

Brett Sobieraski - Episode 827

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SPEAKERS

James Geering, Brett Sobieraski

J James Geering 00:00

This episode is brought to you by Thorne and I have some incredible news for any of you that are in the military, first responder or medical professions. In an effort to give back, Thorne is now offering you an ongoing 35% of each and every one of your purchases of their incredible nutritional solutions. Now Thorne is the official supplement of CrossFit, the UFC, the Mayo Clinic, the Human Performance Project, and multiple Special Operations organizations. I myself have used them for several years, and that is why I brought them on as a sponsor. Some of my favorite products they have are their multivitamin elite, their whey protein, the super EPA, and then most recently, Cyndaquil. As a firefighter, a stuntman and a martial artist, I've had my share of brain trauma and sleep deprivation and Cyndaquil is the latest brain health supplement. Now to qualify for the 35% off, go to thorne.com. Click on Sign In and then create a new account, you will see the opportunity to register as a first responder or member of military. When you click on that it will take you through verification with Gov X. You simply choose a profession provide one piece of documentation and then you are verified for life. From that point onwards you will continue to receive the 5% off through Thorne. Now for those of you who don't qualify there is still the 10% off using the code BTS 10. Behind the shield 10 for a one time purchase. Now to learn more about Thorne go to Episode 323 of the behind the shield podcast with Joel to Toro and Wes Barnett. Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show, law enforcement officer, elite endurance athlete and the author of Grey Man, Brett Sobieraskii. Now in this amazing conversation, we discuss a host of topics from growing up with a law enforcement father, his own journey into policing, joining the SWAT team, the concept of the gray man, how running became integral in his physical and mental health, his road into the ultra endurance space addiction, drug prohibition, Wolf brigade training with Greg Walsh, and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredibly important conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier for others to find. And this is a free library of well over 800 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories. So I can get them to every single person on planet Earth needs to hear them. So with that being said, I introduce to you, Brett Sobieraski. Enjoy Well, Brett, I want to start by saying thank you so much for taking the time and being a little patient

because I had to go to the grocery stores, we have a kind of hurricane bearing down on us, which usually is a little bit more of a challenge in Florida when that happens. So being patient with me and coming on the behind the show podcast today.

B

Brett Sobieraski 03:43

Now so glad to be here. Marriage is great to get on here.

J

James Geering 03:47

Now who was it that connected us?

i

03:50

i It was Greg Walsh from the Great Great Wolf brigade gym in Rochester, New York. That was the common thread.

J

James Geering 03:57

That's right. And it's sad because I was trying to work out who it was. And I realized the reason I couldn't was Greg is was on Instagram and they shut down all his pages. It was just absolute insanity. All he's putting out is good information. I would I would argue not very, you know, extreme information by any reason and I think they shut everything down.

i

04:17

Zero violence. That guy is like one of the two helpers you know, and this this censorship is madness when they can, you know, that's it, that's part of his livelihood, a part of his income and then just for no explanation, by the way, your accounts canceled. You can't appeal all your stuffs gonna get deleted. See you later. Like that's that's true madness. That's like 1984 stuff.

J

James Geering 04:38

Yeah, well, for everyone listening, his YouTube channel was still going and then wolf brigade. I've been doing their programming for a couple of months now. So if you want to support him, then go to those channels instead. So then, very first question for you. Where on planet earth are we finding you today?

i

04:54

You're finding me in the great great town of Carrollton New York, which is a Western You're up by Lake Ontario I've probably only a half a mile in the biggest city would be about a half a mile or I'm sorry, a half an hour east of me, Rochester, New York. So I'm between Rochester and


Buffalo.

 James Geering 05:10

Okay, that's where the connection is with Greg then.

 05:13

Yes, yes.

 James Geering 05:14

Brilliant. All right. Well, I would love to start at the very beginning of your life journey. So tell me where you were born. And tell me a little bit about your family dynamic, what your parents did, and how many siblings?

 05:25

All right, so I was born and raised in this little city called Lockport, New York, which is just outside Niagara Falls south or north of Buffalo. My dad was a police officer in the city of Lockport for 28 years, eventually, he retired as a detective. And of course, I, you know, my, my mentor, my, my God, you know, always wanted to be like him. My mom was basically a stay at home mom until we got a little bit older, then she took a job at a local hospital working like in the administration end of it, then eventually got a full time job at our local jail here, again, working in administrative roles. And she was like, just the salt of the earth like she, she got the fast track and she died to go to heaven. There's no doubt about it. Kind of just like books, like, never heard her say a bad word about anyone, just an incredible lady. And then I'm the middle child. So I have I have an older sister, Julie, and a younger sister sherry. And I, we were very middle class, I mean, fairly middle class. So my dad, he worked 40 hours as a police officer, that he worked 40 hours in this plant that did plating like, chrome plating. So he'd come home a mess, then on the weekends, he would have a part time job with my uncle, they would do like reconstruction remodeling. So honestly, when I was younger, he wasn't around that macho, I don't have a ton of memories, you know, is a younger kid, he was just never home. My mom was always there for us. And blackboards is like just this cool little city of like, 25,000. You know, and so those days when there was parks, within a quarter mile of where I lived, you rode your bike there in the summertime, you got to come home and when the streetlights came on, like all that, like stuff you hear about, you know, days past, it was truly in a fairly safe city, a great school district. And it was just a great place to grow up city lock.

 James Geering 07:19

With the 2023 lens that I have now I look at you know, a lot of things are very differently. And one of the most under discussed elements, arguably negative coping mechanisms of mental health challenges, is busyness is taking over time is working many, many jobs to the point

where as you mentioned, you're not seeing your family, the very people that ultimately, you know, you were doing this for? Was your dad working purely out of necessity or these hours? Or do you think when you look back there might have been that element involved as well.

 07:52

I, you know, my dad was hard man. He was, you know, and, you know, not to judge. He never once told me he looked like we weren't he wasn't that kind of guy who was very stoic. A very hard hard man, I think. I don't think most of it was born out of out of necessity. You know, he tried to provide for us and he wanted to like us to have a middle class type of life back then law enforcement pay was terrible, like, just absolutely terrible is nowhere near the amount of compensation we get now, you know, whether it's police or fire. And so I think that was I think that was most of it. I just remember, he's just he was just a very, very hard man, both both of like, Will and you know, he was an age where you never worked out but I've never saw him get tired. Like that man could work around the clock. You know, now, I guess when I look back, you can see where he was edgy at times, or, you know, short of temper at times or have patience and I'm sure some of that was from, you know, working 100 hours a week for four years on end.

 James Geering 08:57

So when you were young, obviously you went into a very physical profession and then you ended up being an elite endurance athlete what sports and activities were you doing in the school ages?

 09:09

So school ages, I pretty much did them all. They forbid me to play football because I had a neighbor he had a few concussions as a young kid and they're like you're not you know, my parent my especially my mom was you know, I would say over protected and so you know, I would do the soccer I would do the baseball and is a is a youth and as even as a high school student I was horrible at athletics like absolutely zero God given talent. You know, the last kid and I got used to it after a while you're the last kid picked for for pickup football games or the last kid pick for pickup basketball games. You sit the bench almost the entire game during literally like it was just, you know, I had none of these genes and whether some of it was physicality. Some of it was probably mental to to a degree but I was just horrible. Athletes I talk about it were my one whole goal in high school was to get a varsity letter jacket because I would, I went into 10th grade, our Senior High School and you saw these gods and goddesses walking down the hall, like, literally like walking billboards of greatness, Farsi letter patches on their jackets, all these emblems on their stage, some had state champions, sectional champions, league champions and all kinds of stuff. And I was I was at all of these people. That's all I won. That's, that would have made me the happiest person in the world, I'm pretty sure and I couldn't earn one and only sport I could make was track because they didn't cut any. I couldn't make any of the teams that had cuts or definitive rosters. So I went off track and just was never able to earn that and I joke around people that I'm probably still I do some of the things I do is I probably still try to earn that fucking letter, a person letter that was so elusive in high school.

 James Geering 11:00

Will you bake in high school we use small with any kind of physical challenges, or was it just purely your ability to actually perform the sport,

 11:09

the ability like you know, I'm not a strong guy by nature, I have this like, somewhat skinny bone structure, but average that's that's the whole kind of premises. Just like average height, average weight, maybe on the skinny side, average intelligence, just like the truly the most average guy in the entire world, but I couldn't bring it when it came to athletics. I, I just couldn't bring it in. And it was frustrating. And the reason it was more frustrating was I always had these, these visions of grandeur of being great, like on a global level, not just at sports, like I wanted to be Edwin Moses, like back then he was that like, two time Olympian, intermediate hurdler. And I'm like, I'm gonna make it to the Olympics, like I could, barely one varsity. And so it became frustrating, after a while, and, you know, maybe career also wanted to be globally great. And I've always had that. So it was hard to match the super average person with wanting the expectations of greatness.

 James Geering 12:09

What did it do to your mindset when it came to the Training because I was always very small. And I literally, I'm not exaggerating, I have my final adult gross spur up when I was 18, which is years behind. So I'm really going to community college and there was all these men. And I was like a little ventriloquist dummy that was hanging around. But what I did is it burned that, you know, lit that fire into me, and I never became, you know, world champion or anything. But I definitely achieved a lot more just from that bloody mindedness of being someone who was never picked first, who was always, you know, so much smaller and slower than a lot of the people that I was amongst, in my school years.

 12:49

So early on, I let it defeat. So like my senior year track, I knew there was no way in hell, I was going to earn a varsity letter. So I just made up excuse and I quit, I had this minor surgery, I was recovered. I tell a lie to the coach. I'm like, he said, I shouldn't run this year. He's like, okay, so I threw in the towel. And I did that. Often, I did that, like my first year of college. I couldn't use that, to my ability. And it wasn't until, gosh, so I was, you know, in my 40s, probably, that I finally understood, like, how I could use that for fuel, how I could use that averageness. And, and what I always what I never did was for the most part is throw away those visions of grandeur. And so even to this day, like I think of things I want to do, that most people may say is crazy or extreme. And I think that's what what, I still carry that in my pocket to a degree. That's what it really helped propel me in the second half of my life. Now, you

 James Geering 13:49

mentioned that your dad was a police officer, but you weren't around him very much. Were you

dreaming of law enforcement when you were in the high school age? Or was it something else?
Ever since



13:59

I was a kid that there was two things I would, I would teeter back and forth was either going into military or becoming a police officer. And my grandfather was a was the Naval Academy graduate, he flew planes for the Navy. And so I tried to go to West Point, but first of all, we had no political juices, you know, you have to get a political nomination. And, you know, they don't let average people in the West Point they don't like and I probably would have failed out my first year with the mindset I had then. So then once I gave that up, then you know, I was I went to school for criminal justice, you know, for college, my secondary education, but still ended up joining the National Guard when I was 18 years old. So I you know, those were only the two things I wanted my entire life. There's nothing anything else I had, no but I had dreams of FBI or like a CIA spooker you know, being in Special Forces and everything else but uh, yeah, are always lost in professions.



James Geering 15:02

It's funny, I've had a lot of people on here I am, by no means connected with the military, I just a firefighter, they got to speak to a lot of people, a lot of war fighters. And there is a resounding common denominator of people that did go through the West Point program that absolutely hated it. hated it. So I think you know, that just on your little checklist there, maybe there, maybe you weren't supposed to go, because I haven't really heard and I'm sure there are a lot of people out there that did enjoy it. But it's amazing how many people have been on the show that were like, that was some of the worst years of my life. And you know, I think for a number of different reasons, but But yeah, so so some of these Pinnacle programs may be looked better from the outside than inside. I



15:42

just had that conversation with Tim dooba, who owns one of the owners of pro tech. And I saw at what brigade and he's a Naval Academy graduate. He's like, it's soft. He's like, it was nothing like I thought it would be. He goes, it wasn't as hard and his dad went through. And he was like, it's nothing as hard as I thought it was. And it wasn't as challenging. And I was like, Come on, man just shattered my dreams. I probably made me feel better that you know, like you like you just said, but yeah, so I had just recently heard



James Geering 16:11

that interested? Well, so you come out of high school, you've got dreams of military or law enforcement walk me through your journey into policing them.



16:21

So I end up going to a kind of a prestigious school out here. Rochester Institute of Technology

So I end up going to a kind of a prestigious school out here, Rochester Institute of Technology. And I actually went for accounting, thinking I wanted to get in the FBI. In my first year of college, I absolutely bombed the join a fraternity. I joke I say I got straight A's. I got straight A's in beer drinking. And I got straight A's and party in that in that studying hard. And I had a million reasons and excuses in it College. There did suck. It was huge classrooms. I didn't find it the material interesting. And it was just, it wasn't for me. So I stuck it out that year. And then I went I started going to a community college for criminal justice. And then that's where I really started apply myself. I'd like to subject matter. I had just got a basic training for the Army National Guard. So I had some of that discipline stuck from that. And then it was the I was I got my associate's degree. And I was going getting my, my Bachelor's at Buffalo State College and I got hired is at the Lockport Police Department while my dad was still there at the unripe age of 21.

 James Geering 17:32

So he was at the same department as you.

 17:35

Yeah, he was in the same department. We It was weird back then, like you would never do that now or no one would. But I got hired early before the academy and they're like, Okay, here's my dad's like, gives me a gun. No range time. He's like, don't carry this virus. It's only for work. Because he was the range guy there, got my uniforms. And I was on patrol even before I went to the Academy. And my dad was still there. So we got to work together from March or I'm sorry, May until like September of that year. And then when he retired I got to get his I got his badge badge number 15, which was like just special that I got to carry that on.

 James Geering 18:10

Well, I'm not seeing him very much because of all the hours he was putting in, did you get some version of quality time when you were actually in the same department?

 18:18

I did. And our our quality time came. Honestly it was it was pretty much after my parents got divorced. I was like 16 years old when they got divorced. And we probably became closer than and we became like we always go hunting together we go on fishing trips in the spring. He wasn't working like like a madman like he had been. And we became a lot closer once I became an adult. And that's where I really honestly that's where I got to know him. I still remember pouting around the house because he said he would go take these, you know, we'd go to the rain shooting or shoot my BB gun when I was 12 years old. And I would sit there all day and wait for him but he was tied up on a construction job and I remember just like being this little pisspot and you know, disappointed and mad and angry. And I was glad that like is is time when we really connected at a much deeper level. You know, as as I got older



 James Geering 19:15

Did he have any any sort of guilt or regret when he looked back at how much time he did spend away from you?

 19:25

He was built differently. I don't I don't think he ever I don't think regret was a word that like resigned with him ever. I really wasn't he's such an accent. He's such a hard man. And it wasn't a it wasn't like a front he put up it was I think it was just a way he was raised was really tough Polish parents. So I don't think so. In the funny part though, is like later when I went to build my house like he was here every day, like every day in his late 60s. You know working like a crazy man keeping up with me And, you know, and I could always count on I could, especially as I got older, I could always pick up the phone and count on him to help me.

 James Geering 20:09

Well, I know we're going to talk about your, you know, physical endurance journey, when you walk through the front door of your department talk to me about the fitness standards and kind of defensive tactics back then.

 20:22

Oh, gosh, like, so. It was a really like cheesy thing to to get on the list like used to score so high on the test. And it was like these cold dashes, some push ups and sit ups and I remember it was by some folks administer by the police department. I just remember watching it back then, like their stomachs were hanging over their belts. And I'm like, they were counting push ups that shouldn't have counted back then sit up, say there's no kind of standard whatsoever. And then when I went to the academy, the academy was run pretty well, as far as the physical fitness standards. It was more militant, militaristic in nature, to defensive taxes back then we had really good instructors, but it was very as that robotic kind of, you know, front block with your baton and low block and sideline, things that you would probably realistically probably would never use. In a true street fights. I thought they, they were probably up to par at the time. But like if you look back now, like woefully woefully inadequate. And so, when I went to the Academy, I had unfortunately picked up this bad habit of smoking. When I got out of the military. I was 19 at the time. And I still remember my dad smoked three packs of cigarettes a day, at least he and never not saw with a cigarette in his mouth, like it wasn't a thing. And he would, he would just never not be smoking. He started smoking when he was 12. So you know and wanting to be like my dad, I still remember 19 Wilson firearms downtown Lockport I pull into the parking lot, I went in, I bought my first pack of cigarettes and was the same exact cigarettes and my dad smoked. And I remember choking on that first cigarette. But, you know, I said I wasn't good at stuff, I became good at smoking, I became damn good at smoking your pack or two a day. And I went to the Academy. And I could still like psych said it was a cop Fest in the world of running a mile and a half, like I am middle of the pack. But when I went to the academy, you know, the standards weren't that high. And there was there was a lot of people that were overweight and or out of shape. So like for once I kind of stood out at something like I didn't win the PT award, but I was like up near the top of things. And I just and that's why I talk about regret. And I know that lung cancer eventually killed my father. And I often think I'm like,


does he like when he was dying? Did he regret all those years of smoking? I know he did. Because his his mind just didn't work like that until I saw him right before he died. And he said I Finally Quit smoking. And I'll never forget this. He's like, you know, the cigarettes are killing me. And I left on my motorcycle with my son and I said to myself, No dad, they already killed you. And he was dead like a week later from his first chemotherapy. And so like you know, I had picked up that bad habit of smoking and back then all cops smoke it was not all but like that was a thing like you You smoke as a cop and wore a mustache and you drink coffee and got drunk off duty like that was those were the four tenants of law enforcement back in the late 80s.

 James Geering 23:33

So where did you find yourself as far as you know the specific job responsibility early in your career?

 23:40

I love that I worked the road that you know that the one downfall was working in your own little city of 25,000 is you end up arresting people that you know and you go to domestics of people you know and you know some people that you kind of respected you see behind the curtain a little bit you're like oh god you know, he or she is a piece of shit. So you know, sometimes that dampens your spirits a little bit but I love being a small town cop because you felt like you were making a difference there and I really enjoyed work like I loved I was probably a little bit like off the hook a little bit you know chasing people down and you know stopping every car they went by but I truly when I got there I was like, oh gosh, I'm glad I love this because this is you know this is the career decided on and and it was it was it was awesome to kind of put on that Superman cape for a while at least that's how it felt.

 James Geering 24:33

One thing that's that's definitely apparent in the volunteer fire service, but also responders that live and work in the city, which you know, more often than not now is rare because most of us can't afford to live in the bigger cities. But that reminder, every corner, every intersection every every building has a story as you get deeper and deeper in your career. Did you see that yourself as you kind of progress through your 30 years?

 24:58

I did absolutely no and how it how like small town policing when I was a Lockport I got a set of these keys and I had keys to most of the buildings downtown because the people that own them, Why are the police to have them so you know, if there was a break in that you could instead of going through the window that's broken or the that you could open up that door you can check inside for burglar labs. And it was in that smaller town, it was awesome. And because I knew exactly where everything was, and you knew who the who the bad guys were the good people were. It changed a little bit when I when I transferred to the Rochester Police Department. I spent four years in Lockport so then I go to Rochester City of that time, probably

like a quarter million I would say like seven 800 police officers. And it was it was hard at first to adjust in Rochester because I didn't know Rochester although I went to college out there I didn't really venture into the city proper. And it was almost it was kind of like starting new for some things and Rochester is a big melting pot lot portent you know, at that time look look like me. You go to Rochester and I mean, I work I ended up going to a section that was primarily Spanish, and African Americans, and Dominicans, and people from Cuba. And it was just as melting pot of all different types of folks, Jamaicans, and I really didn't deal with that too much in Blackboard. So there was quite a big learning curve.

 James Geering 26:27

So what was that? Metamorphosis things, I had the same thing I was I was an English fanboy. And then all of a sudden, I'm working in, you know, cities that have gangs and all kinds of stuff. And it is it's a culture shock when you've come from, you know, seemingly pretty naive in a positive way upbringing and now you know, you're pulling sheets over people of all colors and creeds. So what how did you kind of deal with that jarring difference between the first apartment and Rochester,

 26:56

it was a really, I really leaned on those officers I worked with, that had been there that had been city cops, big city cops for five or six years, and kind of took the lead from them. And I think it was I've always I've always I was an introvert as a kid, very shy, not very outgoing. I think, as I as I eventually got into law enforcement, I started to shed that a little bit. And I developed along the way this, this ability to talk to people, like people of all walks of life, and it wasn't easy. At first, it wasn't hard. But eventually, that's how I did it was, you know that we're all the same folks, man, we may not all look the same, our houses may not all look the same on the inside or the outside, we may not all have jobs are the same jobs. But it was it was it was a couple it was a couple years until you started to understand the different cultures and and how they interact amongst themselves or with me. And like just because someone was yelling, you know, and was was was kind of, you know, going off, it didn't mean that they that they were yelling at me that was just like part of their culture was to yell or when you walked into a scene and say it was some Spanish folks, like you will generally go over and talk to the male first. Because, you know, they see themselves as the head of the household. And if you went talk to the female first, like now that could cause big problems and it's not discrimination. It's just doing a job and defusing things when you first walk in there instead of throwing gas out of the place. So it was it was it was occur. It was definitely a learning curve. And the whole thing that brought me there was, I want to say Lockport my whole life, like I love that city and I wanted my kids to go to the same schools I went to because half the people I went to high school with became teachers and hang around with kids of my friends kids. But they laid off some folks in Lockport. And I was still saved because I had seniority but they they found out that Rochester to transfer so all your time transferred your retirement time. And I wanted to work in narcotics my entire career. That was my entire goal once I started. And in Lockport it would it took me eons to finally get on a drug task force. So I'm like, let me go to the big city, I probably have a better chance and that was the whole the whole premise of me coming to Rochester.

 James Geering 29:18

So I wanted to get that this is this is a topic that I visit a lot, especially with law enforcement because of having seen it through first responders eyes. You come from a smaller, quieter town, you go to Rochester, New York, you've got this burning desire to enter the narcotics officer side of things. What were you seeing up to that point as far as the impact of prohibition of illicit drugs in the communities that you were serving?



29:48

When I got there, that was literally the beginning of the crack epidemic in Rochester, New York. And it will it was just out of control the amount of violence associated with it the amount of all the other crimes you know the car larceny burglaries, drug dealers robbing one another. It was it was mass chaos where I worked. It was called the Clinton session. And it's probably one of the most violent sections in the entire city. And it was it was like the okay corral. Like it was just, I went there. And I never realized I thought of Rochester naively as Kodak, and Xerox and beauchene long. And I know, there was a big GM plant here. And so I was like, Oh, I'm gonna go to Rochester were like LabCorp a bigger and I got there. I'm like, I don't understand like, and, you know, it's probably not cultural, culturally correct. But back then, you know, everyone just refer to these parts of the city is the ghetto. And just like, just run down neighborhoods. And the crack epidemic is what kind of helped the district like it was the final straw that maybe to help destroy Rochester. And it was just when it hit, it came like a tornado in a hurricane and a forest fire, like all wrapped into one. And there was addicts everywhere.



James Geering 31:10

Now, initially, when you join the task force, what was the strategy of battling the quote unquote, war on drugs at that point?



31:19

So we had different like divisions or different teams within narcotics, I first went there as an officer for about a year and a half. And I was on what we call a night team or a gatehouse team, our sole thing was, we had one half of the city, and we would work on, like doing search warrants on drug houses, or we would buy drugs undercover from these popular street corners that all had drug dealers hanging out on them, we call them by busts. So that was our main function was we would hit it at the at the ground level, playing Whack a Mole. You know, in retrospect, like I realize it really wasn't, you know, the problem is you have you have 10 seats for drug dealers. You know, there's, there's ask for every seat and you take one guy out, there's 100. Guys, we make that money. And when you talk about a city of Rochester, where the graduation rate for high school is dismal. It's probably one of the worst school districts in the entire nation. So like they these, these folks have nowhere else to turn other than drugs. And there's 3/3 generation drug dealers. So that was it, like we hit them at the street level. And so I eventually got promoted out of there as a sergeant and went back to the road. And then like lightning struck, that's when it root the war on drugs was like full steam ahead to pour and all that money and do with federal money. And they formed, they doubled the narcotics unit, I went back up, initially, and I ran one of those night teams. And we at that time, there were so many teams, we only had a quarter of the city. And so every night banging warrants, banging warrants, doing by bus on the street corners. And after about a year of that I ended up on a

drug task, a newly formed drug task force that was a county wide, but not all the agencies are. There's two now we had two competing Task Force. And eventually we brought that all under one umbrella. So for the last 20 years of my life, I supervised, you know, big element of this county wide drug task force. And then we now we're not just in the city, we were in all the suburbs of Rochester, and even the rural areas.

 James Geering 33:23

With this this element of your career, what are some of the career calls? What are some of the things that you responded to that you remember the most

 33:32

like that? When I the I would say like when it came to narcotics, what was what was awesome. Once I started this, we started this taskforce was we would do wiretaps all the time we've taped out to organizations, I mean, we would have the federal agents on our task force, and they would end up going to Puerto Rico and we shot the you know, the head of the snake off from there, the sort of true sources of why are we flagged California, and pick up the guy who was you know, doing multi kilo shipments in the Rochester, we get people extradited back from the Dominican Republic though those like when you really when you really get those upper echelon guys that are are tied into the governments of those countries. That was pretty cool. You got, I would say like I had a couple of close calls. In my career, and I think I'd laugh I say, Well, the first one was in Blackboard. Now you dial back to 1989 or or maybe 90 is we have this guy who tries to shoot his wife this this will tell you how backwards work tries to shoot his girlfriend with a Shaka and he misses he takes off car chase. We end up stopping in a in a mall and while he's driving to the parking lot, he's firing this rifle out the window shop and out the window and he finally gets against this huge stone wall. And he it ends up being a standoff for literally hours and hours. He's just walking back and forth. The shotgun in his hand firing rounds indiscriminately in the air. Never pointed at the police. I think he wanted suicide by cop. Like one time he brought it up. And he was just bringing it down almost enough where where we'd be forced to shoot them. And there's a zillion cops there. And so the sheriff shows up. I'm in the town actually, I'm outside my jurisdiction. And the sheriff who I kind of knew he's like, Hey, kid, come with me. And I'm like, okay, like I don't I've got two years on the job and we sneak up behind these big boulders and behind these pine trees is they have okay, we're going to tackle this guy from behind who gets you off top and I'll go down below. And the guy looked at him I'm like, like, even even wanted to be Superman back then. I'm like, what this is this is make sense. And so we took a he turned his back, we had a close like, probably like 10 yards, and then bomb Rasta guy and like, he just started turning around with the shotgun. You heard his calming and luckily, we were able to take him to the ground and wrestle it away. And I remember like people were jokingly calling Batman and Robin. So of course, I came into work. The next day, there's a rabbit costume tied to my locker. And back then, and you know, I was kind of proud of what I did until, you know, it's something years later, I'm like, oh, it's stupid thing in my career I've ever done, like literally the stupidest thing. And then, when I was working is still as a patrolman in Rochester. We invest with this guy, he was the biggest weed dealer like we what we would do is we would go down his street, we would arrest all the weed dealers, and then we'd have cops out there pretending to sell fake weed. To all the suburban people in the city, people that would come through then we arrest them as a left, which later was found to be not constant or unconstitutional, at least not against the law, because of a

courtroom. But these cars were lined up like 40 deep. This guy was making 10s of 1000s of dollars. And we were messing with them all the time. Back when I was in us, and we mess with them. And finally one day we got him we got him with a in his garage. And he's he's reaching out he had a dog between us this giant Rottweiler and I didn't want to shoot the dog. Like the dog was just doing his job. And I saw him looking at me I said, that fucking guy is thinking about killing me right now. And I hadn't gunpoint me and my partner and I could tell that he was debating fight or flight. And right in front of us, he reached into his hoodie pocket, and he turned his back and he put something up in the rafters almost like we couldn't see him like it was like I'm gonna be I'm gonna be I'm gonna disappear right now. And it was a handgun and like a half a pound of weed. So we locked them up. Of course, he got back out. And then it was like a month later like round July 4 weekend out my whole platoon. There's only like four of us. We were like a proactive team. They were all off of work and I was the only guy working so I roll up to that area and it was one of his little minions on the corner and I kicked that dude off the corner. And I was just standing out there like I was trying to like pee on there. You know, like a dog like I was trying to mark my territory and be like you're not fucking going to be here tonight man just in my corner. And I just saw the courtroom I saw a muzzle flash and I saw more muzzle flash and I started taking rounds that are common in across the street from a parking lot it was a laundromat at the time. And I could I heard the zipper and so I took off chasing them there's three guys and ended up losing them we didn't find them. I was standing in front of this church and like literally a bullet had a missed me by like a foot and there was like perfect head height. I wasn't really I wasn't really all that. Like I was scared but I wasn't as scared until I stood there and I saw this where the bullet hit. So someone was looking out for me and later we had learned through informants we could never prove that that do put a contract out 10 grand to kill really in some of the young punks you know wanted to cash in on 10 G's and what made it worse was and again we can never prove it it was a policeman son was one of the guys oh my god. Yeah man messed up.

J

James Geering 39:07

Well, I want to put something to you and this is your community is that the hardest community to ask? Because for so many years you were told this is bad go and arrest these people lock them up. But when I look at my career through a firefighter and a paramedic sighs coming from an English farm boy that was herding sheep when he was young. It gave me a very kind of different perspective. You know where I wasn't completely indoctrinated and a lot of things that we were you know, raised with and as I start looking at the war on drugs, and then I've talked to told the story many times that my mother and brother moved to Portugal and I heard how they decriminalize not legalized or decriminalized addiction. So you're a seller, you get banged up, you're a smuggler, you get banged up, you're an addict. You get educated on the resources and there's a shitload of resources for them there. And you try and get these people back on the straight and narrow The more people I've asked on here that have come from a law enforcement background about the efficacy of the war on drugs, I hear a lot of people say, you know, you just can't arrest your way out of this problem. My personal opinion, James Geering, is that that decriminalisation, to me is the only way that we address this because addiction is a mental health element. They're not criminals are not scumbags. Some of these addicts do some bad things. And that's a separate conversation. But the war on drugs driving an addict into the underworld, empowering cartels and gangs to be able to smuggle and turn the crime. To me, we've tried that for I mean, it's been almost 100 years now, since the original prohibition. My perspective is, it's an epic failure, and we have to try something else. You spent your whole career In, in Swat narcotics, what's your perspective of that philosophy?



40:54

So I'm probably like a unicorn, because, first of all, I served over 20 years on a kind of rehabilitation clinics, Board of Directors, I was a president of the board for like five years. So I always always believed in, you know, there has to be rehabilitation, there has to you know, there has to be recovery. And so what I would commonly see is, is a supervisor, my guys would go out and buy drugs, and they would get waved down by some guy or gal on the street corner, who are obviously acts like you looked at him, you know, what an adequate thing. And so that person would take our cops money, go to the drug house, buy the drugs, come back with the drugs and give it to our cops. And we would originally arrest those middle people for criminal sale of a controlled substance, third, a felony, like a pretty heavy felony, a B felony. But I would always put a note in those in that case file that went to the district attorney, that that person is a user, not a dealer, they need to visit a drug court. And we have this great drug court, we still do in Rochester, where a lot of people end up realizing how hard it is to graduate from drug court because there's all these rules for the probably the first time in their entire life that they have to follow. And so we would, I would always be an advocate. And I would agree like the the actual dealers themselves, like the big heavy duty dealers, they they need to rot in prison. But those people caught in the middle that are selling it to fuel their addiction. They're not drug dealers, they're like a victim of the circumstance, they're still doing wrong. But if we can, I always we always try it. I always tried to divert that. And of course, there's this asshole like, sedimentology like we had that. That's gonna work, right? You tell me how that's worked out so far. So we I would be a big advocate of that, that those people that were caught in the middle that were clearly, you know, some, some surgeons didn't want to make that didn't want to make that termination. I like what Well, that's why a you have stripes on your sleeves. And that's why you get paid extra to make those calls. And my guys, my guys understood, the new people didn't like, Ah, it's a job, you know, like, you'll understand drug dealers wants you up in this unit for a while.



James Geering 43:03

Well, the other thing is all the crime that's attached to it, you look at homelessness, you look at, you know, sex workers, take a look at all these other things. You know, when I've interacted with most of those people, it always seems to come back to prohibition, you know, whether it's like you said addiction, and they're trying to fuel their addiction, whether it's, you know, a very poor neighborhood in Rochester, where their role model sadly hustling and dope versus, you know, a military member or a sports coach or something like that. So, to me, and you said, cut the head off the snake. Exactly. If we actually took away the consumer supply and demand. I think it would affect everything from the gangs and the violence in our streets to even the cartels overseas or across the border. That, you know, we've watched go from, you know, somewhat low level criminals to these absolute monsters in 2023.



43:54

Yeah, that's the that's the I think that's, that's the tricky part is is, like we have for some reason, this country has this voracious appetite for drugs. And we do we spend so much of our money we do on the enforcement part of it, and very little on the true prevention part of it about, you know, and then, you know, we could we could open up all a Pandora's box with the

opioid epidemic that was that was caused by physicians caused by big pharma, like not no one could ever argue against that. And, like, I just I can't believe how much like cocaine, or now, fentanyl, that that America can consume. It's just it's, it's incredible. But that prevention piece is like the smallest leg of that stool whatsoever, you know, even less than, you know, and when we talk about rehabilitation or recovery, like that's still woefully underfunded, but there really isn't any of this. You know, when it comes to prevention, they tried, you know, to a degree with dare in school, and I thought that was a great program, but the under My issue is an hour of Darren school. You know, sometimes it's hard to gate, you know, the other 16 hours that that poor student spends at home, you know, immersed in the inner city. And that's all they know. You know, it's it's sad, you know, it's truly hurts your soul.

 James Geering 45:19

Couple of statistics that I've, I've been taught actually one of them I've been getting wrong for a while, and someone just corrected me on social media. But one is, we are I think we make up 4% of the world's population in the US, we consume 75% of the world's opioids, which is insane. And I used to think it was that much that the incarcerated population but I was way off, and I got my stats confused, but we have 20% of the world's incarcerated population. So the prevention side like you said, I mean, we're screaming for it and again, sadly, we're going to go through this god awful meat grinder of political bullshit again the next few months and have to choose from to fucking awful people yet again. But I don't understand why there isn't this this paradigm shift where people are like, because it's, you know, we have the internet now we have this information, which shows that dope sick and painkiller just came out. And, you know, which are telling the Sackler story, by the way, Richard Sackler lives in Boca Raton, and they'd like a million dollar house still, still, you know, free as a bird after killing hundreds of 1000s of people. But um, you know, this is the issue, we have a mental health problem. And it manifests in addiction, alcoholism, suicide, I mean, all these other areas. But it's, it's not cool to talk about that. So it's brushed under. But you know, you look at you look at the 1990s show cops, you know, back then law enforcement was chasing people for a bag of weed, you know, and we just, just, I don't know how we finally get people to, to calm down their knee jerk war on drugs, you know, addicts are pieces of shit, why are we wasting Narcan conversations and actually look through a Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, whatever eyes with this compassion towards our fellow man, and actually try and be proactive and, and address the nucleus of the situation, not the band aid, which is the actual drug itself.

 47:19

It's, you know, until people realize it, and still, especially law enforcement, that it's a you have to look, you have to realize that it is a disease and until you do, like, you will never look at it in the proper perspective of how it should. And, you know, 90 probably 90% of law enforcement don't see it as a disease where there's administrators. And, and then like you had mentioned mental health, and there's all these co occurring incidences going on. In New York State, we have the silos, you have the mental health silo, then you have the drug rehabilitation silo, well, you don't need silos, you need one big silo, and you need to put all our resources together, because these things are happening at the same time. But you just can't treat you're like you said you're putting a bandaid on. But the true problem may be the mental health of that person that caused them to become an addict, that will that will always allow them to be an addict until you clean that up and fix that. So it is like I know, obviously, you get older, hopefully you

get wiser. And I think being on that, that board of directors for the rehab clinic really opened my eyes. And when you see people, like the marijuana was the one that got me, really and everyone you know, they say, you know, it's it's not a big deal. And for some maybe it's not. But we could see these kids. And I see kids like in their teenagers come into the clinic. And they were smoking weed like crazy. And they're almost like zombies a little bit, you know, just hard to have a conversation with these folks. And then once you started seeing them come off marijuana, you're like, you saw personnel and you saw spark in their eyes, you saw the wit, and you're like, oh, gosh, man, like, that's, that's that person's true personality there. And it was just, it was just awesome to see that. And just with a drug that most people would say, you know, is harmless. Yeah, it's probably harmless as long as you're not addicted to it. But I always you would see these people turn around. And unfortunately, you know, you don't hear as much about success stories as you do about the failures. But at least that people can can lead a normal life like you and I, you know, and after, after being an addict, it's just when you see it, it's like heartwarming and inspiring. But too many times you see, you see the other part of it, you know, where that person has died of an overdose of a fentanyl or opioid overdose. And they've been in and out of rehab. Like, let's face it. When you start working out, you start losing weight, you know, the first your first try, you generally don't get down to your desired weight and walk away, right? Say, Hey, man, this is awesome. live this way. It's a struggle. And that's how addiction is man. It's a lifelong struggle just like people struggle with obesity lifelong. So There's gonna be bumps in the road and setbacks and failures. But that doesn't define you as a person. So I can't give up on these people. That's I guess that's, you know, that would be my end and comment on.

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James Geering 50:11

Yeah, well, in this one I struggle with as well, you know, a lot of people that talk about their faith, and yet don't seem to actually act the way that the prophets in their holy books would act, because I'm pretty sure Jesus wouldn't be behind the war on drugs or example. That's just me, I think he'd be a little bit more altruistic towards addiction. But Well, it's funny, you mentioned that because I just about four or five days ago, share the video wasn't, it wasn't mine, I can appreciate it from someone. But it was these two addicts, and they literally kind of look like Sid and Nancy from the Sex Pistols. Totally zonked out, probably on opiates. And you know, who knows what else. And then I think it was seven months later, they interviewed the man of this, this couple, and he was clean. And it was amazing. So in, you know, in this, whatever it was 62nd video, you got to see, as you said, the zombie, and then the person. And these are the things that we need to see, you know, there's all the doom and gloom about the homelessness and all that stuff. And we'll just drive them to another county or another city. But each one of those human beings was a toddler once was a kid with their whole life ahead of them, they never dreamed of living under a freeway bridge or shooting up, you know, in some dirty corner somewhere. And so, as you said, we need to put that hope in, we need to not dehumanize these people, but humanize them again. And obviously we can't get to them. So also, the other part of the conversation is just because you can't fix 100% of them doesn't mean you try and help zero of them. And this is the thing, I think that kills us in a lot of these, especially these fucking asshole politicians, you know, they'll pull out that worst case scenario, see, it doesn't work, because, you know, so and so this happens to them, they relapsed, rather than this 80% of those people that you'd actually probably be able to help. And if you lose, if you try and still can't get to those other people will look at the ones that you did help.

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50:11

 52:04

I mean, this is this is only going back maybe 15 years ago, a short 15 years ago is before the opioid epidemic. But certainly during the crack epidemic, we had a district attorney here nominated for to be a federal judge. And I think it was Chuck Grassley, from wherever the fuck he hails from super conservative. He bashed out because he sat on the same board as me. He's like, You're soft on crime, because you sit on the board for a drug rehabilitation clinic. Like if you lost your fucking mind, like, do you Okay, Chuck, we'll just arrest everyone out there because it's working great. Like, that was the mentality only 15 years ago that he got in, he ended up not getting the judgeship. And I don't know if that was solely it. But I'm like, That's the mindset of these of these politicians who have zero clue like zero clue. And God forbid it ever happens to their grandkids? They will probably they will probably look at it a little different.

 James Geering 53:03

Absolutely. Well, speaking of you know, I would argue still part of the mental health crisis, you touched on obesity. And that's another kind of area that you're passionate about. What is your perspective of overall physical fitness in law enforcement and the the civilian population?

 53:22

It's a, and I haven't I look at that through a very acute lens. Because the last 15 years of my career, I also worked as a side job, so to speak at our local police academy, I was hired by the Academy, which is accredited through a college. In the last five years of my career, I ran the PT program, I was in charge. And what I saw was, especially now as of late, we're getting a bunch of folks into criminal justice, who for whatever reason, like never played any type of like team or athletic sports in high school, I'm not sure. You know, maybe they were like me and they suck but I still did track but they come with with almost zero type of, you know, you the first day you ask them, everyone stand up, like what, one at a time, what do you do to stay healthy? Like, what's your workout? They all give the kids the canned answer. I lift weights two or three times a week and I run two or three times a week. And I look at it I'm like, You're a fucking liar like inside of your liar. Like you're not. That's just because the dude before that said that and the girl before that said that. They come in and over those six months of the academy, like I'm able, like with all the other people that helped me with as instructors, we're able to have those people lose tons of body fat and become stronger and faster and confident. In no better thinking under stress. And it's so rewarding when these people leave and the funny part is like, the husbands are like, Oh my gosh, man, my wife can wear big He now like she looks awesome. And in the wise you're like, Man, my you got my eyes, we look at buff, and then a year from then I see him on the road and I'm like you back to where you were man like, it didn't stick. Like it didn't stick for whatever reason, because I was over you with a whip and, you know, making you work out. And so I think across the board, law enforcement is woefully unhealthy. It's not, it's, it's not required, like you can be is, at least in Rochester, most places, we have unions that are made up of people who are of high seniority, and then on the jobs. And like, they know that it doesn't affect them. Like they don't have to be healthy, they have these jobs in the union. It's not beneficial, it would just you know, they would feel a discriminate against guests. They're people they're trying to protect. So it's, I mean, for doing the job, it's and then you look at the rate of like hypertension, and the early deaths course, especially coronary related and or cancer, like we're woefully unhealthy as law enforcement. And you have those few studs here

and there. And those some of those people that put their work in. You hope it'll change but I what I now we see with these folks coming in, is this culture of comfort. So now like, you don't have to go to that you don't even have to go to the store man, you can call an Uber Eats, or you can call up some dude. And if some lady is going to deliver groceries to your house, can order all your shit online, you could just be on your phone all fucking day on social media doing bullshit. And I think that's that's we saw that more and I was really upset. My last academy classes forum that I taught, it was absolutely just their attitudes. There was a few standouts, but I was like, God is this is this the future and I left somewhat, like cup half empty, man, I've never liked that. And then what was awesome is the guy who took over for me told me the next class was outstanding, and I would love to have been there. So maybe it was just an anomaly. But yeah, we is a is a profession, we have to get healthier, you know, and I enjoy going back to like addiction, I would do. I've written hundreds of programs of running programs, because people know that I run and they're like, hey, I want to train for a 5k or I want to train for a half marathon. And I would take you know, the 30 minutes of putting a program together, give it to them. And about 95% of them don't fall through. But it's those 5% man that I have. Maybe I'm working in uniform on overtime for the day and I see him coming across the finish line. Or I see him on social media where they finished a triathlon. I'm like, fuck yeah, man. That's so cool. So I guess I do today I do tomorrow, you know, for those 5% that are willing to see it through.

 James Geering 57:54

I've talked about this a lot. And I was a union member my whole firefighting career. But when I speak to now, I mean high performers from all over the world, whether it's, you know, SCS, or seals, or Green Berets, or you name it. But then also ocean lifeguards and some of those communities. There's no question, they all have standards, and it's just simply you either meet it or you don't do that job. That's the only two options that you get. And then you look at police and fire. And arguably EMS is no excuse for EMS to be out of shape either. Especially God forbid, you're in a shooting or something. And now you haven't extricate human beings. But the resistance like me, since I started the fire service is 20 years now. There's two decades, and there's almost no fire departments that I know of that have a legitimate physical fitness test that is punitive, that you need to be held to. But if you look at what law enforcement or fire especially is expected to do, and from the zero to 100, you know, I mean, lying in a in a bunker at 3am to now having to throw 100 pounds of gear and ascend 10s and 10s of flights of stairs before you even get to the thing that you're actually being called to do. It's pure insanity, absolute insanity and this resistance including some unions, I find fucking nauseating because firstly, You're obstructing the demand for someone to be at the physical level to perform but also you're setting them up for failure when it comes to longevity when they retire. So what is what is your perspective of what why do our professions struggle to have these actual concrete physical standards and you're king for a day what can we do to change it?

 59:41

So in here's the problem now is is now the administration's are setting them up for failure. Like we'll look at Rochester, they want to do away with the current PT standards to get into the academy to get higher, which are set by the state. And it's one of it's a mile and a half run. And they're like oh, While you never chase a criminal for a mile half, like That's stupid, like, well, that's that's not what it's for. It's not for chasing the criminals, it first of all test your mentality or any running tests, your tests your mentality, and your your mental, your mental fortitude.

And this is not a crazy standard to make that mile and a half run and unders push ups and sit ups that everyone should be able to easily do you know what the test is. You just have to train for it. And now they're like, Wow, New York City. Yeah, like you and you want to follow anything that New York City does nowadays, like you're insane. Well, they do this obstacle course where you have to, and literally a 100 year old man with one leg and a half an hour, he could do that. And easily pass. So now they want to lower the hiring standards. Well, what the what does that translate into? Like, what does that look like in 15 to 20 years for now those people that you're lowering the standards and get on the job? And so how do you how would you ever want to make those people better when we're when we're getting less qualified people, it's insane. King for the day was mandatory PT testing mandatory at the 50%. So New York, New York State says for the Academy, you come in at the 40 percentile push ups sit ups, mile half run, you have to leave the academy at the 50 percentile. Our Academy sets it at the 60 percentile, I'm fine, let's do it at 50% at the 50 percentile, you come back once a year you have to pass that then you don't pass it you you get it maybe I'll give you a month because in a month, you could work some miracle in a month you stuck with it or six weeks, you come back in six weeks. If not, then there's going to be disciplinary procedures. And I mean that was that was short all up right? Because we all want to keep our jobs in the back of your mind. And that's why I think I love SWAT so much. So our SWAT team was a part time team. We trade a couple times a month, we got called out so we did a regular regular jobs. But our SWAT we had every six months we had standards. We had very high PT standards a it's a obstacle course that we stole from LAPD because his little history there is RPD rashes prescriber has a second oldest SWAT team in the entire country. We got stood up right after LA and, and we had like the special rifleman squad so people argue that we were actually before LA, but we got stood up right after la back in the 60s. And we and eventually they came and trained us back in the 80s LAPD would come like it I'm talking like, like true kings of the craft back then they would hold SWAT schools in Rochester. And so we do that every six months. And you know, the last part that gets people is is the wall, hey, you do the obstacle course. And then there's this eight foot block wall and in gear and your vest all your stuff on you jump up, you hang from the wall, you dead hang for like a count of two seconds, then you have to pull yourself over. And a that crushes people from getting on the SWAT team, where if you get on the team, and then you let yourself go, you may struggle there. And then we have very, very high qualifications for handgun and rifle. And they're not like much higher than department and I like being held to that standard. Like brings a sense of brotherhood to that team and I say brotherhood and we've never had a female on the team. We've had some try out but again that wall tends to tends to crush them. So I really like that's why I think I love it because you're around guys that can pull their own weight no matter what truly pull their own weight. Or when the time comes, you know that you can count on them. You know hell or high? Well,

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James Geering 1:03:47

a few years ago now I interviewed Big John McCarthy, the UFC referee and former LAPD Swat, and I believe my memory serves him right. His father was one of the ones that started up LAPD SWAT

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Ryan McCarthy, and he certainly did. He was totally as before but predated my time on the team. But we had our anniversary, one of our anniversary SWAT ones. We brought we flew Ron McCarthy to Rochester, he was the keynote speaker at our dinner and what like he told stories

of a while last what a what a life that guy Lee LED. So I was very fortunate to get to meet the great Ron McCarthy like the the true godfather of SWAT like that'll always be his title for me.

J

James Geering 1:04:29

He mentioned about me getting him on the show. I need to know how to circle around him if he if I can still communicate with him we'll see. But what you said about swat is kind of how I look at the fire service as well and we in our Special Operations don't have a special is separate fitness thing unless like Orange County, they have a special rope rescue team that goes up the Giant Ferris wheels that we have in you know, in London in Orlando here. And those guys I mean, I think it's like 300 foot or something. It's a massive climb. So They, they obviously have fitness standards there. But as you said, a law enforcement officer who is fitter who is a better shot, why would that not apply to all law enforcement officers, there may be some specificity in all the gear that you guys when you make an entry, but I mean, as far as physicality, you have the squat that are held to this standard, and you're trying to get rid of standards for the people that are pulling over our children are 16 1718 year olds, I want that person to be well trained in, you know, physically fit, well trained in jujitsu, you know, had to mindfulness training, and be extremely confident with their weapons. So hopefully, they won't pull it when my teenager reaches for a driving license at two in the morning.

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1:05:42

Yeah, and what we would catch a lot is, you know, from from our peers, is like, SWAT kind of frowned upon, they're like, oh, you know, the haha go guys with ball caps and your sleeve tattoos, which I have neither, you know, eat your protein bars. And, and like, and because we have standards, we're like, looked down upon because we, we volunteer for this unit, that really, I mean, extra paid comes in overtime, getting called up at two in the morning to come in for a barricaded government. But it's kind of like almost frowned upon by other people on this, like, you know, you would think that guys in Swat would be the ones who people would be like, oh, man, I want to be like that guy, I want to I want to be in shape, or I want to be a better shot. And it's funny how we're kind of bastardized, like vilify, sometimes by our own people, which is terrible. And, and I look at SWAT like this. We've had the, I would say the majority of people that come on, SWAT end up getting promoted, they end up getting promoted to, you know, a supervisor rank or another or to a mid level, you know, mid Management Supervisor rank, and or investigator. And I'm like, you know, I don't know if it's the chicken or the egg. Either. SWAT picks the people that are go getters and future leaders, or we get the people and make them future leaders. I don't, I don't pretend to know which one it is. But it fucking works man like, like the discipline that we have in Swat and what we the standards, we hold ourselves to a training and live missions. It does something to that person. And you know, we've kicked our fair share off, which is the unit doesn't get involved. And Swat, luckily, at RPD. So like, you don't, you don't, if you're unable to stay on that speeding train, your fucking ass has shown the doors simple. Like we call you in, and you try to make adjustments and you don't, you're out like we don't, there's no grievances. And we've done that to a bunch of people. And I just, that's why I love those guys. And I say when I left. When I when I retired after 32 years of service, the two things I missed the most I love my narcotics guys, don't get me wrong. But I love teaching at the police academy, and not just not just changing bodies, but changing minds. Like it was more for me it was, you know, the end game was making them mentally tougher. The means was through physical fitness. But I wanted people to come out of there knowing that they could

be invincible for short periods of time. So I miss doing that. And I miss being around those SWAT guys like, because they're just, you know, they're people that we we you know, you would you would with it without a second of a doubt you would die for jump in front of a bullet for and you always had their backs that always had yours.

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James Geering 1:08:28

I've spent a lot of time talking about the environment that a lot of first responders work in and how that truly does set us up for failure when it comes to our fitness and our health. I mean, it just does the sleep deprivation, especially in the fire service, the insane hours that are just perceived as normal, literally killing our men and women. And there's, you know, physiological proof and a lot of people on the show the experts talking about the hormonal disruption all these things, why there is weight gain when you don't sleep for shift after shift after shift. The people that I think is maintain their fitness, it's despite the environment, not because of the environment. But when it comes to like you said, setting that bar high and then just asking the profession to maintain it, which includes, you know, creating a work week that allows them to rest and recover. In the fire service in Florida at least where I went to school, they label our academy minimum standards. So they've they've highlighted it for you, this is the shittiest you should ever be in your entire life. You know now obviously when you're 55 and beaten up after 25 years in the fire service, you're not going to be as nimble as you were when you're 18 But picking up ladders dragon dummies climbing stairs, you know, advancing hose. These are the basic skill sets that we need in our profession when the bell goes off. So this is what I struggle with so so much is at least when I went to school, we did come out the academy and pretty damn good shape. And so all you got to do is just say, alright, we need you to keep that shape. You know, asking someone you know, like you said, the 17 year old gamer that's never even seen daylight to now be an ultra runner. You just asking the person that set the bar that reached the bar to just hang on to that bar and hopefully try and get a little bit better along the way. But I don't understand where there's this mentality of like, you know, when you get this, this uncle Rico conversation like, oh, yeah, man, I was in the best shape of my life and the Academy, you should be in the best shape your life now, not looking back romantically at 1520 years ago, at an academy that made you run and do push ups, now you're out there and you actually could get killed, and you care less I just, it blows my mind.

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And I love the uncle Rico thing, because it brings me back to we had a police officer who was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease, which is, you know, neuro muscular. So rather than it he was a runner, and investigator, rather than, like wallow in his despair, he's like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do a fight, we're gonna make up a 5k. And we're going to have, and we have a great research facility here at the University of Rochester, we're gonna donate money directly to the research. So they ended up having this plaque. And you would, you would appreciate this between us between the fire department in the police department. And at the time, it was like the top three runners from each from law enforcement, or fire would get their name on this trophy. So I put an email out, I'm like, Come on, man. Like this is the first year we got to win this. And so these three kids from the academy, they're like three years out of the academy. And I always before I taught at the academy, or at least didn't remember them. And I'm like, You guys are already there. I call him and the Academy like I do a set I do a six minute mile the other guys Yeah, I was like, right behind him. And I'm like, shit, man, I'm gonna do try to do

like, these three will be the top three runners. And like, I it's less pressure on me. So the gun goes off, and they sprint down the road. And then after about a mile and one kids on the side of the road throwing up, mile half, I passed the second kid. It's a two mile mark, the other kids walk in, and we end up winning by the skin of it. But at the end, I'm like, what, like what happened guys are like, I don't know, I'm like, You know what happened and fucking residency Academy? You know, like, the glory days were only three years ago, man. And I think that's the mentality of people is like, maybe they don't even realize where they're at. They're living in the good old days of two or three years ago. The fitness is so perishable, it's like, like you're not you're living to make her leave lives, man.

 James Geering 1:12:31

Absolutely. Well, speaking of running is a great segue. You start off being as you self described, unremarkable athlete, you get into initially law enforcement, then a very physical side of law enforcement. Walk me through your journey into the endurance athlete space, and then talk let's talk about some of the biggest races that have been a part of.

 1:12:56

So it really starts on line around the table where I was still smoking cigarettes. And we're playing this game after dinner is my wife at the time and my two young boys in the courtroom, I see my youngest son, he's pretending to be smoking a pretzel rod. And I catch it and then my blood pressure goes up and I want to yell and for the once in my life, I pause I'm like, he's just trying to be like you the same way you are trying to be like your dad when you walked into Wilson farm, bought those cigarettes. So that night, I quit smoking through my cigarettes out. i The next morning I went to Wegmans or a grocery store, I bought the patch, slap that on my shoulder and never looked back. So then I said I gotta be a better role model. So I, I started going to the gym, we're in a brand new building had a brand new gym, I'm like, I'm not gonna waste my lunch hour convincing with the guys around the table. I'll go work out for a half an hour. And so I thought I was training I wasn't but I get on the treadmill and I lift some weights. And after four months, I'm like, I feel good man. Like, I want to show my boys how their dad turned over a new leaf. And so we I sign us all three up for a 5k They're preteens. They're like nine and 11 Or maybe 10 and 12. And so I get there and I'm like, listen, boys just follow the crowd. I need you to finish line. Well, long story short, they both be preteen sons Beathard dad who thinks he's in shape or hot shit or a role model. And I was crushed. Just absolutely crushed on the way home they were so proud. And I was so happy for him but inside I knew I was rotting away. And I that's when I first realized that I was going through the motions that anytime shit got hard or uncomfortable. I will just back off, wasn't training wasn't working out. It was just showing up. So eventually, i i That day I decided I'm like you're going to it's going to be meaningful, whatever you're going to do now. And I slowly started running. And I got on the SWAT team. And that was a huge, huge thing for me when I started to get around hard, hard men, mentally and physically hard. and wanting to be like these people that I would call my mentors, and they would they refuse to give up. And if they got it wrong, they would do it until they got it right and training. There's no, there's no half stepping. And I got around these guys, and one of them was Todd Baxter, who was one of the leaders on the SWAT team. And I remember one day, after a hard day of training, I just wanted to go home and eat with the kids and go to bed. And I heard him whisper to someone that he was going to run 80 miles that night, he was training for a marathon. And I thought that was the most fucking ridiculous thing

I've ever heard in my life. I could barely stand up in these hard sweat training days. And that lit a fire. So I really got into so because people on the surface would be like you traded one addiction for another you traded smoking for ultra marathon, your distance racing, which is not true. This is a period of five years, when I first quit smoking to my first half marathon. And I beat Todd faster than a half marathon. But like the God of gods, like somehow I beat him. He was running the academy at the time, the PT, he was just seen as he was a fitness guy came out of the military. So then, after that, I was like things started opening it up. And there's these perfect storms that I call them in my book, all these things lined up. And what really started it all was I got done with that half marathon. I just built my own house. I mean, I literally built it with my own hands with the help from friends and my dad, which was still probably the hardest thing I've ever done in my life was to physically I did almost 90% of the work myself didn't hire very little out. So I had this time on my hands. I had run that half marathon, we were fortunate enough to go down and tre and use the Nate the dev group, SEAL Team Six or whatever. People call them use their facility for a week of training because we met them while they were training up here. And they really appreciated all the stuff we did and they made a swim. And I swam as a child at the YMCA not very on the swim team coming in last place drinking a lot of water. But they made a swim. And that kind of came back to me. And then I saw this bicycle when I was moving into my new house is old Schwinn. And I'm like, You know what, I'm gonna be a fucking Ironman. I don't even know what I don't even know what the distance was. And this was in 2006. And I'm like, I'm gonna be an Ironman and I looked it up and I was like food shipment was that you know, that 2.2 mile swim 112 mile bike in a 26.2 mile marathon. And the only thing I've done up to there was a half marathon. And all the people all the experts on the interweb all the experts that I knew were like never do an Ironman your first year of training you build up to it, like cuz you did like, and I even at that time, very good friend of mine died very young. And I'm like tomorrow's promises no one so I got after half fire or full Ironman training way over my fucking head like it. It was hard. But I that's when I know that mental toughness was sticking to me from my SWAT boys. And I went and did my Ironman in 2007. And that was really the spark where I realized middle of the pack finisher, don't get me wrong, like, like middle of the pack towards the rear, probably. But I did it. And that was that was really the first time I experienced personal greatness in my life was when I built my own house. But after nine months, I saw this thing that wasn't there before that almost broke me as a man. And then I did this Ironman, and I was but I was still backing away from the flame man I like with Discover calm, I couldn't lean into it. I got to where maybe I could, I could just stand there. But usually I back away a little bit. And then two years later, I did another Ironman trained a little different. I felt my mind shift slowly shifting a little bit. But it wasn't until like a half, you know, and then ultramarathon came and that was a perfect storm where a DEA agent I knew I ran into him. And he's like, Hey, Brett, you want to you want to pace me an ultra marathon and lock. And I said the only thing I fucking understood that Hulk and whole conversation Brian was locked because that's where I'm from. I don't know what you mean. Cigar you run on the canal path 12 miles out 12 miles back. That time it was a 24 hour race. He's like after the first 25 Miles people can run with me. And I'm like, yeah, cool, man. And he told me the date and I had to work that day overtime. And it would have been in retrospect it would have been easy to say well, I have to work till midnight and I can't get out there. And I'm so glad I didn't take the easy way out and and that's one of my mantras is like we got to stop saying no, we got to stop saying no to new experiences because those open so many doors, and that's what this did. And I showed up out there at like two in the morning. In the suffering I saw these ultra marathon officials and credible man, I saw zombies, people like walk inside where he's hunched over, and it was raining, and it was beautiful. And that's when I, I went six and a half miles with that group, Brian. And we walked the entire time. And I remember, again, this is a grand jury, right? Without, you know, talking out my ass. I'm like, where are you going to run, he's like, ah, average, people like us usually end up walking the second half. And in my

mind, I really said, I think I could run this whole thing without a shred of proof. And I remember him taking his shoes off at the end, his feet were like, look like they were in a meat grinder. It was pretty, it was awesome to see that he could still move. And that following year, I went there and I ran 100 miles. That was that was when really the floodgates open. Like, that's when I started to really understand mental toughness and like about naquin.

 James Geering 1:20:56

What changed? What shifted in your mind from last year, as you said, moving away from the flame to finally be able to lean into it?

 1:21:04

I think I think I finally I finally understood that it took a while. But the biggest thing that I took away was I early in my racy, I would look at things and I would say pain often. And I would say hurt off and I'm like oh, like dying tone is blisters, shaping between your legs, heat exhaustion, hypothermia. All that detail, pure exhaustion, sleep deprivation, I would say this hurt that hurt. This was painful. That was painful. And I had an aha moment one day where I thought about it like, at a very deep level that that pain is when you crack your your funny bone on a door jamb. And I said, What do I do when I do that I pull it into my body and rock back and like in the standard fetal position, and you rub it. If you if you bust your toe, you hop around, and you sit down, you pull your toe into your center and you rub it, you burn your hand, you do the same thing. I'm like, I didn't do any of that. So I finally understood man that it was discomfort. I'm like, so I had this little tiny pain silo in my brain that would overflow when I when I first started getting into it. And it would impede everything for them. Like Wait a minute, that's not that's not pain, that's discomfort. And I mentally built this gigantic fucking discomfort silo and I started emptying all that little pain silo into it to where I almost never used the pain silo that I realized that man, this is bearable. Like I only have 50 miles ago, I only have 12 more hours of running. And I really started like be able to lean into that into that flame and the other. The other big thing that propelled me was emotions. When you experience good emotions, when you're training or running, they're easy to use, like you feel love. You feel joy, you feel courage. Happiness, like those are easy. They easy fuel man, like someone shows up on a race course cheering you on someone you love, you're like, oh, man, you start sprinting and you're like, Oh my God, and you feel good for a little bit. But like when you're doing Ultra distance racing, chances are, you're gonna get more the flipside of that point, you're gonna get hate fear, and you're gonna get sorrow and all that. And I'm like, How can I use that, because I feel a lot more of that than I do the others. And that's really where I, where I shifted my my way of training and racing is now. So when I started feeling those good emotions, I would run any faster or swim any faster or blink any faster. I would perfectly purpose purposely try to slow my brain down. So I can live in that second and enjoy it for as long as I can. I would maintain my same pace. And I would just try to ride that out, right? Every every second millisecond of those good feelings. And then when the bad ones come, that's when I would go faster. I'd be like, fuck you. Those are little demons telling me to slow down or those are demons getting a blister or dying toenail. And I'd be like, you're not going to you're not going to keep me down. And then the harder I went, the less it was less painful repeat because I felt like I was winning over those demons. And when I put those two things together, it was incredible. It was it was really what what happened as my first 100 mile race. I finished in 21 hours 21 hours and 52 minutes. So just under 22 hours in everyone's like that's awesome in the finisher beat me by four hours. He

looked like he was running a five Que the entire time and I said, I didn't know they made humans like that. He looked comfortable. I looked like I was dying. Part of me was dying. But as I didn't know, they did that. And then four years later, I went and ran a race in honor of a police officer. We lost, Daryl Pearson was murdered in the line of duty. And I ran 17 hours and 52 minutes the exact fucking time four years later that the guy I thought was a God had done, you know, beat me and my first race. And that was like, I didn't have gene therapy. I didn't have God didn't give me new lungs or legs. I discovered just comfort and using bad emotions, and started putting that all together. And I was like, Holy shit, man. Like, that's, that's really where personal greatness still came in fourth in that race, I don't win races, I'm still that gray man. But like inside, like I felt it. I just saw this, this level of greatness, that personal greatness that was just, like, almost addicted.

 James Geering 1:26:00

Well, you mentioned the Grey Man, that's a that's a phrase that I've heard a lot against specialists in the Special Operations community. But I think it's, I was telling my son the other day, it's really I think, have a natural place for a lot of us to be in the problem is, at the moment with social media. And you know, the way that a lot of politicians peacock around at the moment, is, it's the opposite of the gray man. It's the Look at me generation at the moment. And again, I'm touring a lot of people with the same brush. But when you look at tribal humans, you know, apart from maybe the witch doctor and achieve, everyone else was a member of the community. You know, it wasn't, you know, Steve's got great hair hair, and Sandra has a great day. You know, we're all, we're all ants working together for the greater good. So talk to me about what gray man means to you through your career. And then and then walk me through deciding to write the book.

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So I, where I first discovered Grey Man was teaching at the police academy. And there would be, say, 40 recruits, and I call them kids 40 recruits in there. And after the first maybe two or three weeks, I could tell you who the top four were, who the studs were. And I can tell you who the bottom four were who needed much work. And those other 32 in the middle, I didn't know their names, they all blended together. Because because they weren't shiny objects. And there was in the funny ones, the shiny objects were shiny for two different reasons, because some are really good, and some are really bad. And I noticed that was a flaw in my teaching. I'm like, just the good people the really good and the really bad. They're not the ones who only ones who need help. It's those ones in the middle, the gray man, I swear, like, you know, there's an 8020 rule, like the one economics I think was a Peretti. And so I believe that if you look at society, and I don't care if it's where you work in a in a fire department, if it's a sports team, if you take all the quarterback starters and, and backups in the NFL, you would have 10% at the top half, who are very, very, very good at what they do, you'd have 10% of the bottom half that aren't that good at what they do. They still make the NFL but you know, NFL standards not that good. Then those 80% in the middle, very Shades of Grey, that you probably wouldn't even know their names. But my thing was with the gray man is we're the we're not bad people man we try organizations for where the bulk of the workforce were the bulk of the people in a fire department or in a police department you know there's only Michael Jordan didn't win championships just because Michael Jordan there's other people on that team that that him the ball that were also productive. They just weren't as great as him. So they gray man at first you

know, you would think is a negative connotation but that's the majority of us majorities of us will never be like globally great at what we do. But we try freaking hard man and we do that we do the best we can with what we have. And so that's where that's where gray man where I felt my entire life was that guy that was overlooked no stimulus, just blending together. And and, and so we're finally where I finally figured it out was that is the to be great in my own skin. Was that was truly like what the book is about is not comparing ourselves to the Joneses are keeping up with this or that. And we have a problem in society right where, where it's hard for people to be happy for other people. Like it's like some somewhat of a society of one uppers or, like it's hard for people to say hey, man, you did a great job instead of saying Oh, my cousin did that reason he finished like five minutes fashion years ago. Like I don't care about your cousin, like Sorry, but I don't. In in so that whole that's a whole premise that we can still feel personal greatness. And it's not it's not at a global level. And I think that I think that once you once you get past that, like once you once you start framing that in that context, that's where you truly don't prepare yourself, right? Like my 100 mile race may be someone else's 5k. And I'm not any greater than you are. But I hate when people look at me and say, Ah, he's got jeans or he's he, you know, God gave him this guy to give me a gosh darn thing other than, you know, put me on this planet, like anything that that I did that I developed along the way. Because I started figuring things out that worked for me that, you know, that may not necessarily work for others.

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James Geering 1:30:46

When I wrote my book, it was the same kind of philosophy. I wasn't at the World Trade Center, or the Vegas shooting or the notre DOM fire or the Grenville tower fire, I was the other 99% of the fire service that day in day out, put their uniform on check their gear, and responded to calls for 24 hours. And I wanted to reflect that. I mean, how they been to that event, of course, I would have written about that too. But so many of us are the backbone, and I think especially in the fire, so I always find that the phrase like firefighter of the year, a very strange face, like the best firefighter who they're all out there doing the same job. Some of them are even doing it for free. But I agree with you 100% It's, it's being the best version of yourself is extremely important. But that shouldn't have a barometer against other people. And even if you watch for example, the documentary The weight of gold, and the people that do reach the pinnacle of their sport, over and over again, they report that that feeling lasted minutes, and then their identity was questioned because they're like, Okay, now what? I am the world's best pole vaulter, but now what? You know, so, I think that that's what I love about the book and the concept that you came up with. I've heard gray man as far as blending in, but being okay with that, being proud to be a cog in a positive functional machine. Rather than being you know, the the centerpiece at the top of it.

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1:32:13

Yeah, and and let's face it, man, there's only there's only so many centerpieces, right, and there's there's always these tons of chairs around on their plates and everything else. And again, that's us. I just and I think what also helped me along the way, was early in my racing, I started raising money for charities and and, you know, that's another you know, motivation has become this dirty word nowadays, like, oh, gosh, you know, discipline, discipline, discipline and discipline Trumps motivation. But motivation is beautiful man, like, when, like that first 100 miler. What happened was the same officer or the same investigator to get Huntington's disease. I knew I was gonna grow as a human for running 100 miles. Like I knew somewhere

along the way, man, I was gonna find a better version of me. I wasn't sure what it was. And I meant I was I was, I was scared or at least nervous going into it. I knew that, you know, I was gonna, I was gonna die or you know, try or die like I was, it was I was never not gonna finish lesson was catastrophic. But I want to I want to someone else's benefit. So I asked Billy Lawler. I said, Hey, man, I want to raise money in your name for Huntington's disease. He's like, Yeah, that's cool. Then three weeks later, like, it was just tragedy, there was a sergeant Billy Mahoney, who just had nicest like, the nicest guy when he asked you how you were doing? He didn't ask you, like, as you know, wrote, or like just off the cuff, like he truly looked in your eyes, man. He wanted to know how you were doing. They always had this infectious smile. And he felt rundown for a couple of months. And almost like he had flu, but without those symptoms. And so finally, one day at work, he checks himself in the hospital, he can't take it anymore. He's got this weird infection around his heart. And they prep him for surgery and he dies on the table. And I'm talking like 40 leaves behind three kids and a wife. So I was like, oh, gosh, man, I want to raise money for his family, but I don't want to renege honey him so I call they're running for the bills, Bill Lawler and Billy Mahoney. You know, as you know, we raised just no social media. I'll add almost social media probably was a thing that I don't know. But I certainly wasn't added. But word of mouth policemen firemen. 18 grand raised. And so like that was like, There's no way I was never not going to not going to finish that race and his wife. Abilities wife showed up a couple times during the race. It was just like that motivation of finishing. And usually every time I do something, you know, I try to include some type of organization. Special Olympics is a really big one. For me. I just love love that it's such an inclusive organization. We have a Veterans Outreach Center here which is As awesome they have homeless shelter for vets now. Just get them job skills, incredible organization. I'm all in all the time Foundation, which was the Saudis navy seals that they came up to train in Rochester. And I didn't even know who they are. No one really told us they introduced me to these guys with big beard long hair. And I'm like, Who are these dudes? Man? Only thing I know is whatever they do, they take your job pretty frickin serious man, because they had, like, they were scary looking. I don't even know that they what they were until later, I asked him the third dev crew guys, and I'm like, holy shit. And so we set them up with all these locations to train and we were the bad guys that got shot up and submunitions and we go out with them every single night, they would go out for dinner and have some beers. And you know, they wouldn't, they wouldn't storytel But they, I was fascinated how smart they were. And like, they knew something about everything and everything about something. Like just, it was phenomenal to hear them talk about things. And two of them became like I became, like, closer with one guy we call Lemo. And the other guy is Tommy Valentine. And then a couple so that when they they appreciate it so much and I come down to damnit. So we split our teams, we went out alternate weeks use their facilities, which was cool as hell, they've left a huge thumbprint on our team to this day for our tactics and the way the way we trained the way we run operations. It was really incredible. Like we would go training throughout the country. And these other these trainers who also were either seals or SF guys, or Marine Raiders or Rangers, and they're like Rochester, where the fuck do you guys come from? And where do you learn to do what you do man? Like, we don't see this except for where we worked. And like, and that was like the highest praise you could get as these guys would be like, Rochester and what do you guys like how you doing this stuff is a local part time SWAT team. Now I thought that was the coolest like the biggest compliment we could get paid. And unfortunately Tommy Tommy died in a halo training out in Arizona. So as we started this foundation, all in all the time that they provided a gap money, like before the insurance before the government when he came so paying off paying car loans, mortgages, groceries until you know whatever took some of the funeral costs. So like really appreciative and that that was like the impetus one day when I I did my fastest 100 mile race we talked about and I was a little banged up like in the knees just a little bit. It was early raised, like I think it was in May. And I didn't think I wanted to do another 100 miler. And that's when I

had this crazy idea that we live by the Great Lakes and I'm like, you know, there's navy seal. So I'm gonna swim across Lake Ontario one. I didn't know it was a thing. I just I live by the lake, I stopped on a ride home one day. And I relived a moment I had with my best friend who was a state trooper who died very young. And I'm like, I looked across the lake, you can see you can't see Canada from where I live. And I'm like, I'm just from across his pitch. And I went home. And I started to research. I'm like, it's a thing. Like, oh, what do you mean, it's a thing like it actually there's a route. It's from Fort Niagara to Toronto, it's 32 miles. I think I was like the 54th or 55th person to do it. And to raise money for Tommy. And, like, what was different about that swim than running or doing like an Ironman or double Ironman was, I felt like the water was trying to fucking kill. Like the environment was trying to kill me. So when you're running, and I did this 100 miler Key West with my son II Karoubi. I was boiling. So I jumped in the air conditioned van and I cooled down for five minutes, which was the worst when I got out. I was stiff as a board. I'm like, Zack, don't ever let me do that again. Man, this is a horrible idea. Or if you're running, you could sit down for a second and change your shoes. But when you're in that lake water, it just it's relentless. You have to constantly move, I can't float. And it's just always tugging at you trying and trying to hurt you in some way. And, you know, I went through bouts of like really cold water, which is unexplained, unexplained people warn me and I'm like it's a bowl of water, a giant bowl of water. It's all the same temperature, if that's not true, so I hit Arctic. I had hypothermia a few times, like literally, you know pale white, purple. Let's quiver and hit waves that also blew up in the middle of the night when it wasn't supposed to blow up. I ended up getting some type I'm pretty sure it was probably like a virus or bacteria. I started VAs stop diarrhea has swim on like swim trunks around my ankles because I just literally can't stop shitting and then they all kind of have and all at once all over again. But like ultimately was like 21 hours and change man every key other side there. And it was it was incredible to do that for Tommy and his wife. His widow was Christina was sending me messages along the swim it's pretty damn cool

 James Geering 1:40:23

it's amazing. Obviously, it was like, emotions still hitting you now.

 1:40:28

Oh, yeah, sure they do, you know. Like that that up until that point like that was that was hard. Like that was, you know, shoulders were felt like there was little shreds of glass in them. And I remember I got down and like I had like naysayers and like, he's a really great guy, this doctor, I know, he's like, you may have permanent damage, I couldn't lift my shoulders, like I couldn't eat, I had to use, I had to tape of four to a tape of four to a knife to elongate it. And I couldn't get my shoulders up like or, you know, couldn't shake my head. And they all came back and everything. But it was a like, just, you know, watching, I started the five at night thinking Lake be calm, and then watching that moon go across the sky the entire time swimming. And it was it was awesome. Like, if I look back at it. I'm not sure I would ever do it again. But it was like that was up until that point. That was that was just incredible effort. Except for time you like, you know, it's not as nationally known. Not for profit. So to raise that kind of money for those folks who's just just incredible.

 James Geering 1:41:41

So we've touched on the mental health side, when it came to, you know, addiction. What about your own journey? I mean, all those years in law enforcement and then the transition out? What would the highs and lows for you personally.



1:41:55

Um, I think I think the transition, I was easy error for me than most people. Because once I hit 20 years that we could retire at 20 years of the half pay. I love being a cop and the union guys will probably get mad at me. But 90% of the time, I felt like they paid me too much money for my job. I had a great job. I loved it, like, like nobody's business. And then 10% of the time, like you're not paying me enough, but you're certainly not paying me enough. So when I decided to stay on, I knew I was going to stay for 32 years, like that's the max you can get for pension benefits. If you stay after 32 years, you're literally working for a couple of dollars an hour, because what your pension would be and what they're paid. So when I reached 32 years, that was in 2020. Like that was a clean separation because that was the end of the the ultra marathon. Like I crossed the finish line. I was like double middle fingers like man like I still love coming to work. But I have a lot of shit I want to do my life still. And and I think what it really hit me and we talked about mental health was before I retired, like eight months is was my last academy class because they were about a year apart. And a really great guy that I had worked with paper net. He was one he was retired as a commander, one of my mentors as a young surgeon, he taught me how to become a leader. He put the iron on all these recruits that I had trained and people that worked for me he bought me this like garmin fenix six watch. And like a \$900 watch was my going away gift from the Academy. And when I wore it, it measures your stress level I'm not sure you know whether it's correct or not, that's still believe it's a baseline even if a scale is messed up, if you use the same scale, like it's it'll tell you if you're gaining weight or losing weight. So I always thought that I handled stress very well on the job like when I stacked up on a door to go through for SWAT after a while like you know, I think you talked about it in your book is yeah, there may there may be some some stress but you put that to the side so you can do your job but you can't. You can't be all stressed out when you're trying to stop a guy who's bleeding out from his femoral artery, right like you can't be trying to put on a tourniquet and being all Helter Skelter, you put that to the side and you do your job and then after maybe even think about it. So, you know, it wasn't like I was like, in fear of my life going through doors and crashing doors. But my watch when I worked would be around 40 Whatever that means for my stress level for zero. And then when I got into retirement, it would barely crack the 20s It'd be in the teens. So I'm like whatever that measures I'm only feeling half of it now that I retired. So I didn't believe there was any stress and I go back to when I worked Midnight's on the job. I worked Midnight's for my family, and we're not meant to sleep during the day and when we sleep during the day we don't sleep as much as we should because and I got off Midnight's finally my wife's like take Guys, you were a fucking asshole. You were a complete miserable prep. And I didn't know I'm like I thought I'm doing great man as a dad as a husband, you know, is a cop. And so I think it was that same thing like you don't think you're under stress. But however, there's always that stress, whether it's from the actual job or the administration. So I had I had a clean, I had a clean break coming through there. I think probably the, in retirement what what hit me, the hardest so far was that, you know, we had another officer murdered in the line of duty, Tony mazurka, which, and he was my age of, you know, maybe a year or two younger than me. And when we have that when a police officer, Darrell Pearson, was killed eight years before him. I was on the job. And I was there amongst, you know, amongst the men he worked with, because our units were close together. And I had that, that circle of workers around me and co workers and friends. And I felt extremely sorry for

him. But when when Tony died last year, I had this like survivor's guilt. I'm like, he should be like me retired, he was going to retire in January, actually, of this year. So he got killed July of last year, six months from when he wanted to retire with 30 years in. And I remember being at the funeral, and I was with these guys and my age, were all retired and reaping the benefits. And I'm like, it was it was epically sad, and I had guilt that he had died. And then, you know, I don't I wasn't around my, my, my boys and my girls anymore at work. So I think it was a little harder to deal with that death also. Because, you know, I have a very loving girlfriend, and I have sons, and I have friends. But you know, some people, you know, don't understand that as well as maybe the people you work shoulder to shoulder with. So I think that that was that was hard. That was hard for me to, to bear witness to that death. It's a guy that like you would never, he was amongst the chaos, but you wouldn't ever think he would just for some reason when they said he died. I'm like, No, he did for two weeks. Like I think I was in denial. I think there's no way that Tony was killing, you just would not believe that Tony could be killed and that he would be killed. Because it was it was it was hard, very hard.

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James Geering 1:47:30

Well, this is what's so sad. I think at the moment, we're losing so many to murderer aside from obviously, by their own hand, which I think is double that figure again. But we're losing so many that they just become another another name. Another day, you know, but every single one of these people, as you said some of them were weeks, months, days from retirement, some of them were weeks, months, days from the academy, they just got on the job. And it's just it circles back in my opinion to this prohibition conversation where I always ask the question, why are the streets of Oslo not filled with gangbangers? You know, why are the the Norwegian police not walking around like they're in Fallujah? When are we going to have that conversation? It's not just law enforcement responsibility to to you know, to not hurt someone when they're restraining them and not pull their weapon at the wrong time. When are we going to talk about why are off I can streets so dangerous, and why are our police officers getting murdered on a daily basis?

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Is you know, you hit two points Volusia in like the apathy nowadays. And so the tooth The two officers that were murdered in a line of duty for Rochester were in the same unit, the tactical unit. And it's like I say that like we're not Susan falooda. Man, this is a city in the United States. And you lose two officers in the same unit eight years apart. Some something is inherently wrong. And what really bothered me also about Tony mazurka was being killed is we had somewhat of a yardstick and you're not going to compare two men died for their country or died for their community. But like when Darryl died, his story was in the news cycle for months. And part of it was because we hadn't had an officer killed in the line of duty since the 50s. That was part of it. And back then eight years ago, people still people love the cops. So there was fundraisers galore that he's constantly in the in the paper in the news. And then when Tony dies last year, it his death dies within a new cycle. I'm looking around for the fundraisers and they're nowhere near the amount at that time. And you know, part of it it was may have been apathy because he was the second one kill, you know, since the 50s. The other one was there still all that residual stink from being demonized and vilified. You know, over those last two or three years because of few fucking criminal cops. And then we all got painted with that same brush that BLM swept in, and before you know it, everyone hated cops. The people that are

there to protect the community. So like that, that like struck me hard man. And like, I was mad, I was disappointed that he did not receive that the recognition that he deserved for given his life. And that was the whole, honestly, the whole impetus to me, you know, I just got done with eight states for mass. And that was a whole reason was to spread the word of Tony sacrifice and to raise some money and emotional support for his family like, that was it and that the whole thing behind it,

 James Geering 1:50:36

I can't even imagine what it's like being the widow or widower, or, you know, the children of a first responder, especially a police officer, who left that family home every day to go serve and protect complete strangers, and then they're killed. And then there's that vitriol, you know, toxic nastiness. And rather than at least respectfully honoring that first responder who was killed. There's this anti police rhetoric that has peddled on so many of our news agencies, and then the, the heartbreak and the, you know, just the, it's disgusting to think that family was the one that sacrifices we know, alongside us, the family goes through it as well. And that officer didn't leave saying, Oh, I'm gonna go kill this type of person today. I always say if you want to do that, then go join the extremist group. That's how you kill people that you don't like these other people that are first responders, some of them maybe should never get hired, hence the example you just use. But most of these men and women leave the very nucleus of their world, their wife, their husband, their children, to go protect other people, number of times, I drove towards a hurricane where it was bearing down on my family home. This is what these men and women do. And so we owe it to them, to honor them, remember them and fucking snuff this anti law enforcement rhetoric because of the inner the few. And like I said, it goes back to what we talked about earlier, you don't say, you know, the prohibition of the war on drugs is working, because I tried it the other way once. And there were three addicts that didn't work for. So we're just going to No, this is this is, you know, this extreme mentality that we have. You have to affect the masses, not the extremes. And then I think COVID has been a perfect example of when you allow the outside wings, to have these these voices, the middle normal people lose every fucking time.

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So and you know, there's so many points there. And the one is, well, the big one is so after this, this thing for eight states for mass, what I thought was, was a huge win is Harry Smith, who, who's he's on the Today Show, and he was on national news. And he tells these great stories, he's a storyteller. And he picked up this eight states for mass and he put a great thing together with with the with Lynn, Tony's widow, some of Tony's co workers, and it airs on the Today Show, which most people could say are left leaning, of course, like the folks on there. And there's Harry Smith on the couch with the whole staff, or the whole crew of the US of the Today Show. And it shows this he just did a tremendous job of of explaining how we're how we're human beings behind the shield and how much pain is Lynn is in and at the very end, he looks at all of them the county's like you know, when these officers are murdered in line of duty or killed, we we need to stop we need to stop and pause for a second and think about what had happened and not just let it go off by and he's like kind of lecturing these people on the couches and I was like, maybe this is like part of the turning point. Like maybe this is it were and they were all nod their head and I think none of us said anything because I think they're all gonna cry when they saw this episode. It was so incredible. But the other part of that is when I

did this h days for mass. I did I didn't watch any news the entire time. So real quick, so eight states for mass was 20 was working with work in the tactical unit, which has a number designator of eight. So all the units in Rochester have a number. So one day it hits me I said I want to do something for him. I want to raise money. I like to run a lot. So in the middle of the night I wake up I'm like eight states for maths. I'm gonna run through eight states do a marathon 26.2 miles a day, originally was 48 days for 50 days run from Florida to New York, spread the word of Tony sacrifice all along the way and raise money for the family. So what I tell people is I've met hundreds and hundreds of so many kind, decent, caring, generous, law abiding law supporting folks I met the fabric of America and the ground frickin floor and it's Beautiful, unlike the amount of people that gave me their last dollars to give to the family, the people, the strangers that hug me, and offer condolences for a man they'd never ever met. Tony mazurka was a hero was just incredible that he was. I left there I left Florida. And in in middlee, a cup half full kind of guy. I've always tried to keep a positive outlook, I always look on the better side of things I finished with a cup runneth over type of attitude by the time I got done, because I'm like, regardless, whether we see it as in like you had touched on, it's the fringes, man is the fringes on both sides of the aisle, the big loudmouth that gets the most press, the most social media attention trying to push their distorted views on the rest of us. But we're the super majority man, we still are, and we will let them change our way of life. And I tell two stories. I'm gonna have hundreds of stories from this run. But real quick to one is I'm in. I'm in ED Ray, West Virginia. And for some reason, in West Virginia, there's a church about every hospital every 200 yards. I'm like, there's a lot of religious people of West Virginia, like, so during the week, we would park in the church parking lot every three miles, I would have to get something to eat or drink and then go on my merry way to the marathon was done. So I'm doing the P Ron. Like, I'm almost pee in my pants. I'm like, oh, man, a pickup truck. And like, Please don't be in a church parking lot. And around the corner. There he is right in a church parking lot right in the middle of it. No cars. And I see this old couple actually. I'm like, gosh, like God's gonna be mad at me now. And so I see this elderly couple, they're in their mid 80s trying to get in the front door of the church. And you could tell they couldn't get in because they were kind of frail. So I was going to help them but they finally got to say, so I get my Gatorade on my j then I gotta pee. So I get on the other side of the truck. You know, I'm like, Please, God, forgive me, man. I just got to go home. So I go. Next, I run off I have this three and a half mile mountain climb up this giant mountain, just relentless. And as Jay is getting ready to leave, the lady comes out her name is Jean. And Jean says it'd be rude if I didn't come out and say hello to you. invite you in our church. And so Jay Do we had 30 minutes to kill before he needed to see me so it goes inside. They're really proud that they just restored this church back to his late 1800s granddaughter. One of the parishioners who had recently passed away hand painted the mural on the ceiling to replicate how it was they were so proud of this church. So that she asked, she asked Jay like, what are you guys doing here? Like what are you guys what's going on? And he he tells her of eight states for mass. So she reaches into her purse and she pulls out three tri folded \$5 bills. And I remember my grandma used to keep her money that way, like neatly trifold in her little satchel. And she pulls out three of them and puts it in Jays hand clutches his hand and says this is all the money I have. I wish we had more to give to the family. So Jay tries not to take the money. And Bob's like, Hey, Bob stands up at five years old. He's like, Listen, I've been trying to argue with Jean for the last 60 years. Not gonna work like jean jacket has to take no take the money so on. And so that gene hugs gene hugs. J You know, blesses him for safe travels on the remainder of the marathons and tells him to bless me. So, like, you know, that's the fabric of America. So now I'm three miles up this hill, and I'm literally barely holding my whole, my legs are full lactic acid. My lungs are burning. I'm like, pissed. And I meet me on the side of the road and I start drinking my Gatorade. He tells me the story. And I'm like, Oh my god. Tears are welling my eyes slammed like Gatorade down. I started sprinting. He's like, where are you going? I'm a nice spring sprinted that last half mile.

And when I usually went up these giant climbs, like they would beat me up pretty good. And I would get emotional at every climb. I'd get to the top when I knew I was at the top. Because a lot of times they're just switchbacks. And I'm like I made it. Now like, oh, this bitch will let me out. Now another switchback. In other words, when I finally knew I was on the top, I would usually do double middle fingers. And I would just scream like fuck you. You can't keep me down to the mouth. And this time I remember not doing that, but just thanking God for biology and thanking God for all the people that are like Jean and Bob in this in this country that understand right from wrong and honored heroes and giving, giving of themselves for someone they don't know. And it was just incredible. And the other story real quick was I'm going to all we were in Elkins, West Virginia, my 125 miles down the road, and I was with two different guys helped me. They had worked with Tony. They were good friends with Tony. And they're like, let's go to all up buffet One dude is like 400 pounds on with like 350. He looks like a linebacker he can. He can literally eat nonstop. The other guy ran, who was a reg Walsh protege who hates running, I call my surrogate son. His name is Matt Pataki. He ran an entire marathon with me that day, and he's not a runner and he hates running. But he's like, I'm gonna just do it because I can't, which he did. So he's starving. Me I'm burning 6000 calories a day. So I felt bad when we decided to go to all you can eat buffet cuz I'm like, we're gonna pay for up these poor people. Like they're gonna have to go, they're gonna go under or gone. Get new supplies. You walk in the door, there's this nice lady behind the counter. We pay her and I find out she's just not the cashier, but she's the waitress. She's at times the dishwasher. And she's actual owner of the place trying to keep it afloat, during like super tough times. So we're eating she comes over every five minutes gets the dirty plates make small talk super nice. Finally, Hey, what are you guys doing here with your strange New York's accents in West Virginia, and I tell her about eight states from us. And I tell her about Tony like, not how we guide as a hero. But how he lives as a hero as a father, a husband of grandpa, a brother, a son, great street cop. How he didn't need to be in that unit. He could have retired on duty could have put his feet up at some desk somewhere and just rode his career out but why did a be amongst the chaos? Why the train the younger officers on how to do the job right. And their eyes start welling up. She reaches into her food state apron pulls out all the tips she made that day. \$9 So here, you take all my tip money. I wish I could give you more but I don't have anymore. gave me a hug that's the fabric of America. It's alive and well. You know sometimes I learned that very true lesson that sometimes when you give man you give you get so much more back when you never ever expect to be I didn't have expectations going into these runs. Other than I was going to raise money for the family but like it changed my life. Like I like I said I'm a cup runneth over guy like I saw the fabric. Just freaking beautiful.

J James Geering 2:02:16

I've had this echoed so many times with people that have done events that have taken them over a long way. There's a guy he was on TV. Several years ago now Leo Leo, Leon Logue leaked, oh, my goodness, Leon logo. Thetis is a Greek last name. But he was the the kindness diaries. They were the kindness guy. And he went from, I mean, literally through countries relying solely on the kindness of others. And it was it was, you know, a kind of pilgrimage slash test. But he was able to document all these complete strangers, this weird Englishman going through their country and helping them another guy, Paul Harris, or just how there's a Royal Marine who walks all the way around the British Isles, the entire perimeter. And now as we speak, he pulled finished it and was like, I think I'm gonna walk back and he says, reverse, reverse, absolutely lunatic, but these people all say the same thing. Over and over and over and over again, the hospitality the community, the love, these are the British people, these are the American people. And this is what drives me crazy is we these extremists that we allow to

have seats in the White House, both fucking last administrations, for example, this divisive things, they're speaking, they have no they have no right to speak for us, the middle at whatever percent of normal people that are just trying to, you know, put a roof over our families has foods in their stomach close on their back, and just live together and educate our children and, you know, empower our first responders to be the best version of themselves and protect their communities. And, you know, hope advocate to only send our children of war if it's absolutely necessary, but if that's the case, to to give them all the training and equipment that we need, I mean, as so many middle of the road common sense conversations, you know, not having an obese nation fighting to get the health back Chair of addressing the mental health crisis. These are community based altruistic principles that are discarded by these extremes. And I agree with you 100% The storytelling needs to be that the average American the average Englishman or woman, or you know, however you want to describe the community of a country are good, good people. And we the masses in the middle need to reclaim that narrative and fucking knock these pieces of shit out of these spotlights that are projecting their opinions that basically a vast majority of people disagree with from both sides.



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Yeah, and it's, you know, not to get on the politician bashing anymore. You go to politics, and you come out a couple years later as a billionaire who who you serve? And you serve in yourself? Like, how do you become a millionaire? When you went in there without a platypus? And or a window to throw it out? Then you look at COVID? For example, how did our our country missed a boat? The prime, the prime thing for COVID should have been, hey, we need to get healthy as a nation. Like, how do we missed that you tell? I just read I read a book and and I'm reading it now. And there's some studies in there. And they're like, the 63% of people hospitalized could have been changed. You're just through diet, not even exercise, that people just change their diets. And I'm like, how do we not make that the priority of COVID to make our country healthier? And there wasn't any mention it was the mention of just get the shot, and it'll be fine. When what's the long term of that? It's like, I was so mad, like, every day, I'm like, Somebody, please champion this cause, like, who's got a voice? Who's got a real voice and not not one person, you know, have have substantial. You know, notoriety was like, other than, you know, people like like you and like us. But we don't have, we don't have audiences of millions and zillions of people is, man, let's just get healthy. Let's just Let's just exercise. Let's, let's do this bar thing. And there's a guy I think, Greg, maybe Walsh talked about having I was Tyler mitten. Who's a nutritionist. I follow him on Instagram. He's an ex UFC fighter. And it was like wickedly smart. But But, but, but for me dumbs it down to where I can understand it. My, my favorite thing is, is if your dog was overweight, what die? Would you put them on? Question mark, he's like, there is no diet, you would feed them less and walk them more. Like, that's the key to it. Like, I remember a guy at work once he was getting ready for his wedding. He was obese. And he goes, Hey, Sarge, like, I really need like, like, the top secret thing for losing weight. Like, I know, there's like just like a gimmick like a secret thing? And can you just tell me and I'm like, Eat less workout more like it's a deficit. It's a deficit thing? And he's like, no, no, seriously, like, what, like, what else? Like, there is nothing else, there's nothing else there, there. It just doesn't exist. And people think, you know, now we we want to buy everything or we it's the knee now thing. Like I don't want to I don't want to earn it. I don't want to know about six months from now. I want to lower my cholesterol today. So I'm gonna take this medicine. And I want my arthritis to go or inflammation to go away. So I said are working on it, I want to take ibuprofen. And like I said, it's the me now generation across the country. But to

miss it during COVID was. So it's sad. It's sad, because COVID really didn't change anything other than it probably divided us more because of either the mask issue or and or the jab issue, instead of bringing us together under one common theme of Healthy America. Missed it.

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James Geering 2:08:03

Yeah, I said this, right from the beginning. And like everyone else, of course, we were looking like, what is this thing that supposedly sweeping across the nation first, you know, a couple of weeks or so. Okay, this could be really bad. And, you know, so I think everyone wherever they stood, pretty much everyone said at the beginning, we took it seriously. And then as the you know, two, three weeks, you start hearing how it actually is in China, Italy, wherever it was, like, Okay, this seems like these numbers actually aren't as bad as you think. And so when that first hit, I was hearing this extremist, you know, polarity. And so I'm like, fuck it, I'm going to do an extra episode every week. And find more middle of the road experts so that when people are sitting in their house, maybe just maybe they'll turn on behind the shield and listen to this nutritionist or this strength coach or this doctor who actually is standing in the middle, you know, and but it was the same thing and not just the nutrition side, but the environment. Mother Nature was like, let me show you how I can heal. And everyone was like, Oh, that's amazing. And fuck you Mother Nature and then gloves and you know what I mean it when the polar opposite. But the two sides and I always said this all right, say you are pro vaccination. Your body's ability to take that vaccine and turn it into an immunity in your body depends on the health of your human body. If you don't want to take a vaccine, your ability to stave off the virus depends on the health of your body. So the only truth of that whole year was this make people as mentally and physically healthy as possible. And we came out the back end of that. Obesity got worse mental health got worse. They still cutting PE programs in schools are still serving shitty processed food to our children. So it was never about health. You cannot look me in the fucking eyes and say it was about health because you as you said disregard At the most unique, amazing opportunity of focus, where everyone's eyes are on a screen, to educate and empower people to take control of how they eat, how they move, their time in nature, their mindfulness, practice their understanding of community and family, and you fucking destroyed everything. And you said, stay in your house, we're gonna close all the things that actually make you healthy. We're gonna send fast food and alcohol to your house while you watch Tiger King. That I mean, you could not if you and I wrote down, how would you fucking destroy a country in five easy steps? Exactly what happened during COVID is what you would do, and the polar opposite of what needed to happen. Let the people who are healthy, keep the country running, protect the people who are truly vulnerable, and educate people on all these things. So you can empower them to work on their own health as we're navigating this crisis.

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2:10:56

Yeah, and you just gotta, you gotta hold for some time it it, you know, comes to the forefront, but you know, now I guess we're talking coming into the fall there, like more vaccines, different variants, this and that. And, you know, again, I'd like to be the cup half full guy, but I think if it hasn't happened yet, I'm not. I'm not super confident that is going to, you know, and I'm fairly sure that you know, America is in majority or kind of are definitely over the lockdowns are over the isolation, and you look back on it, and you had mentioned, like, history is not going to run, I look finally upon the people that let people die, you know, alone in nursing homes, or you could visit your, like, people are gonna look kindly upon those people. And you don't and now, you

know, now these people are cut, you know, and I love like, the hypocrisy of is really what kills me like if there's this one on Twitter, and I think he's on the defiant L is a is an Instagram also. And it just shows the high proxy usually of like, you know, people with big miles, whether they're politicians or movie stars or etc. That worked for the government, and how like, just like they're basically you take you take a shot, or you don't deserve health care, then two years later, they're like, We don't need government interfere with our lives. It's like, wait a minute, what are you talking about two years ago, you said we shouldn't get health care if you didn't get shot? And it just I, I think we are definitely I think the and I use this analogy, like when it comes to our health is I get frustrated sometimes and you you walk around a supermarket, or Walmart and fit like 10 years ago, we didn't have those scooters, right. And those scooters. For some people, you got a knee surgery you're coming off of, you know, they're great for some folks. But where the slippery slope is, you know, it's called I call a father time. So the first time you walk into that, and you don't, you don't necessarily without those scooters. 10 years ago, you still got groceries, right? There wasn't Instacart No, you still had to go force yourself to walk around the store, pushing a car and getting your groceries and coming home. And so I think we're a father time is really like where you have to watch with folks, is the first time you decided to get in that scooter because of laziness, because of convenience. Or the first time you do your Instacart order because of laziness or convenience, then it becomes now it becomes your modus operandi, like that's what you do every day. Now you go use that cart, that's less steps you're putting in, that's less output you're putting in. And it's that slippery slope. And I use that with with people all the time. Like, when you when you blow off, I get it, you're tired one day, maybe you don't want to work out, but when it turns into two days or three days, and that slippery slope of five times behind you laughing the entire way, taking a little bit of your fitness. And I think what I think like one of my biggest messes nowadays is when you stop doing hard shit, you stop becoming hard. It's that simple. You stop running, you lose cardiovascular endurance, when you stop lifting weights, you are as strong. And so when you stop doing a hardship in your life, whatever that may look like for you. Do you stop becoming a heart person? And like, it pays to be a heart person really does for every facet of your life to get you through challenges and I was with this guy the other day and he's like, what's your he's like, if someone's struggling, you know, whether it be addiction, mental health, marriage, financial, I'm like, it depends on what what the struggle is, but you just need to make it to the next second. For me when I was running from Florida up here, I didn't make it to the next telephone pole. That was always my goal. And I've started to get like strung out, worn out. And I'm like, you just have to make it to the next second and put 60 of those together for a minute and then put 60 of those together for an hour and make it to the next day and just keep chipping away at because eventually the tides do turn if you put your work in, if you if, if you will it to happen. And you and you want to make it happen bad enough things change in your life for the positive. And so I just say like you have to, you have to be willing to do hard things working out when you don't want to work out or squeezing in a gym session when you know you're feeling tired or you find an excuse not to. And I always say Father Time and next. I know he's like he's probably staring at you right now James behind me. And like that guy is always lurking. And initially, he's really sneaky about it.

J

James Geering 2:15:36

Yeah, he's looking at the omega and they've been sitting down for almost three hours. So I'm going to

o

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2:15:41

write exactly.



James Geering 2:15:43

Well, I want to hit one more area and then go to some closing questions. You mentioned Greg Walsh, Wolf brigade, talking about hard things. I absolutely am loving his programming. I'm actually testing it. I've got a firefighter based fundraiser fitness competition in a couple of weeks. And all I've been doing is the strongman class that I coach, which I also participate in every week, but then the wolf brigade programming so, you know, the Turkish get ups and the mace and all these new movements, and so many hollow rocks, my abs has already come back again. But I'm excited to test it out. Because that's what I do. I don't train for a race, I write fitness, you know, are you good? Or are you not? And it's, it's because I'm not competitive in that race. I use it as a testing ground. Talk to me about how you came across Wolfer gay Greg, and how that served you as far as your endurance side and or your ability to be a tactical athlete in uniform.



2:16:37

So it really came with my first like, immersion into that was through map, Pataki, who's on our SWAT team is still on the team, you know, much younger than me, and he's been with Greg, since Greg opened wolf brigade in his tiny, you know, in their original spot, which is, I don't know, like 400 square feet of space. And I would, I would always catch MATT Like, even through the academy. Like when he got through PT sessions, that guy was a stoic as you could be never showed anything on his face. And then when we got done with hard things, you know, you would stand straight up. And I started once he got on the team. After that, I started picking up these things from him. And ask him like, like, where did you learn this? And he'd be like, you know, you got no hands on knees, no defeated posture, stand up, like you're going to, like, act like you like you can, and you will have to do it again. And like, that was a thing that I've never really taught in the academy until I started learning that from Matt, that came from Greg. And so then Greg would come to our SWAT schools at times. And he would, he would, like, run our recruits through certain skill based, you know, things that he that he would do at his gym, then he'll offer free because Greg's a great guy. And then he was like, he's so detail oriented, and we sees, he sees things that most people cannot see as a trainer, and he's able to connect dots that I don't even know are there. And then he would give us a list of like, this is what SWAT recruits also needs a workout. This is what SWAT recruit needs to work out for him. And I was like, Oh my gosh, like, how does he see this? Like, he's, he's literally I call him like a mad scientist because he sees that things that I can't. And then eventually, three years ago, I went to what they call convergence, which is like the first week of June, it's a two day training session at Woodford. And I'm like these people here from England. Like, there's people here from all over the country. And like, what, like, I didn't realize how influential Greg was and his training. And I always hit it off with Greg. I kind of always understood his mindset, because at times, I could be like, not too flexible on certain things. But what Greg's never flexible on is, like never sacrifice speed, you know, never sacrifice for him for speed. Like it's not, you know, correct form. And I was deadlifting. At the time before I met Greg and like, gosh, I can't believe I didn't blow my my vertebrae out. You know, he corrected all of that for me, that I got into mace that I bought my mace, the first year there, and to really see, you know, and I follow him, obviously, on Instagram, it is his mindset and his training. And what he talks about is like the

minimum effective dose that every day, you don't need to corkscrew yourself in the ground, where then it becomes more of a liability, where you can't you can't function the rest of your day or whatever you're truly trained for. So you're a fire, you're a fireman or a policeman. But your training is so tremendously hard that it impairs you to do your duty later that day. And he trades very smart, very hard, so I'll never take it as being easy. Especially their conditioning part of it but truly that he is he is one of the one World baths and I say that lightly strength and conditioning in the entire world man. He's in Rochester, New York, which I feel so grateful for. And in the people who go in there, it's incredible like Guys and girls, I call the superhumans because you would never believe that these average folks can move the weights as they move, whether it's whether it's traditional barbell lifting deadlifts, bench press, or if you're talking about kettlebells or Turkish get ups or flipping you know, 600 pound tires. It's incredible. Like I anytime I go there, literally, my jaws open and I'm like, I didn't know they could build people like this. And these people didn't go in there. These are gifted athletes. These are like, you know, tier one guys. Or like, you know, people that were Division One standouts in college. So I think what he really what, what best exemplifies Greg is Matt Pataki. So Matt Pataki. When I retired, he told me he read, he told me, he read a book about a Navy SEAL. And the very end, the Navy SEAL said, if you haven't learned something by yourself, just go walk around for a full day. Don't stop moving. And I like that. That's kind of interesting. I, you know, I did races, obviously, like 100 mile races, but it was COVID when I retired. So I said, Matt, you told me about that book, which he didn't remember. And I said, Let's do wandering the earth. And he's like, what's that are like, we're just going to go off for 24 hours. And we're just going to go run and walk in. We'll keep moving. He's like, Yeah, cool. I'm with that. Didn't train. We went like 84 Miles ish. His feet were broken. his ankles were broken. Like he was beat up at the end. But never once did he ever show it in his face. He just kept moving the entire time. And the three months later, I don't think he was healed. He was he was mad. He didn't make 100 miles. It's a 50 mile mark. We were like, eight, nine hours in, oh, man, we're gonna go way over 100. And to myself, I'm like, No, this is when the wheels come off, dude. Like, this is where it's gonna get really frickin heart. And it did. So he calls me up. Three months later, Hey, man, I want to get 100 Miles like Arctic off my house. And that dude ran, he ran 100 miles. In the same time I read my did my first 100 miles. He never trained, you know, all the mindset that he got out of work brigade and their program, which I said, those people that work for your game could do whatever the fuck they want when they want to do it. Because that's how they're built. They will never ever, like quit. They're never scared of things. And they could just do what they want, because the way of Greg's programming, so I hope I hope you see that same success, man, because you'll be in the superhuman category, then, man, James.

 James Geering 2:22:49

Yeah. And I'm I'm literally just dipping my toe in the water at the moment. So I'm excited to get deeper into it. And I've actually got Heather McAllister coming on, I think in a couple of weeks, as well. So we'll get to tell the whole story again.

 2:23:01

She's one of the superhumans and she's certainly one of the superhumans there in the mouth, like that. She could like you know, back squat, a kettlebell that weighs like one point like 1.25 times her body weight. And to get into that position is just incredible. And it's all about detail.

That's what it is, is really attention to detail in the bracing evolved it in a Greg's a master like he's just he's truly truly a master of his craft.

J

James Geering 2:23:32

Absolutely. Well, I want to go to some closing questions quickly, and I can let you go. We've been chatting for well over two hours now. So I want to be mindful of your time. The first one I love to ask Well, firstly, we talked about your book so so gray man is the title of your book for people listening? Where can they find that?

i

2:23:47

Um, that's right on Amazon. That's the only places available Amazon. So the funny part is when I wrote Grey Man, an average man's journey to personal greatness. That's when the gray man like series came out with that do have blond hair. So there's like 87 novels of Grey Man, but there's been like enough sales where you can get it like within the first 10 or 12 books when you search for a

J

James Geering 2:24:08

perfect Yeah, that's the problem. I think I was lucky my my one there's a song which I use the song as my title. But there's no books, which is kind of bizarre, but there is no books named one more light. So I lucked out there. Alright, well, speaking of books, and is there a book that you love to recommend? It can be related to our discussion today or completely unrelated?

i

2:24:30

Yeah, I think the one that I thought was very interesting I read a years ago is called diet cults. And it's by Matt Fitzgerald. And it's really cool. He goes through all of what I would call the fad diets, whether it's Atkins or vegan or the raw diet, the Paleo diet, it he breaks down, like kind of what the diet is in a success story like Oh, Joe Schmoie lost 37 pounds in six weeks. Then he breaks down Like, what's wrong with those diets? Like, you know that 80% of the people on the Atkins diet thinks they can eat chicken wings and steak and your cholesterol level went through the roof, you know, and we were born to eat carbs. So it's just not sustainable. So he goes through all the pros and cons, and most of them are there are cons. Then at the very end, he like he does the common sense thing, that diet that works for you is the one that's sustainable, and makes you healthy. He misses I think a little bit and he calls it the agnostic diet. I don't think like his his recommendations for like tier one foods, like the ones you must, must have aren't the same as mine. He puts like meat, like is tier two proteins that you should have, but don't necessarily need to have I think, like I do eat a lot of like, whether it's chicken, pork, beef, or venison, but all in all he's like, comes to that common sense realization that the diet that works for you that keeps you lean and healthy, and that's sustainable for the rest of your life. Is that the diet you should be? And it's just, it's a fascinating book in the into the diet fads of the last probably 12 years.

J

James Geering 2:26:08

It's interesting when you take a step back and go, Okay, so telling us all that we should eat thing X. If that truly works, then you tell an Australian Aboriginal that they should eat like an Inuit you know, that it's, it's gonna apply to you know, what you've been brought up in. And as there's, of course, some sort of genetic element to it as well. So people have certain bath backgrounds are going to tolerate maybe fish more than others, or grains, or whatever it is. But I think the one common denominator in most of these is just take processed shit out of your diet. If you want to be vegan, you want to be omnivore. You want to be carnivore. If the common denominator denominator as you take anything processed, and ground to a dust out, you're gonna have success, and then you can kind of titrate to effect and see what works best for you.



2:26:58

Yeah, and based on your your, you said, your, how you were brought up, like, you know, it's like talent, a talented person, you can't eat pasta. Well, guess what? Like my girlfriend, she has like sauce sundae, right? And that's how she was brought up. You know, and in. So to recommend something outside of someone's like, either either their upbringing, or their culture is just ridiculous, but there's enough good food and all of that, to make it work. And, you know, and my other thing is, like, I don't, I don't say cheat days. But if I want to have a thing of ice cream, I have a thing of ice cream. I don't have it every night. And I realized that, you know, maybe, you know, the the side effects of it. But I'm still having ice. I'm not. I'm not gonna I'm not gonna live like a like a caveman. Because we're, we're in the, you know, the 21st century now. So,

J

James Geering 2:27:46

exactly. Well, that was the book. What about movies and documentaries, any of those that you love.



2:27:54

The one I just saw? Well, the one that got me started on this was called running on the sun. And it was when Badwater 135 that raced through Death Valley, which I did out of back maybe five, six years ago. I, my, my wife at the time, brought that home, and I was like, What the hell and again, the suffering is what drove me to it. And back then it was easy to get in and now was super competitive. It took me a couple of years to get in. But I saw it and like, what you saw these people turning themselves inside out was just incredible. You know, their stick to itiveness. And mental toughness, before that was even a thing like it's ultra racing was even wasn't even on a map at that time. There's, you know, only a handful of these people was incredible. And then I just saw another one. It was just one mile. And it's Chad. I can't think of

J

James Geering 2:28:51

his last name. A Navy SEAL.



2:28:54

Yeah, that guy crazy. Crazy. Those guys a huge beard. And it's this race in Tennessee, you've never heard of where, basically, it's one mile with a pretty substantial elevation up and down, you get 20 minutes to do each mile. And you stay until the last man's there. And it was it was it was interesting to see. Like you knew when the people checked out, man, like when they are in the process of checking out you saw it in their faces. You saw it in their actions. And it was interesting because I don't I don't know if you if people fully realize when they're starting to check out that's what they're doing. And I really enjoyed that. Unlike many different levels of watching the the cast of characters is so worth so to speak in there. And there on the other probably their ultimate demise. Where they were like, again, mentally they're just like, man, like this is it. And it was it was like that suffering also was incredible as it sounds like you know, it was like just one off documentary. I think it might have been on I think Netflix now. But yeah, that was that was interesting.



James Geering 2:29:57

And so Chad right I



2:29:58

think I got that right The chair with to these Yes, yeah. Okay, beautiful.



James Geering 2:30:03

All right. Well, then the next question, speaking of amazing people, is there a person that you recommend that come on this podcast as a guest to speak to the first responders, military and associated professionals of the world?



2:30:15

Yeah, I would, I would probably go back right now to that. Tyler mitteded Who's is the, he's the nutritionist. He's he just he spoke, actually, he came up on his own dime, that's how great of a guy is to convergences here, you know, Greg can't afford to bring him in and pay him like any came in on his own. And he spoke like the last spoke for like a half an hour. And incredibly engaging in the, like, I just love his common sense approach. But if you want to talk about like your, you want to get into nerd stuff, like, into the weeds, he can get into the weeds, like nobody, like he's smart as a whip when it comes to it. But he can also, you know, you can also transfer that knowledge, that's easy for us to understand. And it's, it's almost so common sensical that you're like, gosh, man, like this guy should, this guy should be everyone's nutritionist in the world. And you know, he's not a radical in any means about anything. And what I took away, the thing I took away the most, I think, was, he's like, you eat three different ways. You either eat, to be healthy, you eat to perform, or you eat to look good. And all three of those are different. You can't you can't do them in combination. I was like, I never knew that. I'm like, wait a minute, you can't. Like it's weird. And I think about my fuelling is, if I'm coming

up on a big race, or if I've tried to, like slim down, or just in this period of eating healthy, and he's like, those are three different, entirely different ways to eat, and you know, to track your eating. And I was like, that's something I never ever.

J James Geering 2:31:49

Yeah, that's interesting when you when you talk to, you know, strongman competitors, or, you know, World's Strongest Man, or the bodybuilding community, or even some of these actors that had to get into a certain shape for a role. And they're all like, yeah, and then I then I had to go on a row to get unhealthy. They look great on film, but they actually were extremely unhealthy. Or they hit a PR and lifted something no one's ever lifted before. But then I had a one way, one year journey to try and get away from strokes and heart disease before they dropped out, like a lot of their fellow competitors do.

 2:32:23

And never knew that man, it was like it was super lightning. You know, actually, I know Matt Pataki, the guy who talks about Greg, he's actually hiring him or has already as his nutritionist and anyone who does with him, and they're like, like, he's just a great guy to work with in innovation. He puts a, you know, obviously his personal touch on everything.

J James Geering 2:32:45

Brilliant. All right. Well, then the very last question before we make sure everyone knows where to find you, what you do to decompress.

 2:32:54

I think it's, for the most part, my big decompression is in the fall like I my my number one passion, and most people don't even know about it is I'm a I'm a bow hunter of deer and I own 57 acres, my own property. And my life revolves around the deer season, and all year long, like in the summertime, I'm planning in the spring, I'm planning my food plots for the deer and then I also put them in the fall, then you're trimming lanes, and then you're putting your time into the actual standard hunt about eight hours a day. And that's truly like, that's true decompression like four hours in the morning, four hours at night, no phone, don't pick up the phone to get on social media in like one with the woods and to really think about that fast three months allows me to think about the last nine months, and then the the upcoming nine months and what like I kind of want out of this life, you know, in all aspects of it, you know, interpersonal relationships out of, you know, where I want to travel. What I want to see what I want to do and that's that's truly it. And the other one is, is obviously when I when I run which is you know, and or swim. It's just that time alone with your thoughts. It's a it's a I always find that very reflected more reflective than probably any other thing that I do

J James Geering 2:34:18

is you raise your kids at a Elk and what they're asked just to pay them back

is you raise your kids at a 5k and what they're asked just to pay them back.

 2:34:22

So I made a promise. Yeah. never beat me sentence and we've raced against each other and I'm like, No fucking way. Why? Because I'm gonna ride home James, they made a fucking song. They're like we are chant we beat there. We beat Dan. I remember like, they were so proud of themselves, but I was like, You will never frickin beat me again. Never ever. And I have a thing about the board out there. And I have like, we all did a race a couple races and I added I read like 2109 And I'm like, House Champion is still a fuckup on his whiteboard.

 James Geering 2:34:58

Brilliant. Yeah, my son got To track and cross so he whips my ass in a running like hands down. I ran with him as you're getting back into specifically running so I can keep running with him because I love doing it. But we ran a while ago and I was, you know, pretty gassed. And he was like, I was like, Yeah, that was that was also the one that that was that was a tough workout. And he goes, Yeah, that was my easy day today. I'm that guy. So yeah, he runs I forget, he runs a five minute mile and I forget what his 5k is. But you know, yeah, he's never never gonna be able to catch him and nor do I care anymore. So I just keep doing jujitsu. So when I get hold of him, I can choke him out and

 2:35:37

exact Ciao, tap out son. Who's your Daddy?

 James Geering 2:35:41

All right. Well, then for people listening, we talked about the book Beyond Amazon. Where else can people kind of find out more about you reach out to you on social media on the Internet?

 2:35:50

Yeah, so I'm on both Instagram. Last Instagram, Facebook and Twitter as as Brett so braschi which is S O B IERASKI. And then I'm also at its gray man. I nc.org. Great, man. That's my website for the mostly for the book. So those would be the best places.

 James Geering 2:36:20

Brilliant. Well, Brett, I want to thank you so much. I want to thank Greg for for connecting us as well. But it's been an amazing conversation. We've gone all over the place from swinging meses to drug prohibition and everything in between. But yeah, I mean, I want to thank you so much for sharing your journey sharing your time and being so generous and coming on the podcast today.



2:36:41

You're a good man and I appreciate I love every second of it man has been great talking to you.