

Shelby Stanger:

The presenting sponsor of this season of Wild Ideas Worth Living is Subaru. One thing I just learned that I thought was very cool is Subaru is donating 50 million meals to help feed people need during the COVID-19 crisis. They know this pandemic is devastating our country and has left hundreds of thousands out of work and unable to feed themselves or their families. Through the Subaru Love Promise, a commitment to support their communities, Subaru and their retailers across the country are making a donation to provide 50 million meals to feeding America. This action called Subaru Loves to Help will make meals available at 199 local food banks across the country. In addition, Subaru retailers will be doing other things to help these local food banks, including food deliveries, donations, and volunteer events. Subaru knows their ongoing support will be necessary as local communities work to get back on their feet. Subaru Loves to Help, just one part of the Subaru love promise, one more reason that makes Subaru more than a car company.

Shelby Stanger:

I know that after two months of staying inside my little condo and running on deserted sidewalks at odd times of the day I'm itching to get back into the waves with my surf buddies and hit my favorite trails with my family. I'm sure you are too. But for the time being, one of the ways I'm getting through is reminiscing about my favorite memories in the great outdoors. You may have heard my story of riding my first big wave in Indonesia. If not, go back and listen to the episode with waterman, Brian Keaulana. But some of my other favorite memories, well, the first time I slept in the wide open without a tent at Cougar Canyon only to see a mountain line a hundred yards from the campsite that night, which happened just a few years ago. Also I'll never forget paddling in the Amazon River and just being totally over it after getting eaten alive by bugs, only to round the corner and see thousands of wild macaws, which are like beautiful parrots, flying through the sky. The other thing that's getting me through is reminding myself that when we're told it's safe to do so, mother nature will still be out there waiting for us. I'm Shelby Stanger and this is Wild Ideas Worth Living. In celebration of REI's largest sale of the year, we're celebrating 82 years of helping people get outside by asking customers and members to share their favorite outdoor memories. Of course, I wanted to share the stories of some of my favorite guests from our past season as well. So all seven of these folks recorded their stories in their homes where just like you and I, they're holed up with various restrictions in place to how they can adventure. First up is a touching story from the one and only Sal Masekela and features another meaningful bull wildlife encounter.

Sal Masekela:

This is Selema Mabena Masekela, most people know me as Sal Masekela. And I am grateful that my friend Shelby Stanger invited me to tell a story from back in the olden days when we went outside and did not take it for granted. This story is about deciding pretty much on a whim to go on a free diving meditation, yoga, breath work retreat to a small island called Niue that I'd never heard of as a gift to myself for my birthday. But for context, I had lost my father Hugh Masekela on January 23rd of 2018. And in the wake of my father, who was also my best friend and mentor, in the wake of his death, I was experiencing real physical, emotional, and spiritual battles with grief. I think as a society, we don't really talk about grief in the wake of loss and how it affects us very well and we tend to want to pat each other on the back for being strong and getting back to our routines. And it seems to be a noble way to look at how people deal with grief. And so I tried that and the longer I tried to go back to routine, the more gripped I was with grief and the more that I was processing it internally and having an ability to really function at anything other than a basic maintenance level. And I knew that I needed to do something to experience something, to really process what I was going through. And I happened to come across an

Instagram post from a woman that I had met in a cafe three years earlier by the name of Hanli Prinsloo, world famous free diver and yoga practitioner and advocate of our oceans. And I saw a post from Hanli that said that they had one slot open for a 10 day free diving breath work meditation, yoga, Ayurvedic eating, hiking, and by the way, opportunity to perhaps swim with humpback whales retreat on a small island nation called Niue, which I'd never heard of and if anyone was interested in taking the slot, they should contact them. And something hit me inside of the core of my being that said, "I need to do this." So I reached out to Hanli and she said, "Hey, no, one's taken the spot. My partner and I would love if you would come and join us." And off I went. I bought a ticket and off I went to the island of Niue, which I had never heard of, which it turns out was a few hours plane flight from Auckland, New Zealand. And so I flew to Australia, I flew from Australia to New Zealand, stayed there for a couple of days in Auckland and then made my way to Niue. And right from the second when I got to this incredible island that is about 40 kilometers if you drive all the way around it, maybe a few thousand people, I just felt like I was on a different planet. And going and choosing to do this, I'm not a person who's ever practiced yoga before. Most of the time that I spend in the ocean, when I do love it, I've spent on the surface, on my surfboard and being under the water for a long period of time is strictly because I'm trying to not drown when surfing waves of consequence. And I found myself in an experience where I suddenly had to abandon everything I knew, leave my ego at the door and commune with the ocean in a way that I never had before. With peace and stillness and really, really explore what's underneath and being in a manner enveloped by the ocean, by this practice of free diving. I saw things that I just never dreamed of, when we would go out and do these dives and found myself swimming with sea snakes and sharks and things that I never thought I would experience and learning how to really, really work with my breath. And as a result I was able to really deal with and process my grief in a manner that just never could have imagined, including having the most vivid dreams of communication with my father that I had been unable to have before that trip and really felt access to him and really felt like I was able to know that he was okay. And the absolute pinnacle of it was when we come across a pod of humpback whales, which are very, very elusive if you're trying to swim with them. And we got out of the boat and into the water and Hanli was this just incredible sort of general of managing the collective of the group's energy so that when we entered into the water, we would go in with peace so that the animals who were highly sensitive would know that we were chill and perhaps want to have an interaction with us. And that interaction did not involve touch. In fact, you're not allowed to even try and touch the animals. But we came upon this pod, this group of three large humpback whales that probably were about 30 to 40 feet in length. And I was able to have an experience with one where I was sitting floating on the surface, looking down and this giant massive female came up just underneath me, about 20 feet. And there I was in the water with my snorkel, just above the water surface, looking down in the clearest bluest water ever. And this massive, powerful yet peaceful creature sat and looked at me and I looked at it eye to eye for about 10 minutes undisturbed, maybe 20, 25 feet from each other. And I'll just never forget that peace. As crazy as it sounds, it was almost as if this animal knew where I was and where I'd been and where I was trying to get to. And everything after that moment, after this interaction with these whales and them sort of circling us and then swimming down out of view. And then as we popped up, watching them breach off in the distance almost as if they were saying goodbye, everything after that felt light and different. And the back end of this experience, and on this trip, I felt a hundred percent empowered to get on with my life and actually begin getting out of the grief dominance of what I was experiencing and now getting into the healing experience. And slowly but surely the grief started to diminish, the healing started to increase. And I would say that that experience on Niue, those 10 days were a life changer for me. And I'm so grateful to Hanli and her team and to the incredible Niue people who were so open with their culture with us. I'll just never, ever, ever forget that trip.

Shelby Stanger:

Next, we have my friend, the author, Chris McDougall sharing a story about a treasured run he went on with one of his most wild friends.

Chris McDougall:

Hey amigos. This is Chris McDougall, the author of *Born to Run*, *Natural Born Heroes* and my latest book, *Running with Sherman*. My all time favorite outdoor adventure story is the saga of Billy Bonehead. Now you probably know Billy, if you've seen the cover of *Born to Run* because Billy is that really good looking stud dude, with his shirt off on top of the mountain on the cover. I mean, I love that image because not only does it say pure adventure to me, but it also says pure Billy Bonehead. Half naked in the middle of nowhere, half lost, but up for anything. In the book *Born to Run*, I tell the story of how Billy showed up in the Copper Canyon with the rest of us and he had a phenomenal race against the Tarahumara. But to me, that's only the beginning of the legend of Billy Bonehead. Because after that race, he kind of wandered across America until he just about ran out of America. He ended up on the big island of Hawaii. And when he got there, he saw a listing in the newspaper for a bed breakfast that was looking for a new head chef and caretaker. So they're expecting some experienced hotel operator, and instead there's a knock on the door and who's there, but Jeff Spicoli. So the owner was about ready to send Billy packing, but Billy said, "Hey, just give me a chance." He walks into the kitchen and to this day, I don't know how he pulled it off, but he produces a perfectly baked pan of blueberry scones. He gets hired and that's where he lived for the next couple of years, taking care of this bed and breakfast, surfing by day, trail running by night, smoking his face off in between. So I hadn't seen Billy in a couple of years. When I got a chance to go over to Hawaii myself, I was over in Oahu where my wife grew up and I sent Billy a message and said, "Hey man, can you get over to the island? Let's get together." Couple days later, Billy calls back, said he's on his way. And we arranged to meet up in the woods on top of this mountain at the trail head, for the Pali trail. So I get there and I'm standing around, there's no one there. It's starting to rain. And then his car pulls up and it's just like a scene out of Cheech & Chong. Car pulls up, backdoor falls open, Billy comes tumbling out. He's got a pair of shorts on, no shoes and no shirt and no luggage, by the way, even though he'd just taken a flight from another island. So Billy gets out and he tells me he'd just flown over and he walked out of the airport and stuck out his thumb and a car full of stoners picked him up and drove him up to the Pali trail. And I was like, "Cool, man, but you got on a plane with no shoes, no shirt." And he said, "No, I got those. They're in the car. Well, I turned around and that car was pulling down the lane disappearing. So Billy tears after it, gets his shoes and his shirt back. And after that, we set off on this run down the Pali trail. It is 10 spectacular miles through the heart of the Oahu wilderness. We're gone past mango trees and papaya trees and all kinds of wild, beautiful scenes and waterfalls. And running with Billy reminded me this is running at its best. It was like somebody sent you off to go jogging in a dog park, except your dog is like a cougar. That's what it's like running with Billy. He's a barely domesticated panther. The whole time we're running, he would veer off the trail and he'd dash up in the hill because he saw a tree he liked and he climbed the tree and jumped out of it, then tear it back down and join me again. And if he saw water, he'd just leap in and swim around and climb out and throw his wet hair out of his eyes and just keep running. He and I had a blast. We ran this 10 mile trek, which turned out to be like 20 because he kept veering around and getting lost. And we'd come out of the woods at the end of the trail and my wife's there with the car, we get in the car. And I have a change of clothes because I'm a normal human. Billy has nothing. So I get changed. We clean up, we go into a restaurant to eat. Billy walks in splattered with mud, dirty, sweaty, wearing the same crappy clothes he'd been wearing all day through the mud. And yet people responded to him like it was the second coming of Barack Obama and Jesus Christ and Billy idol at the same time. It was just this like beautiful wild savage creature. So we all sat down and had a meal and the next morning Billy left our place, got back on a plane and flew back to the big island. But what I love about this story is the fact that

it never ended because every once in a while I'd see something online or somebody would send me a message about the next appearance of the ghost runner. Billy had turned into a guy known as the ghost runner because across the Hawaiian islands, some guy would rock up to a marathon or trail race, no shoes, no shirt. At the last second, he might skin on a pair of trail shoes and he could just bolt off. He'd win the race and he'd be gone before the award ceremony took place. And he's somewhere, he's still out there. That's my favorite outdoor adventure story guys. Thanks a lot for listening.

Shelby Stanger:

Next up is author Bonnie Tsui. Bonnie shares a story about diving for abalone off the coast of California. Every year the state issues a certain number of permits to dive for abalone if the population is high enough. This year the threshold was high enough that Bonnie got to go on this rare trip.

Bonnie Tsui:

My name is Bonnie Tsui and I'm a journalist and longtime contributor to the New York Times. And I'm the author of the new book, *Why We Swim*. The story that I'm going to tell you today is actually something that I write about in the book, it's about abalone diving. And I am a lifelong swimmer and I got my start swimming much the way many of you have, which is taking lessons as a kid, joining the swim team, becoming a lifeguard, sort of swimming over the last 30 years in all kinds of situations and all kinds of pools and open water. And one of the things that I had never really experienced was swimming for survival in a way that was more essential than just for exercise, right? So I have never felt the urge to shoot a bird for breakfast or run down a deer for dinner. And so hunting is not something that has ever appealed to me, but that appeal of swimming for my lunch was clear from the moment that I started thinking about abalone diving, diving down with my breath and body and getting shellfish. And there was something that I needed to understand about the act of swimming for something more essential than what we normally do. And so I was convinced to go up to Salt Point State Park in the Northern coast of California. It is about two and half hours north of San Francisco. And my friend, Steve, who is an ardent open water person. He's a pretty advanced tech diver. And he was the one who I swam from Alcatraz with and he said, "You got to try abalone diving. It's just so awesome. It's so amazing." And so I went. And scuba tanks are illegal in this part of the coast. And so I remember going out to the coast, it's pretty rugged. A lot of people drown every year trying to dive for abalone. And so I was pretty careful and I went with a group of other divers and I remember sort of being pulled to and from the horizon and how the currents were pretty strong. And because you can't use scuba tanks, you have to basically just rely on your breath and your swimming skills. And also abalone really liked to stick to the rocks with what's called a muscular foot that they have. And so you really have to kind of sneak up on the abalone to kind of pry it off the rock before it locks down. Because basically can't get off the rock once they lock down. And so I remember swimming down and they blend in pretty well, they've got barnacles on them and trying to get this abalone and it would not come off the rock. And I'm just feeling my breath bubble out of my mouth and struggling to stay in place swimming at the same time, I was trying to get this shellfish off the rock. And then I spotted one down at the bottom 15 feet down and I dove down and I remember swimming up using my hands and my legs just to propel me to the surface and then hoisting above my head and feeling like just a cave person, just this primitive lighting up of a part of my brain that just had never really been awakened before. Because doing this, diving down for food later that day in the backyard cleaning, trimming, pounding the meat tender, cooking it up over flame, feeding my family of four this meal that I've prepared entirely with my own hands and breath and body. It's pretty satisfying. We're divorced from our food sources and it's such a recognized symptom of modern life, but swimming for abalone allowed me for this moment to resolve that disconnect. And I remember rinsing my hands in the sink and watching the water drain away. And then thinking about

that rhythmic tide of seawater through the rocks along the shoreline and what that felt like to watch it all move back towards the horizon and it felt pretty special.

Shelby Stanger:

This next story is from next week's guest photographer and author Ben Moon about a special birthday climb he did at Smith Rock in Oregon.

Ben Moon:

Hi, my name is Ben Moon. I'm a photographer, filmmaker, and I just recently published a memoir on Penguin Books called Denali: A Man, a Dog, and the Friendship of a Lifetime. One of my favorite outdoor stories is a memory from a little while ago. I had just received my last chemotherapy treatment for colorectal cancer and a week following that final chemo round was my 30th birthday. Like all birthdays, I feel like it's up to you to make that day really good. And I decided to make that day the best day I could possibly have, because I realized that after a year of battling that disease I finally was going to be free of all the treatments and tests. So I decided to get up early, have a great breakfast at one of my favorite restaurants in Bend, Oregon, where I lived at the time and also do one of my favorite climbs at Smith Rock with a friend up Monkey Face, just a nice relaxing climb at sunset to celebrate the day. And as we hiked out of the park, the moon was just phenomenal. And I was with my dog Denali at the time and a good friend of mine. And I asked her if she would give me a catch on Chain Reaction, which is one of my favorite climbs at Smith Rock. It's always been one of the climbs that I love to go back to whenever I just kind of wanted to feel grounded and check in. It's, a shorter climb. It's a steep arete rated 5.12c, but just a stunning climb, really picturesque. It's been in many photographs and on the cover of the guide book for years. And the moon was so bright that I asked her if I could try to climb it by moonlight because it had been such a perfect day, just that climb and being at Smith Rock and just realizing that I had a new lease of life. I just really wanted to wrap up the day with a good memory and challenging myself to see if I could climb like that after recovering from chemo in the moonlight, felt like a good way to just welcome a new chapter in my life. So I gave the Denali a hug, put my shoes on, took a deep breath and proceeded up that climb. And I was able to climb it by moonlight and it wasn't like it was my hardest climb by any stretch, but in that moment, I just realized that life could go on and I could move beyond all of those things that had been really challenging over the past year. And every decade kind of brings a new chapter in our lives, but I feel like that was one of the most special moments I've ever had out in the outdoors and also just in my life. And I write about that experience in the book and many others that just really it's about staying grounded in the outdoors and staying grounded in ourselves by being in the outdoors. And in these times right now, I feel like it's just so important to get outside no matter where that is and just observe nature and take deep breaths and realize that the only moment we have is right now. And so just to embrace it with everything we have.

Shelby Stanger:

We'll be back in just a minute with more stories. We've been waiting 82 years for this anniversary sale in particular. This is REI's biggest kayakiest, backpackiest sale of the year and you're invited. So shop online in your sweatpants at [rei.com](https://www.rei.com) May 15th through the 25th. Humongous deals on your favorite brands and that bright orange jacket you always wanted, but didn't think you could pull off. Happy anniversary sale from everyone at the Co-op, be safe and stay outdoorsy.

Shelby Stanger:

For our next story, we're hearing from our first guest of 2020 Chris Fagan about a special family trip. Just a reminder that our guests are recorded at home. So you might hear Chris's husband unloading the dishwasher in the background.

Chris Fagan:

Hi, my name is Chris Fagan and I'm the author of *The Expedition*. It's a book about my 48 day expedition to the South Pole with just my husband and I. And my favorite story that I want to share with you today is one that has to do with my family, myself, my husband, and my son, Keenan. So we just celebrated Mother's Day. I was sort of gravitating towards an idea that would include my son. And while Keenan is 18 now and getting ready to graduate from high school, this story happened when he was 10 years old. It was December of 2012, and it was a winter break and we were extending it to be about a three week vacation. And when we landed in Tanzania, Africa, our plan was to bike from the Mount Kilimanjaro area at the base of it to the coast over four days, and then take a break for a day and then climb Mount Kilimanjaro over eight days. At the time, Keenan really wasn't much of a mountain biker, more than just a regular kid riding around the neighborhood. And so he was a little bit stressed about what the terrain would be like and would he be able to handle it. So what we did to alleviate some of that concern was we shipped a tandem mountain bike from Seattle to Tanzania months in advance. And as we landed there in Tanzania our bike had never arrived. It went rogue, kind of went off on its own vacation. We tracked it to various places in Europe, but it did not arrive. And so we found ourselves problem solving right off the bat to find a bike that would fit him. And we found one and we crossed our fingers, hoping he'd be able to handle going off on his own on this trip through remote dirt roads. And so as we set off on that first day to our surprise, each mile he seemed to gain confidence and we could just see that he could handle it. And that first day we covered over 30 miles over remote bumpy, dusty dirt roads through villages. And we were off. We knew this was going to be an amazing experience. And what I remember over those four days, just all of the friendly people and smiles of kids racing out from each village that we pass through to greet us. And when they would see that Keenan was riding a bike on his own, they would cheer him on and he would wave with such joy and pride. And I remember times where we were enduring really steep hills and Keenan's walking, we're all walking our bikes, because it was really hard to bike up hill. And then a local young child would sort of come along on his bike that didn't have any gears and was rusted over. But he's just peddling up that hill and biking next to us and cheering us on and waving and smiles as he passed by. And other times it would rain and the dirt turned to mud and we would barrel through these mud puddles and whole roads and occasionally fall over and find ourselves laughing because we're so dirty. At night we got to camp in these really amazing remote places. And again, kids would appear and play with Keenan and they couldn't speak the same language, but they enjoyed each other's company. Sometimes we just come into these small towns and be so hot and they would have ice cold soda. The Orange Crush became our big reward. And I just remember the beauty of the landscape and the way people treated us and how our family bonds through these shared experiences and the perseverance and determination of my 10 year old son and just the way he endured and loved that adventure. And we went on and we climbed Kilimanjaro over eight days. We made it almost to the top 2000 feet short with our 10 year old. And it was great. He learned about what it means to not make your goal. And then when he was 16, six years later, we went back and we all made it together. And I just know, as he heads off to college that these experiences in Africa have really helped to shape the young man that he's become the kind, compassionate, determined person. And I'm excited to see where he goes next. And I hope that you enjoyed my story of taking you over to Tanzania. Thanks so much and this is Chris Fagan signing off.

Shelby Stanger:

Chris Fagan isn't the only one whose trip started a little bumpy but then ended well. This next story is a funny one from the legendary commentator, Chris Cote.

Chris Cote:

Hi, this is Chris Cote. I talk about surfing, skating, snowboarding on live television and the internet. I also have a podcast, it's called the Monday M.A.S.S with Chris Cote and Todd Richards. This is a story that happened in the early two thousands. At the time I was editor at Transworld Surf Magazine. And during that time period magazines were hundreds of pages. We had corporate cards, tons of advertisers, and we generally did whatever we wanted. We had a trip planned to Timor in Indonesia. This is kind of between times of strife for this country and we decided we were going to go do some exploration. So we put together a pretty wild crew of surfers, Andy and Bruce Irons, Dean Morrison, and Jason Shibata, myself, Blair Marlin, who also worked with the magazine and our photographer, Brian Biemann. We went out with great intentions of catching perfect waves in this region that hadn't really been explored. We were just going there to try to find something unique. So as we were exploring, the crew got pretty restless. We weren't really finding waves. The captain and the crew were not seeing eye to eye. So it pretty much became a light mutiny, let's say. So we basically told the captain to turn around, drive us home. And we were going to take a flight from Timor back to Bali, I think half because we wanted to just try to find some better waves and also half because with this crew, we wanted to cut loose. We wanted to party. Well, as we got to the airport, which was this tiny little strip of runway with just a hut, we get on this plane. It was probably a late seventies, DC10 or something like that, a hand me down from American Airlines or something. I think there's even faded American Airlines logos on the seats. But we got on this plane and we were all kind of excited. All right, that part of this trips over let's get to the next chapter, let's go to Bali. Let's surf, let's party, let's have some fun. When you're hung over, you definitely have a little bit more anxiety than normal. And for me, flying gives me anxiety any way you slice it. So I was already feeling pretty sketchy. As we start to take off in this vintage airplane, vintage is good for clothes but vintage for airplanes in the sense of a passenger plane, not super fun to think about, especially when you're sitting on the plane. We start to take off as we're going down the runway, right when we hit full speed, the nose comes up, the loudest scariest explosion rocks the plane and black smoke immediately fills the whole cabin. We come to a screeching halt, side sliding off the runway, it was crazy. We think we're dead. We think this plane is going to explode. We think we've just had a plane crash. And as we sat there for a second, all the doors fly open, the smoke starts to clear out everybody on the plane just immediately starts lighting cigarettes and smoking. It was unlike anything I've ever seen. Nobody was panicked though. I was on the verge of tears. I was sitting next to Andy Irons and he was on the verge of tears, which is something I've never seen before. Some people were laughing, other people were crying. It was a scene out of a horror film. So a little bit of time elapses, we're looking out of the windows and we see the same guy that checked us in and took our bags and took our tickets and did that whole thing, he's scratching his head and he's looking into the engine. I think he brought a chair out, a folding chair and he climbed up on the chair and looked in the engine. We're watching him and he reaches in and he pulls out what looked like a burnt chicken. So he takes it out, looks up towards the captain, holds it up, gives a thumbs up and they shut the doors. And we're freaking, a bird just flew into the engine and nearly crashed the plane. And the same guy that took our bags and took our tickets is now I guess a mechanic, a burnt bird remover. That's his job, he's a burnt bird remover. So he throws the bird on ground. People put their cigarettes out, they shut the doors. We turn around and do it again. We start taking off, we're driving down the runway. Everybody's palms are sweaty that you could hear people saying prayers in all different languages. Nose comes up, I'm thinking we're dead. Back wheels come up, we're in flight. I look out the window and I swear to you all, there was a flock of birds like I've never seen whizzing by the windows. I mean, within inches of the engine. I thought that was going to be

my last visual of my life, a bird flying into the engine, it explodes, we go down in flames. The flight made it, we landed in Bali. I know I'm privileged to be able to have traveled and been on all these flights, but I will tell you, this is one flight of my life I could have lived without. So for the next week we ragged our faces off in Bali, had the best time ever. I don't even know if we got waves or not, but either way we lived, we survived our Timor adventure, we survived a plane crash. The only victim in this whole sort of affair was that poor burnt bird, rest in peace burnt bird.

Shelby Stanger:

I am so glad I wasn't on that flight. I don't know if I'd ever get on another plane. Well, for today's last story, we have a tale from one of my favorite storytellers, children's adventure author and accomplished editor, Steve Bramucci.

Steve Bramucci:

Hey, my name is Steve Bramucci. I am the travel and adventure editor at uproxx.com and a children's book writer and novelist for National Geographic and for Bloomsbury Books. My next book is called *The Quest for the Ruby Backed Turtle* and it's coming out from Bloomsbury in 2022. For me, I think nature has always been one of these things where I like it at its best when misadventure is sort of hovering on the horizon and the truck has metaphorically got two wheels off the road and everything is just a little slapdash and chaotic. So this is an example of that. I was in the Amazon basin and I wanted to be under my own power. I wanted to be under my own control rather than taking a tour. So I rented a bike from a bicycle shop and I had my backpack on and I had my tent and I had those things. And I rode my bike to a river that was an Amazon tributary, it was about a full day ride across gravelly roads on a mountain bike. It was probably about 10 to 15 miles and took a long time, maybe a little more actually, and took a fair bit of the day. And by the time I got to the river, I was beat and I was chugging down water and excited to set camp. And I swam real quick and then I set camp as far as I could from any sign of human life. There was a little palapa that was alongside the river that had clearly been built by someone. And it was made for campers, but I thought, "No, I'll be more intrepid than that. I want to be away from it all." And so I walked my bike, kind of carried my bike over my shoulder and my camping stuff a little further upstream. And there, I saw this beautiful collection of three towering boulders kind of out in the river in a kind of swampy marshy part of the river. But between the three towering boulders, there was a very small human-sized bedroom-sized white sand beach. And so I was like, "I'm going to go there." And I got out there and set my tent and got excited. And it I was just living the Huck Finn life, perfectly pleasant and hyped to be alive and feeling good. And it took me about an hour and a half to get a fire started because my fire skills were a little rusty and all the leaves that I could find anywhere along this forest and along the river were soggy and wet. I didn't have any fire starting stuff, I had wanted to kind of do it rough it as much as possible. I just had a book of matches and I didn't want to waste any. So it took me a little while and I had to get a tinder ball and I finally got it started and I got my meal heated. And all of a sudden I hear this wild galloping through the forest, just massive wild sounds of clacking. And it sounded like the biggest panther in the existence of history was galloping towards me at full tilt about to bite my head off. And it took me just a second to realize it wasn't that and then another second to realize that what it was was rain. It was rain, a storm cloud passing across the jungle and rain coming towards me and it hit. And I was instantly in the middle of a wild flash flood. Now I had a rain fly on my tent, so I was presented with a couple options. First of all, I remembered those documentaries I saw when I was a kid that said the Amazon rain forest is prone to flash floods. But second of all, I was pretty comfortable where I was, I had just had my dinner. I was in my tent, it was cool to be around rain. And I knew that if I moved, then I was going to be soaked to the bone and everything I had would be soaked to the bone. So it was a little bit of a tough choice. And what I did was kind of six of one, half dozen of another, I stuck

my hands outside the tent on the white sand beach. And I decided if I ever felt water, that I would get moving and if I didn't feel water, I wouldn't. This is a horrible idea and obviously incredibly precarious, but it wasn't what I decided to go with. I was feeling a little lazy. I sat in the tent and I ate my meal and I didn't sleep very well and every hour or so, I would wake up and I would look out of the tent and make sure that I was still okay and that my beach was still a beach and not a puddle. And the water did start to creep up around me. But by the time I woke up in the morning and the rain finally stopped about 12 hours later, I was okay. I was alive. And then I walked up as the sun broke through the clouds to one of the boulders. And on all three sides of me, the boulders had protected me on the downstream side, they had no need to protect me because the river passed through. But the boulders had protected me and I was on an island in the middle of the river. And I was completely isolated on all sides besides the downstream side by these boulders that had really saved me from getting caught up in a flash flood, or at least having to move in the middle of the night and getting soaked. And it took about four more hours for the river to go down enough that I could even walk through in waist deep water back to shore. But not only did that foolishness as a young man wake me up to the power of nature, but it reminded me why I love nature so much. And it remains one of my all time favorite stories of the outdoors as close to disaster as it was.

Shelby Stanger:

Remember, we'll all be adventuring soon outside in wild places in nature and embracing those moments that only happen when you decide to go after a wild idea. If you're in a place where you can get outside, do so safely. And if you're feeling kind, share a glimpse with the rest of us adventurers so we can all live vicariously through you. If you have a memory you'd like to share with us, we'd love to see it. Share your story on social media, along with a photo or video and tag #REImember. REI will be sharing 82 of these stories so that the rest of the world can be inspired and reminded that the outdoors will be there for us when we're ready. Thank you so much to all of our guests who shared their stories with us. You can find all of their episodes as well as links to their website books and more on rei.com/wildideasworthliving or wherever you listen to podcasts. Wild Ideas Worth Living is part of the REI podcast network. It's hosted by me, Shelby Stanger, written and edited by Annie Fassler and produced by Chelsea Davis. Our executive producers are Paolo Mottola and Joe Crosby, and our presenting sponsor is Subaru. As always, we appreciate when you subscribe, rate and review the show wherever you listen. And remember some of the best adventures often happen when you follow your wildest ideas. And remember right now the best way to adventure is by staying safe.