

Severely Wounded in the Line of Duty: One Park Ranger's Story

Voiceover

00:00

Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

Gilbert Moore

00:16

Hello. I'm Gilbert Moore and welcome to *The Beat*. According to the National Blue Alert Network, which is administered by the COPS Office, in 2018, the last full year that statistics were available, 251 law enforcement officers were shot in the line of duty. Of that number, 51 officers or approximately 20 percent of those who were shot succumbed to their wounds unfortunately.

For every law enforcement officer who is sworn to protect and serve, the threat of confronting a criminal with a gun is a very real part of the job. For those who have had that experience and have been shot in the process, the road to recovery can be a lonely and an uncertain path. Making a significant physical recovery may only be part of being deemed fit for duty and returning to work. The emotional toll that a wounded officer must endure and the impact on family are equally critical aspects of the process.

Today we are speaking with Ranger Brody Young from the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation. Ranger Young is joining us from the field via cell phone. In 2010, Ranger Young was shot nine times by an assailant, endured a lengthy recovery, and today he is back on the job, serving the people of Utah. Ranger Young, welcome to *The Beat*.

Ranger Brody Young

01:42

Thank you, Gil, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

Moore

01:45

Shall I call you Brody? Is that okay for the purposes of this interview?

Young

01:49

Yeah, that's great. Brody's good.

Moore

01:51

So, Brody, to get started, for those of our listeners who are like me and do not know a whole bunch about the world of a park ranger other than the fact that you work remotely and far from support and backup, tell us about the demands of being a ranger.

Young

02:06

Well, Gil, Utah is very open public land, sparsely populated other than what's on the Wasatch front in northern Utah. I live in the southeast portion, Moab area. We've got two national parks that surround us and then a whole lot of just public land. And, as a ranger, we often work alone and that requires a little more vigilance than maybe when you have a partner or you have backup that's two minutes away. My backup could be as much as an hour, if not two hours, away.

And so, the first day at police academy, I show up and they show us this video and it's very graphic and it's of an officer and the officer dies in this contact. He watched this subject that he pulled over load a rifle and took several minutes while the officer stood there and did nothing and then the officer was killed. And the graphic sounds of that officer dying and gurgling on his own blood. It was a wake-up call. And then after the video they pointed to me and some of the other rangers in my group and those who work out in remote areas that, "You guys will be the first probably to get involved in an officer-involved shooting." So it was a real wake-up call and it, I guess, lit a fire in me to really be diligent and consistent as far as training and mindset and the will to survive.

As a ranger, we meet a lot of great people that are out on vacation. There are, unfortunately, as all officers know, that there's the few that aren't nice and have ulterior motives. And so that's the life of a park ranger. You got to be more diligent and play the... head low, nice, sharp mentality, talk nice, think mean, and work through people who want to be alone out in the desert or up in the mountains. And so it's a really fun job. I'm kind of talking about the negative side of it, but most days I'm on a boat, motorcycle, ATV, snowmobile, grooming trails, and meeting a whole lot of great people out there.

Moore

04:22

So was there anything in your background that prepared you for being a ranger? I mean, what attracted you to it, right? So there's the outdoor aspect, and then, you know, quite frankly, there's the hardcore law enforcement side of it. What prepared you for that? What attracted you to it?

Young

04:38

So before I was a ranger I was a professional river guide and that involved taking people on trips down some intense whitewater. I worked in the Grand Canyon, Cataract Canyon, or the southern Utah, northern Arizona rivers, big, wide, big rapids when the water's flowing. We're talking 25, 30-foot waves, and here you have a group of 17–20 people and their lives are in your hands. And that was a thrill and a rush and it led to me being a river ranger is what I got hired on as initially as a ranger.

But you could say I'm a hippie turned cop and I think hippies make the best cops. We like people, we know the other side of the law, and you've got that opportunity to work outside, and to help people maybe get through a tough situation or find where they need to go when they don't know where to go. And so that's kind of what led to me being a ranger... I had this motorboating experience on big rivers, big whitewater, and then just having people's lives in your hands. You know, an honor, an honor to serve, and, people... you know, back to their tent or back to their homes at night.

Moore

05:56

So, on the day that you encountered your attacker, was it one of those days where you were kind of doing the things that you typically do out in the field or was there anything unique or special about the day before the incident occurred?

Young

06:13

I ran a normal shift during the day and we had this opportunity to work some overtime that night, the youth alcohol overtime grant shift. Anyway, it involves taking alcohol from underage drinking and whatnot and get them back home to their parents or what. So it wasn't a typical shift. Our focus was primarily let's find drugs and alcohol and deal with the partiers out in the desert. And so, that's how my shift began that night.

My supervisor and I, we met up before the shift, we decided where we were going to go. So we were going to go out and scout areas, find those party spots and then come back, jump in the same truck and go and contact those groups. And so we separated and I went north of town there, along the river corridor, the Colorado River, and went to this trailhead. It's one of the most difficult trailheads as far as the trail that follows it. You get a lot of search-and-rescue calls and a lot of injuries and worse, and so I was just checking trailheads on my way out to this party spot.

And the first trailhead I go to, it's called the Poison Spider Mesa Trailhead, and there's just one car, a lone car sitting in the parking lot. I think it's empty. My idea was, or how I treated my contact with this car was, I was going to write the plate down and then come back and check on it later. I thought maybe someone was up on that trail that was lost or hurt or worse. And so, I wrote the... I got out of my truck. It was dark, about 8:30 at night, 7:00, 8:00, 8:30. It's late November. It's a warm night, kind of a warm before the storm.

And I walked around this vehicle and I wrote the license plate down, then I go to the backseat, and it was a four-door passenger car, and I knocked on the window because I saw this lump kind of that looked like someone might be sleeping in the vehicle. So I knocked on it. I knocked on it several times and woke this gentleman up and he opened the door. I said who I was and asked if he was okay. And then we talked about where this guy could go camp because he wasn't allowed to camp in this parking lot. And then I asked for some identification. He gave me the name of Michael Orr. Do you recognize that name?

Moore

08:23

No.

Young

08:24

It's from the movie *Blind Side*. This is 2010, November, the movie had just come out. But he gave me this name and date of birth, turned out to be, right, fake name, date of birth. Little did I know. I mean, it's *Blind Side*, I was about to get blindsided. So, I wrote the information down, I asked him to wait there, and I walked back to my vehicle. Just as I was trying to get in, I have my truck door open, that's when the shot rang out. Boom. First round, he hits me on my left hand. Now, I'm left-handed, and... Immediately when that round hit my left humerus it just shattered it. And I screamed and turned away and I yelled out, "I've been shot." And I knew it and I turned away. And as I was turning away, I looked over my other shoulder and I could see the muzzle flash and him coming at me and taking a lot of rounds, and...

At least when I turned and I was away and some of the rounds hit me, they went into my vest that I wear religiously. You wear the uniform, you wear that vest, and I had been wearing it. Those rounds that hit me and I went to the ground and he moved up on me very quickly and was just shooting over me, right, almost standing above me, round after round. I was thinking, "When is this going to stop?"

Finally, he stopped shooting and I have... I'm presented with this moment, you can either lie down and die or you can get up and fight. It's like time stood still. It's a terrible cliché and I decided, well, I decided well before this ever occurred that I was not going to die. And so I got up, which I think surprised him, and I did what you train to do. I went to the back of my truck, he went to the front, and we started playing this cat-and-mouse game around my truck.

I am looking down at my left hand and it won't respond, it won't move, and I think, "You idiot, use your other hand." And I had a pad, a pen and paper, and a flashlight. I just threw that stuff down and I cross-drew and grabbed my gun and got a really firm grip on it. And then went up to see if I can find him in my site picture, right? I'm at the right rear of my truck and he's at the front, left side, and I see him through my windows. And I could even begin to fire through my vehicle at him.

Now, I had trained before about shooting through your truck, shooting through glass. What we did was we got a bunch of windshields and we put an officer, a ranger, in a truck and have them draw inside of the truck and shoot through the windshield to get the effect or to know what it feels like, and where the rounds go, and where they should go once they hit that windshield, and once you create a hole to shoot through it. But I'd learned to shoot through my cover, which I don't think I would have done otherwise, but I'd gone through motions physically, mentally and swiped, fired a bunch of rounds through my truck. And I carried a 40 caliber at the time, it's a Glock, and I was counting my rounds because I knew I had 15 and I'd have to, right, reload, and I only had one hand to do it. Fortunately, I had the training to load with your non-dominant hand. And so what I did was I released the mag, gun in my right hand, and I put the gun between my legs upside down and I grabbed a magazine, and I unfortunately dropped the first

magazine but we carry two, so I grabbed the second, and I put it into the handle of the gun, and I used my rear bumper to feed the magazine into the gun and then the rear side on the bumper to chamber a round.

And then I went up to see if, like, if he was still coming after me, and he was in that same general area through my window, so I fired more into that window. And he backed up and went in front of his car. I moved up to my right rearview mirror and he raised his hands and so I stopped shooting because we're trained, right? When the threat isn't coming after you, you stop going after the threat. So, he'd raised his hands, I could see them clearly, and it got really silent and he said, "You got me." And then I went, or said in my mind, "Oh, thank you," and I began to lose consciousness. I think my adrenaline had run out.

I had sustained a lot of damage when he was standing over me and firing all those rounds at me. He fired 15 rounds and nine of those rounds, entered or entered and exited me. Let me just read the list of the extent of the damage. So, I had, laying on the ground there, I had damage to my heart, small intestine, colon, right kidney, liver, diaphragm, left lung, spine, pelvis, left humerus, left tricep muscle, right forearm, right femoral nerves, and my right hip flexor. I don't know how I got up off the ground, but mentally I did not want to die. It never occurred to me at any moment that death was an option. If I could still breathe and I was still conscious, I was getting up.

So, I began to backpedal and lose consciousness. I fired more rounds as I was falling unconscious. I ended up behind my truck about 20 feet. And I think he thought at that point that I had died. And so what he did was he got in his car and drove off and drove down and away from civilization out into what's called Canyonlands National Park, or near the border of Canyonlands, which is... you can imagine the red rock and the river meandering through it. It's just miles and miles of just no civilization, open desert, and it's really easy to disappear. There are thousands of caves one could drop into and never be found again. That's what makes the solitude of southwest Utah so great.

Moore

14:22

Wow. What happened next?

Young

14:25

Well, I woke up several minutes later, I'm on my back, and I feel like someone has poured concrete on me. I just, I can't move. And my adrenaline has run out. And I got to get to my truck radio, which is about 30 feet away, but I can't, I can't get to it. I just have no energy. I'm in a canyon. I was wearing a handheld radio but I couldn't, I knew it wouldn't work, and so my only way was to get to that truck radio. And the most remarkable thing happens. Thoughts of, or the faces of my wife and three kids who were at the time were six, three, and nine months of age, like almost appeared before me. It's almost like a cheering section, like, "Get up. You can do it."

And that gave me the strength, the energy to begin to slowly roll. And so what I do is... my arm was really loose and lifeless because the damage, and so with gun in hand, I rolled onto my stomach and take some breaths, and this is a gravel parking lot and so you taste the dirt and the exhaust coming off my truck, and slowly half roll on my stomach, breathe, roll onto my back, breathe. It took some time to get to the rear bumper and then I readjusted and rolled down the left side of my truck.

And I get to my truck door and my door is open. Now, I've always felt I should keep that door open ever since I started in law enforcement. I never like to be inside. I never like to write tickets inside the truck, contact people inside. I just always felt strongly I should be outside, and that door, you know, made thousands of stops and I always keep that door open, and I have that luxury. I'm not on a highway, I'm on a dirt road or parking lot or whatnot. But that door is open and I couldn't have opened it otherwise.

And so I reach up, I lay my gun on the floorboard, I reached the radio. I... really calm about what I was about to say on the radio because, well, try not to sound, you know, hysterical on the radio, yelling and screaming. So, thinking about what I'm going to say, I say, "Price 12069. I'm at Poison Spider Mesa Trailhead. I've been shot. Please hurry." And then I lay the radio down and lay back down onto the ground. And as I was laying back, I see black smear on the floorboard, and seat, and on the door, and I realized, "Oh, that black stuff is my own blood." Now, I'm pretty queasy when seeing a lot of my own blood, and honestly, it was a bit of a blessing that it was dark.

So I lay down and I didn't know what to do after that. I had never trained on what to do if you were injured and waiting for medical assistance to arrive. It just never occurred to me. But what I did research out and study, I read some articles on breathing and how you can slow your vitals in traumatic situations, to calm yourself down, to slow the bleeding, and so I just started to focus on one breath to the next and to be slow about it.

Well, while I'm trying to be slow in breathing, I don't know this but I'm filling up internally. It's getting really hard to breathe. I'm just focusing on one breath to the next. So, I'm laying down on the ground, I'm hearing familiar voices on the radio, those who I work with daily. I live in a small town Moab, population of 5,000, county is 8,000, and we work closely together with that federal, local, state, county officers, and then we kind of back each other up, so we're a close-knit family. And I hear help coming. Well, my supervisor who I started on the shift with that night, he calls for a helicopter immediately. All I said was, minimally, "I've been shot, please hurry." And fortunately, that helicopter was in route from Colorado, just about an hour flight or 40-minute flight away, Grand Junction.

So let me get back to what we do now. I carry a tourniquet with me, a blood clot kit, that kind of thing, since then I've studied how to treat yourself. You know, when you're out and about in the back country it's just you. And anyway, grateful for that training and for the help that arrived about 12 minutes later. They came up, they cut off all my clothes.

I had a weird thought as they were cutting off my clothes that I was wearing my favorite stuff that day. It was just in the cycle of laundry—under armor, the uniform, the pants to the boots, it was just the stuff you feel good in, my favorite, I guess, uniform, and they were cutting it off and the thought in my head was, "Oh man, I am never getting this stuff back." I was so disappointed at that. Looking back on it, it

was really encouraging to know that at least I had a mentality I was going to work another day. I was going to get back to what I was doing. It just never occurred to me that death was an option. Life is so worth living for.

And, so my clothes off, threw them in the ambulance. I was conscious through the whole ride. My supervisor shows up as the ambulance is leaving and he's just... they're asking me questions about his description, where he is, where he could be. And I remember the whole ride back to Allan Memorial Hospital, which was a legally condemned building at the time. They were building the new hospital and they were about to reopen in January and this was happening in November. So I make it to the hospital unconscious and I lost a lot of blood. I was told when they opened the doors to the ambulance to the ER that the blood flowed out like a waterfall.

So a guy my size holds about 10, 12 units, adult human, 10–12 units of blood, and they were struggling to get it into me. Fortunately, there was blood, extra blood at the hospital and my blood type, B positive, is real compatible with a lot of other blood types. And so if you're thinking about donating blood, I would highly suggest it. It saved my life that night. And there's my plug for donating blood.

My wife got a call right as I get to the ER and it's from a friend and she has a scanner and her husband's a trooper, state trooper. She says, "You've got to get to the hospital like now." And she's like, "Why?" She's like, "No one's told you?" And she's like, "Told me what?" She says, "I'll call you back," and she hangs up. You can imagine my wife's response to that. It must've been a little traumatic. After she hangs up, another supervisor of mine called and Ed finally spits it out, "You've got to get to the hospital right now. Brody has been shot. It doesn't look good. You better hurry."

Now, she hangs up, she gets a knock at the front door and it's that friend who had just called her, and said, "I'll watch the kids. You get over to the hospital." And so Wendy jumps in the car, it's about a two-minute drive. As she was driving to the hospital, she's overcome with this feeling, this impression, that I was going to be okay, I was going to live, and it was going to be alright.

And so she showed up to the hospital real calm. If you can imagine the ER, it's chaos, right? I'm on death's door and everyone I know is there, and I just hear a lot of chaos. I'm on the table and hearing voices and whatnot. I'm just trying to focus on my breathing, one breath to the next. An ER doctor actually walked up to her and asked her if she really was the spouse, she was just so calm. Call that a blessing from above. But she came up and whispered into my ear and said, "Hey Brody, you're finally going to get that helicopter ride that you always wanted." I didn't laugh or respond, but boy, it was so nice to hear her voice.

And then I got intubated and thrown on the chopper and they threw units of blood, numbers 15 and 16, with the hope that I would make the 40-minute flight to Grand Junction. Now, I have the look, according to the staff there in the ER, that I was not going to make it. All those there said I just had the look like, "He's not going to survive," and for some reason, mid-flight, I stabilized and surprised the doctors in Grand Junction. And then I went into a coma for almost a month, and let me tell you, it was the greatest month of my life. I don't remember, I don't remember much of anything.

I did have two dreams in the hospital. One was real comfort. I was surrounded by my family. We were on a train, we were headed to Plymouth Rock. We try and go somewhere every Thanksgiving. And being surrounded by them and doctors, it was just real comfort because I was full of anxiety. Someone had tried to end me that night and that did not sit well with me at all.

The other dream is, and this is what heavy narcotics do to you, I thought I was being used as a prop on a CSI show. So I was wheeled into this room with burn victims and other patients at the hospital and they were going to film the scene. And so, I thought, the hospitals make their money. And so I got really pissed off and I started tearing out tubes and just struggling to get out of bed and here I am intubated, they're strapping me down. I've got to... I briefly opened my eyes to see a nurse with their finger in my face and yelling at me and I thought I was going to get kicked out and they weren't going to help me anymore. Just a real vivid, vivid dream. But that's all I remember about the four weeks. It was a nice four weeks. Apparently, I was, I'm told, I died several times on the operating table. I had to be revived.

I don't remember it. I didn't see a white light, but I will say, felt an extremely overwhelming comfort that death is not such a bad thing, that things are, in my belief, is that there is a life after death and it... I was just overwhelmed with a comfort and a peace that is hard to explain in words. But, if you don't believe in a higher power, it's time to start rethinking your priorities, but that's my take and my opinion. But I certainly felt a great comfort through all of it, through the whole shooting, there was definitely maybe some help from guardian angels or whatnot, but I sure felt a presence anyway.

Moore

25:44

If I could interrupt you Brody, I just want to let everybody listening know that if they are just joining us, we are speaking with Ranger Brody Young who is a ranger with the Utah Division of Parks and Recreation. And Ranger Young just got finished recounting a harrowing story about being wounded in the line of duty, specifically, shot nine times and what that felt like. And I would ask, Brody, given all of the things that took place in the extent of your injuries, how long were you hospitalized?

Young

26:15

My stay in the hospital in Junction was six weeks. I was in a coma for almost four of those weeks. When I woke up, I started to heal really quickly. You can imagine being shot nine times, there's a lot of nerve damage and a lot of holes and that needed to be patched up. And I, there was, I mean, a coma is necessary. It allows your body to heal when they breathe for you and do everything else for you, and then, when they start to wake you up, that's where the real work begins. I could barely lift my head off the pillow. I couldn't understand the clock on the wall. Someone had just put the first generation iPad next to me and I couldn't even hit the key on the board.

I was just... when you're intubated or in a coma for so long, you lose dexterity, you lose muscle, you atrophy quite a bit, and so I had to rework all those muscles. I mean, sitting up and putting my feet on the cold floor with two nurses beside me would wear me out. I'd have to lay down and take a nap again, a good two-, three-hour nap. And so it was a slow progress of standing up, making it to the edge of the

bed, laying back down, starting over, making it to the doorframe of the hospital room. And, mind you, with two small nurses next to you, I was afraid of falling over. I just had no energy, no muscle. It's kind of like when you have the flu and you're down for a couple of days, then when you recover from it, you're groggy, you're slow, and you got the little aches that you got to work through and get back into the swing of things. And I had a month of that and so it was a rigorous process, but I just started to heal.

And, I've got to tell you, about nine months before this happened, I had a distinct impression that said, "You need to exercise and get really consistent." So, cardio, you know, the push-ups, sit ups, run, kind of a CrossFit craze that's all over the place now. It was, "Get consistent, get fit." You know, for me not knowing that this was going to happen, but again, what happens, happens. And, you know, some of us are born on the top of the mountain, some of us are born at the bottom, each with a destination to get to, and bad things happen and none of us are immune. And this is my, this was my thing to get through.

And so I looked at it from that point of view and I think that's what got me out of the hospital so quickly. So I was released Christmas Eve of all days. What a great gift, right, that the staff at the hospital, I think, were trying to give us. Now, no doctors were working. This is all, you know, interns, and new or newer employees at the hospital, and they wanted to send me home Christmas Eve, and I had passed all their tests, and it's probably the worst day to get released.

But we sat in a Walgreens' parking lot for like four hours trying to get the right medication to get home, but to be home Christmas Eve, I mean, what a gift after all that, and to see my kids open their presents the next morning, and just to be together, because they had certainly seen me when I was on death's door. And I'll never understand what they went through when I was induced into a coma. They were watching this guy.

And to this day, they don't like to talk about it. If I go and speak about it, they won't come do it. Just, I just, I can't quite fully understand what they went through. But we sure spent a lot of time throughout the next year that I was doing physical therapy and stuff, trying to recover, getting my strength back. Every night it was a question answer session and just going out with my kids. And they would ask me questions. They were young at the time and curious and trying to understand why someone would try to hurt their daddy, right?

My oldest, who was six at the time, he took it pretty well, but his comfort was food. He'd just have a full stomach and life was good. And so we battled that for a while. That was just where he went to. My three year old, Jade, she got really angry at the world. She was actually yelling at nurses in the hospital, "You can't keep my dad here. We're taking him home." You can imagine that, you know, the voice and mind of a three year old, just didn't understand and as time went by she was just very clingy and she wouldn't play with friends. And kindergarten started and we were still struggling with this idea of the separation. And so what we did is we got professional help. It's called play therapy and it's just like what it sounds, you go into a room with a counselor and there's a map on the floor with cars and figures and you play. And her play went from people dying, not making it to the hospital, really negative, to just the opposite through many sessions where the good guys win and, you know, making it to the hospital, rescuing, and I mean, some success through play that in her little mind, her limited vocabulary, really

helped to turn it around for her to where she could finally go to kindergarten and play with friends. And I guess, realizing in her own little mind that the world is safe, that she can walk away from our home and come back and all is well. So, I mean, that was a real help.

My youngest, he was nine months at the time. He was too young and didn't remember much and he's a good balance between the two. They said that was the greatest year of their lives. They, my daughter, was like, "Daddy, I love your new job" because I was home every day recovering. It was a real special time honestly, and one that I'll cherish and never forget.

Moore

32:48

Talk a little bit more about that recovery process. I can only imagine that the psychological impact of somebody trying to take your life, fighting through an extensive physical recovery, and in your case not knowing who shot you and why, must have been very hard to work through. How did you specifically deal with that emotionally or psychologically?

Young

33:14

Well, that's a great question. So when we first got home, I could go on short walks with a cane. I was like the old man in the neighborhood walking down the street, really fragile, feeble. But we went on this shore walk and someone lit some fireworks like firecrackers near us, and boy, I thought my heart jumped out of my chest. I was just... I was still so full of anxiety and didn't like that feeling. It was really uncomfortable and there was still a lot of fear inside of me. So, I decided early on in the hospital to run at this fear. I had to know if I could get back to where I was before, then I had made it. And so I would put myself through a few series of tests. One was, when I could drive again at night, I drove out to the spot where this all happened at the trailhead, and I just went to the trailhead, turned off the light, and I was shaking. But just to know that I could be there, alone at night, and that life was still okay, that was a real stepping stone as far as getting this fear, this anxiety. I mean, none of us can live in fear. You can't move on unless you find a way to overcome it. So, for me, it was running at it and then, certainly, spent a lot of time on my knees and asking, praying for comfort.

Moore

34:14

So, in your case, you didn't know who shot you other than the fictitious name that you were given, Michael Orr, from the movie *The Blind Side*, and you didn't know why. How much was that a factor in you trying to find balance as you were going through recovery?

Young

35:10

You know, I'm glad you asked that question. It was, we did find out who did shoot me. His name was Lance Leeroy Arellano. He was 40 at the time and 6'1", 160. And his mom actually came forth and revealed that early on. Also his car was found that he drove off with. He kind of drove off the beaten path when he left me and tried to hide the car. He actually grabbed some supplies from his car. There's

evidence of blood drops around his car. He grabbed a backpack and ended up having a 22 rifle and a backpack and he hiked about a mile away from his car. And then, he set up to ambush some officers that he thought might be coming towards him. And this was that initial night. We pieced, or investigators pieced it together later. And then for some reason before the sunrise he left all of those things there, the rifle, backpacks and food and disappeared. And his trail disappeared from that spot.

Now where he disappeared, there's a lot of sandstone and real rock and really hard to track, and the trail just got washed out. So they actually tracked from the car, the tracking team, you know, law enforcement tracking team, tracks from his car to the spot and then saw all of his gear and then they secured from that point. And he went missing for five years. Hundreds of officers were out there searching in that area. But I mentioned it earlier, this area is huge open, remote, thousands of caves, and you could just about hide and disappear and never be found.

So to the credit of the officers, man, they searched a huge, huge area that you would need thousands of officers to find, you know, search every crack and cranny, you know, in their hundreds. So his mom was somewhat helpful in at least identifying him. She also gave us some history on him and he didn't have a very good upbringing and didn't like cops. The family didn't like cops. He would actually talk about, amongst his friends, on where to shoot a cop and where not to. He had a stepdad who abused him, who was a former deputy. And he actually had his stepdad, when he was young, at gunpoint and his mom asked him later, "Why didn't you shoot him?" I mean just a rough upbringing and so his opinion of police was pretty negative.

Moore

37:52

So, as you were going through the recovery process and dealing with working back, are you thinking, since he hasn't been identified at that time, are you thinking that he's after you personally, that he is after officers, writ large? I mean, what is the thought? I mean, are you walking around and seeing this guy in different places? How do you conduct your life knowing that the person who tried to take that life is still there?

Young

38:19

That's a great question. I thought I saw him several times in the month following this, but people who visit Moab, they're all long, dark hair, scraggly looking. I mean, you go out into the back country, they all look alike, you know, like Lance did that night. But they had officers staged at my house for a couple of weeks just because we didn't know. I didn't know him before this incident, he didn't know me, but there was the fear that there would be some retaliation, and him not being found really stood in the back of my mind for that five years.

And get this, I mean, Christmas Eve 2015, I'm making vanilla to hand out to my neighbors and I get this knock at the door and it's my lieutenant, my supervisor who was there that night, the one I was working with, and he says, "Come on outside," and you know, with a serious look on his face. I'm thinking, "Oh, something's hit the fan. We got to go." We go outside, right? It's December 24th, and he's like, "We

found him," and I just burst into tears, like, well, there's this weight, extreme amount of weight being lifted from me and I just... I didn't think he would be found when you go so long without knowing. I knew that the longer time went on that there was less of a chance that he would be a threat to anyone. But, hearing that news on Christmas Eve was really unique having come home Christmas Eve five years earlier.

I went to the county office and got to see all the evidence and saw what was left of him. Was just that it was just the bones, you know, bones in a sleeping bag. So, what he did do is he hiked about 400 yards from that location where he left all the supplies and he crawled into a cave and he laid down and he died that night in this wet, dark, damp, cold cave. I guess the injuries that he had sustained from the shootout, he succumbed to those. He just lay down and didn't get back up, and then laid in that cave for five years until two local kids during the Christmas break, 2015, decided, "We're going to go find this guy," because there was a \$30,000 reward. Pretty good incentive for these two kids.

You know, their parents were, I guess, diligent and having them be self-sufficient. And so these boys went out, they had a great plan. They gridded out stuff on a map and they were going to search an area one day, such an area the next, then at the end of their second day, they saw this green bag sticking out just right on top of the rock. And they went and opened it up and saw a weapon that matched the weapon he shot me with and this really piqued their attention. I have to mention, their dad is a city cop investigator, so they talk about this around the dinner table and they kept thinking he can't be far. He's got to be closer than what the search area suggests.

And so they saw this green bag and then they look up a little further and they see this white rib bone just sticking out right at the entrance to this cave or what looked like a crack in the ground. Then it drops about five feet and this cave goes in quite a ways. And so they were really excited. Ran and got the sheriff when they came out. And the kid who found it, the kids some way ended up being the only ones who could fit down into this crack and in this cave. It's because of all that gear that we cops wear, right?

He crawls in there and starts by taking the photos and dragging everything out. And those kids, he and his younger brother, got the reward, 30,000, so they get to go to school and, he's in the Air Force Reserve and married now, and younger brother just graduated from high school. Just a real, real, nice ending or great closure for me. I got really sick after this happened. Just finally I could let up and let go of this, this idea that he's out there and he could still cause harm to other people.

Moore

42:38

So, Brody, you're back on the job now, and I know that over the years, I've spoken with several officers who were shot in the line of duty and I can think of a few that returned to the job after they recovered. However, I've met two who recovered physically but were not emotionally prepared to return. In fact, one of them actually told me something to the effect of the doctors patched him up physically, but emotionally, he felt that he was left to heal on his own. This officer, he initially returned to work, but after being back a short time, just decided that he couldn't do the job anymore.

As you were going through the recovery process, did you know for certain that you wanted to return to a career in law enforcement, and at what point did you feel confident that you were able to get back in the saddle?

Young

43:26

It's a great question. You know, there was a fork in the road. I knew that if I could get back, I'd made it physically, mentally, emotionally, socially. But, the further, as time went on and the further I wasn't doing law enforcement, it was becoming easier to justify, "You know, maybe I shouldn't go back. Maybe I should stick with something, you know, that's a little more safe, but there was just a part of me that had to know I could get back. And so my supervisors were actually, really, I wouldn't say mean, but diligent and making sure I was okay mentally, physically, socially, to be able to get back where I was before. I mean, it's a traumatic thing and you got to be right in the head so that you don't—no offense to the postal workers—go postal on, you know, the public.

And they had to know. So they were pretty rigorous. In fact, our non-law enforcement administration thought they were being too hard on me, but I'm grateful that they were hard. They had to know and I had to know. They gave me the benefit of hitting the issues from all different directions. I went through a lot of psychological evaluations, which was a real, which was good. I had also decided early on, deep down, that I was going to do it. I was going to return and work.

Now my, I guess my vocation changed a little bit. My occupation sort of changed. I went a little bit more administrative and in the boating world. So I help enforce laws on the water, the education and navigation of it for the State of Utah. And so I'm a little bit more administrative, but I still love to get out and meet people. And that really helped as far as that transition with my family at home.

The first day I got in the uniform and went down and had to eat breakfast, they were down there eating cereal, my kids were. And the three of them looked up at me and my oldest said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm going to work on the water today." And they're like, "What?" They'd never seen me in uniform, right, for years, or at least for a year. I said, "Yeah, I'm going to go out and work." And they went, "Okay." And they went right back to eating their cereal. And to me, that was huge, huge comfort that we had overcome, at least, started to overcome that issue of, "If my dad goes back, he may not come back." And, we had crossed a crossroad and that was a real comfort. How, Wendy, she was really supportive throughout all of...

Moore

46:06

Is that your wife?

Young

46:08

This is my wife, I'm sorry. She was really very supportive, but she was really mean to me. When I was recovering early on, she would, you know, if I was thirsty, she'd say, "Get up and get your own drink. You know, go play with kids for five minutes." She just saw that the more I moved and interacted with my kids and stuff that I was going to recover more quickly. So, I mean, I'm grateful she was so mean and didn't just coddle me and allow me to just sit there day after day and to dwell, right, on the negative. She was a real influence and a force. Having a great, supportive home life was huge, absolutely huge. I don't know what I'd do without it.

Moore

46:55

Well, you've used that word "mean" twice in response to how your supervisors interacted with you after the incident or as you were working your way back, and even your wife. And so I take that "mean" to mean caring, pushing you to make sure that you are okay, maybe in the case of your supervisors who, in all fairness, you know, they are people, not necessarily mental health or counseling experts, were doing what they felt was necessary to ensure that your wellbeing was being safeguarded, that you weren't a risk to yourself, and if in fact you got back on the job, you wouldn't be a risk to the public.

During that process, if you don't mind me asking, were the services that you sought provided through the department, and were they adequate in your opinion?

Young

47:11

Yes, they were provided through the department. I feel like it was adequate, but I found a peace early on that allowed me to, I don't know, take the abuse of, you know, going through something rigorous, getting back to feeling normal again, to trusting in society. This whole experience reaffirmed, at least, my faith in society. There's so many more good things and good people doing good things more often than the few and the bad that get highlighted on the news. If you want a good day, stop watching the news. Walk away from it. Don't let it affect your life. It's just not worth it.

Moore

48:23

So, Brody, if you were able to have your experiences inform law enforcement leaders as they seek to bolster the level of support and psychological services that they provide for rangers, troopers, deputies, officers, what guidance would you offer them based on the experiences that you've had?

Young

48:42

You know, you can't just go... an officer who's been through something and you go up and you ask, "Are you okay?" And they say, "Yeah, I'm good." We can't do that anymore. You have to immediately assume once someone goes through something traumatic, they should be... I mean, I would hope someone would go on their free will to get that help, the counseling, but we got to stop just asking, "You okay?" "Yeah, I'm good." "Okay, let's move on." It's not the way we should be doing things.

There should be a criteria or a, you know, how mental health advocates, they can steer you down the path to feeling normal. Knowing what the signs are, the little things that they're doing at home, their spouse or significant others should be right there too so that they can recognize those signs. This is how we, I think, how we can prevent more suicides from law enforcement, from first responders. We got to look for those signs. They're there. The old days of tough, "I'm invincible no matter what I see or go through," have got to stop. That's my suggestion. You've got to go beyond asking, "Are you okay?" "Yeah, I'm good."

Moore

49:55

What about your brothers and sisters in law enforcement, what advice would you give them if they're struggling to maintain balance as they fight through the more traumatic aspects of the job, the repeated exposure to trauma, maybe a line of duty injury, or, similar to your case, being wounded in the line of duty, what information would you want them to have?

Young

50:18

So I would say there's several things, but get your home life in order, right? Start being honest with yourself. That's just one part of it. The other part of it is, man, get in shape. You got to stay physically in shape. It's going to keep your mind clear. And then, before every shift, you should put yourself in a scenario. There's a whole lot of police videos out there, police websites, you can go and you can watch an incident and put yourself in that place and critique it. Play the game of what if they do this at a traffic stop, watching this officer go through this traffic stop, "If they do this, I'm going to do that." It's all reactive, right?

We're so defensive and reactive, but I think we can expose ourselves to more situations and scenarios so that we're prepared for it. Because if you're prepared, right, we shall not fear. I mean, like fear, the past and the future are products of our mind, right? No amount of guilt can change the past, no amount of anxiety can change the future. Happy people know this. Folks, I'm living in the present.

Moore

51:28

We have been speaking with Ranger Brody Young. Ranger Young, thank you so much for talking with us in such a candid and open manner. Thank you for allowing us to learn from your experiences and we wish you the best as you go forward. Thank you so much.

Young

51:48

Thanks, Gil. I sure appreciate this and the opportunity.

Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

51:48

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Voiceover: Disclaimer

52:42

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