

James: [00:00:00](#) Welcome guys to episode 75 of behind the show podcast. My name is James Geering and this week we will be discussing something that most parents fear and dread but are so blessed never to encounter and that is losing a child. So my orange county brother Steve Kibbler, we are on the show this week and we were discussing how he and his wife were blessed to have a baby who a few months in was diagnosed with a form of leukemia and passed away at the age of five months. So we talk about that. We talk about cancer treatments. We talk about his fundraising with simple tricks, how those trials strengthen their relationship even through divorce, which sounds ironic. Um, and then how we're sitting here now having this conversation 10 years later and little Camden is still resonating in the hearts of so many people. So I'm going to keep this intro short so we can get to this as a longer, a longer interview. Again, before I sign off again, please rate the show on itunes. Please share these episodes, get these incredible people's stories out here. Some of them are laying their hearts out wide on the, on the table, as it were, so we owe it to them to get this, uh, these stories out to as many people as possible so they resonate and change lives all over the planet. So without further ado, I introduce to you Steve Kibler. Enjoy.

Music: [00:00:00](#)

James: [00:01:41](#) Welcome to the behind the show podcast, Steve. So the very first question I always open with is, where are we finding you today,

Steve: [00:01:51](#) In Orlando, Florida, Sunshine State.

James: [00:01:55](#) I'm kind of familiar with that place. So you are. So were you born there though?

Steve: [00:02:00](#) No, absolutely not. No, I, ah, AH, my tale goes like this. It's a cautionary tale. James. Um, I was born actually in Toledo, Ohio. The glass capital of the world where, uh, their notoriety is corning glass and they also made a windshields that went in the vehicles in motor city Detroit. So, uh, I was born there and my parents divorced when I was pretty young and my, uh, my dad moved down to Florida. Uh, he remarried and uh, I guess I should say when, um, when he was with my mom, he had two boys. Um, I have an older brother, Mike, and then myself, and then he remarried and had two more boys. So I was so young when he had those, uh, the two younger ones that are just my brothers. There's no, you know, no half this, half that or whatever. We've all grown up together and uh, uh, and he lived down here in Florida and then, um, you know, my mom was

living in the eighties with a little credit to her name trying to make it on her own.

Steve: [00:03:10](#) And um, there was, it was hard sledding for a single mom of two back then. So, uh, we live in apartments and we lived in a trailer and uh, at some point, um, my older brother was, um, he was into like fishing and camping and kind of that kind of stuff. And so it was my dad, so my older brother actually moved down and moved in with my dad and two other brothers. So it was my mom and I in Toledo, Ohio. Um, or, you know, the suburbs of Toledo. I graduated, um, high school there and then I spent two more years at Bowling Green State University, uh, getting, uh, getting my degree in elementary education and I was 20 years old. I was going to be a junior and I was getting really tired of having all these phone calls with my brother, like at Christmas, then he's in shorts and flip-flops and I'm freezing my balls off, so I'm the allure of the north.

Steve: [00:04:12](#) The northwest runs out when you no longer have snowball fights and go sledding and now the, you know, the winter is, consists of brutally hard winch here and digging herself out. So I moved down here when I was a 20 years old, um, and started going to University of central Florida to finish up my degree. Finished the education down here. Yeah, I finished, uh, I have, uh, my, my first degree was um, elementary education. And so I was teaching fourth grade and I was working part time or I was working part time at Delta Airlines and uh, it was a great job, man. Like you went out there, you, you broke a sweat, you, you earned a living, you made really good money for what you're doing and you're, you know, you traveled for free. So I was able to go back and visit family up in Ohio and get out to a, get out to some other places that I never thought I was going to be able to see.

Steve: [00:05:18](#) And um, I was doing that part time while I was teaching fourth grade. And Man, I love kids, but they're just, you know, there, there's a lot of politics and things like that and there's just not a ton of those Aha moments with kids. Um, you know, at least at least where I was. I don't know if it was the school or, you know, I'm just my situation. But, um, so I actually went back and uh, went back to ucf and I got a history degree with a minor in African American history and civil rights, um, are, are, you know, uh, area. And so the goal was to then teach high-school, um, you know, where are the kids have a little bit more of their own thoughts and they're going to ask a little bit more challenging questions and want to get a little bit deeper into some of the material.

Steve: [00:06:11](#) And actually, while I was, while I was getting that degree, I was still at Delta Airlines and September 11th happened. And um, so it was, that's what sparked my interest in the fire service. And uh, interestingly enough, uh, my older brother Mike, his neighbor down the road work for a neighboring fire department, uh, from the one that we both ended up getting a job at. So he had a buddy, Mitch that was working at the city of Orlando and know he was going down down the street having a beer or two, you know, a couple days a week listening to all these, the firehouse stories and kind of that same time I was married at the time and my wife, all of her family were volunteer firefighters up in New Jersey. And so I talked to them on the phone and, you know, when we go up there and visit, you know, I hear all the stories and everything.

Steve: [00:07:04](#) So some, my brother and I, unbeknownst to us, we were both kind of on a collision course to get into the fire service. Um, and that's what we did in 2006. Uh, we both applied and Orange County, I worked for Orange County fire rescue here in Orlando. And they have what, uh, what's called a non-certified program where you don't have to have any education when it comes to ems or fire ground or anything like that. And they basically pre hire you a so you have the job before you ever step into a classroom. And then, uh, and then they pay for you to go through, you know, ems and fire standards. And um, you know, we, we heard people, we heard rumblings out, you know, they're, they're not gonna hire two brothers and they need to meet these quotas of, you know, of, uh, ethnicity and all that other stuff.

Steve: [00:07:59](#) And I was like, well, listen man, you know, they've been nothing but nice to be so far and until they tell me not to come back, you know, I'm just going to keep showing up. And so yeah, uh, my brother Mike and I graduated together and we were able to pin each other, um, started our careers together. And that was going a little over 11 years ago now.

James: [00:08:20](#) I worked with Mike for Years in. I'm battalion four in Orange County at a. He was at station 50 and I was at 70, so we spent lots of time together.

Steve: [00:08:30](#) Yeah, funny thing, he, uh, he went from 50 to 51, he got onto truck 51, and I know some of our listeners have no idea what we're talking about, but 50 and 51 or two of the five or six busiest stations in, uh, in Orange County. And we have 41 stations, I believe. Um, and he just found out today that he got a transfer out of 51. Um, which he, he put in for a few stations and he got it. And he's, he's realizing he's not happy. Like he's,

it's going to be, it's going to be a little culture shock for him leaving. I'm Italian for stations you go into, he's going to go to 82, which is, um, it's, it's toward the east side of town and, and, um, this area called Bithlo, um, you know, so it'll be a little bit slower for them. Um, you know, he's, he's just looking for a change. He's got a, he's got a side business that he does, so I even, even being on truck 51 normally the specialty units are a little bit slower and they're still busier than 85 percent of the engines in the county. So, um, so he's looking to, you know, slow down a little bit and kind of reassess where he's at.

James: [00:09:47](#) Right. Everyone this thing that isn't familiar with our area, so a 50, 51, they all serve obt orange blossom trail, which I think the best description would be skid row of Orlando. So it's, uh, yeah, it's, it's there in Pine Hills, definitely the busiest two areas. And as a matter of your truck engine rescue, you're going to have your, your rectal passage handed to you every 24 hours.

Steve: [00:10:12](#) Yeah. Yeah. And then, you know, uh, I'm sure we'll, we'll talk about it as we go on here. But for there, there's a give and take for, for every night that he didn't get any sleep. You definitely gained a sense of comradery and, and family and things like that.

James: [00:10:29](#) Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Definitely find that in the busiest stations. So I wanted to touch on something you said, so grown up in Ohio. I just had um, a Sam Quinonez on who wrote a book called Dreamland about the opiate crisis and a lot of it is centered on the Ohio area. Um, did you see a lot of drug issues when you were living in growing up there?

Steve: [00:10:53](#) I mean, not opiates. I mean, I, I grew up, um, you know, but my mom is a huge success story in her own right. So we went from in an apartment in inner city Toledo to. We moved out to the sticks and we had a, a, a, a trailer mobile home out there. And um, she actually went back to school while working two full time jobs. She got her master's degree and she ended up buying. She'd probably overcompensated because she ended up buying a four bedroom house in the suburbs just for the two of us. And um, and so I was out in the suburbs and it's, it's an interesting story. Um, I like to say that my mom got pretty lucky and she likes to say that it was just good parenting, but I can remember being alone, um, as a kid in like fourth, fifth and sixth grade, I would basically walk myself to the bus stop and go to school and then I would come home, walk home, do my homework, and I would fall asleep on the couch because he was working a second job and I'd fall asleep on the couch and I

would just basically leave my math book or whatever homework open until she got home.

Steve: [00:12:07](#) And um, and then when she got home I'd wake up and we'd go over whatever it is I didn't understand and uh, and you know, she was, she was pretty liberal with me as far as, um, it was kinda one of those things I'd be home when the street lights come on when I was his elementary school and junior high. And then as I got a little older I really didn't have a curfew. Um, but it's interesting because I would spend half my summer in Florida visiting my brother and my dad and I'd spend the first half in Florida and we, you know, do all the cool things and I get a little taste of what it was like to kind of have that, that sporting life, these seen magazines with them. And then my brother and I, we'd go back to Ohio and, you know, they say, you know, I little hands type of thing can get you into trouble.

Steve: [00:12:59](#) And I noticed when I came back before freshman year of high school, all my buddies had started drinking and they were months ahead of me and it just wasn't really my thing. And uh, and by that time I knew my dad was an alcoholic, so, you know, you hear, oh, it's genetic and things like that. So I just kinda stayed away from it. And then next year, same thing, I came back before my sophomore year and they had started doing weed and you know, that just wasn't my thing either. And uh, and then we came back after my junior year and they were dropping acid and I don't know, you know, after, you know, after that I kind of steer clear air from a lot of those guys, uh, were doing it. But every year they progressed a little bit harder, a little bit different, um, you know, mind altering chemicals and uh, it, I just never got into it.

Steve: [00:13:47](#) And so, you know, to this day I, uh, I've had probably like three puffs of menthol cigarette and that's the extent of, you know, ah, I guess I've had some cigars, you know, throughout my college years to before we got hired on with the fire service and we can't have tobacco anymore. But, but yeah, I just, I just kind of fell into a situation of being a responsible one that designated driver, things like that and it was really just because I would get pulled away from it to go visit family only when that all started it. Um, but as far as opiates and [inaudible] like that, um, you know, I graduated high school in 94, so I, I probably left before opiates became a huge deal in that area. Um, at least I didn't witness it. Um, I do now. I mean, I, you know, I see it, um, my sister station, I'm an 80 and 82 is my sister station and the sign has a big opiate problem in here in Orlando. I was telling him in interviews the, it's weird being a firefighter because we

see it in a lot of our patients and then we see it in some of our brothers and sisters too that are using it to cope.

James: [00:14:58](#) Yeah. So. All right, well I wanted a one more question about you, your younger years before we kind of delve into the fire service and being a fireman. Were you, uh, an athlete when you were younger,?

Steve: [00:15:15](#) Um, you know, I'm not the most athletic, uh, you know, I, again, I'm not putting, you know, all this with my mom, but like we didn't have the money and she didn't have the time to take me to like pop warner and things like that. So I didn't get involved in sports outside of playing in the backyard or playing on the, you know, on the driveway basketball or something like that until junior high. But I didn't play any organized sports before that. So I was, I think seventh grade, I was the sixth man, you know, I came off the bench, I took two shots. I made my first shot ever. And my second shot got blocked about three, uh, three rows deep into the stands and that was the last time I took a shot. And uh, yeah. So, and then eighth grade our coach was my math teacher and you know, we didn't get along so I didn't want to play basketball anymore and I wasn't very tall anyway.

Steve: [00:16:09](#) And a football kind of the same thing I played, I played junior high, which was seventh and eighth grade. And um, I was, you know, I was the third corner back, you know, defensive back to come in and then I was the second tight end. So I was kinda again, like the next man up type of thing. Um, I can remember again, we were in a, it was eighth grade and we were in a passing situation in seventh grade. You barely ever threw the ball, you just gave it to the biggest guy. They got run forward and a eighth grade we opened up our offense a little bit more and uh, are starting tight end was tired and uh, it was a third down and coach Kibbler get in there. And I looked at him and I was like, coach still throw me the ball and don't throw me the ball.

Steve: [00:16:53](#) I was just so nervous. And uh, they threw me the ball and I caught it. We didn't get a first down. But uh, but yeah, no, we'll, we'll go with um, I was, I was not an all American in anything. I did pole vault, I pole vaulted my senior year and they gave me a participation award because I just gave it my all. So, uh, so yeah, no, no, not, uh, not, not a, not a huge athlete you're going to write home about. I don't really have a lot of metal sitting on my, uh, sitting on my mantle for my glory days.

James: [00:17:29](#) You know, it's funny because this, since you talk about that sport as far as I remember, uh, Games and games is supposed

to be things that you just play and it's kind of sad if you think about it, that if you just want to play into your best then you count yourself out, you know, and it's all about winning and being, being the best and all American. Whereas football, soccer, when I grew up, we just threw two jerseys down on the floor and that was your goal posts and you just played. And it's a shame that we've lost that. They're like, oh, there's no participation trophies. Well, you know what? Yeah, you can be the best and you can be a winner and you can be elite. But there's also the other 95 percent of the kids just want to freaking play the sport. Can you just let them play the sport too?

Steve:

[00:18:13](#)

I agree. We, we go back, you know, the fire service has a, has a lot of Alphas in it. And like you were saying, there are a lot of very, very good athletes. Um, so usually if you're a good athlete or you're an Alpha, then you know, winning is kind of the most important thing. And uh, and I have, I have an eight year old daughter now and she's not the most coordinated and she honestly, I was super competitive. My family, you know, most people will tell you that I still am, even though I've tried to mature and I've tried to get out of that mentality and just enjoy being with family and in kind of enjoyed that process. And uh, but I could see my daughter from a young age, we're starting to get frustrated, you know, I'm at things. And so I started this, uh, this little mantra where we would play a game.

Steve:

[00:19:06](#)

And what I do is I still do it to this day and I started it when she was three and four. But if she had, if she had a good attitude throughout the whole game, whether she was winning or losing, then I would, you know, somehow or another she would find a way to win, you know, a more often. I don't, I still don't let her win all the time. Um, but at the same time, if she had a bad attitude, I would always beat her. And, and the mentality was, you know, and I would kind of coach her through and I was like, you know, if you just kind of keep a good attitude, you know, and you don't get down on yourself and you don't get frustrated, good things happen, you know. And uh, and then at the end of the game, a win or lose, that's basically exactly what we say.

Steve:

[00:19:48](#)

I give her a high five and I say sometimes and she finishes the sentence, you know, sometimes you win, sometimes you lose. So, you know, dad says sometimes and she finishes you when I say and sometimes and she says you lose and we don't make a big deal about it. We just go on with tonight's game. So she is, she is that she doesn't care about winning or losing. And at the age of Eight, I don't know, I don't personally think it's that

important. Um, you know, at some point she's going to have to toughen up a little bit when she gets out into the competitive world of whatever she decides to do as a career. But at eight, I'm just going to let her be a kid, man.

James: [00:20:28](#) Well, yeah, I was just thinking while you're talking, you think about the videos that go viral than not have one sport just destroying one team, destroying another team. It's the one time with a kid falls over and then the kid stops mid race and picks them up and helps them to the finish line. Those are the ones that go viral. So think about. I still,

Steve: [00:20:48](#) man, I'll tell you, um, there are a few landmark things in my life that have changed me as a person and made me really, really soft and uh, one of them is having a daughter and uh, and yeah, I'll tell you all those videos, they still get publix commercials, get me thinking. So publix commercial of, you know, the family figuring it out and, you know, just showing you the, the true essence of being a family or caring about other people. And I'm like, whew. Wow. Anybody else get a little teary?

James: [00:21:17](#) I do too. I'd say right now anything that's a dad, you know, specially God forbid as a single dad because I went through that for awhile and uh, yeah, that, th at one, oh my God, that will get me every time.

Steve: [00:21:17](#) Living that now, man.

James: [00:21:32](#) Yeah, exactly. I know you. So well, let's delve into that now then. So, right. Um, how long, how long did you have on the fire service when, uh, when you guys got pregnant?

Steve: [00:21:43](#) Ah, so the story goes to just to fill in some of the gaps. I was working at Delta Airlines, I had finished up or I was in the midst of finishing my history degree and I mean, I'll tell you, it was the all American life, um, my, my wife and I, we met in college and I was actually four years older than her and my, my original plan when I finished my elementary education degree was to move back to Ohio and I was going to teach up there and things like that. And I met her in my final semester and uh, so I was like, oh, she's worth sticking around for and kind of seeing what happens. And so I stuck around and, and, uh, her, her parents are traditional, you know, parents, you know, old school and everything. So it was one of those, you know, you, you can't live together until you're at least engaged.

Steve: [00:22:39](#) And, uh, and we were, we were, we got to that point where, um, you know, I just was, I was going on, you know, I, I'm not looking around for anybody else and she's a great girl and we don't fight and, you know, she makes me happy and we laugh and, and so, like, I got a good thing here, you know, and so, uh, so we got engaged and we bought our first house and I was driving a jeep wrangler and we had a yellow lab named Gus, like it was the all American, you know, what you would see on a postcard. And um, but I was still at Delta Airlines and this is post 9:11. And so the airlines just, you know, you just don't know they're, they're volatile. Uh, even at Delta, um, even with the big airline like that, I just, I just didn't trust it if I was going to be relying on this for my family. So I made the move to the fire service and I had, let's see, I started in [inaudible] in, we had our first son Camden in February of 2008. So I had about a year and a half on. OK,

James: [00:23:50](#) All right. So, um, you know, if you wouldn't mind then just walk us through, you know, I mean w was, it was the pregnancy as at that point, the. OK as far as the, the medical feedback that you got.

Steve: [00:24:01](#) Yeah. Yeah, I mean, everything, everything was perfect. Uh, she was, she was great. She ate everything right as far as, you know, stay away from Deli meat soon, you know, no raw foods and things like that. And um, she did all the, all the research, all the reading on vitamins and in what foods to eat, what not to eat, things like that. Um, and yeah, no issues whatsoever with the pregnancy. Um, ultrasounds, everything, everything was good to go.

James: [00:24:42](#) When Camden was born. At what point did you guys discover that that was something not quite right.

Steve: [00:24:48](#) So Camden was born actually. Um, so do I, I'm not sure how much this is going to date this situation, but, um, but today is February 27th and uh, tomorrow is Camden's birthday and he would have been 10 years old. Um, and so I, I guess I should say at some point that, uh, you might have to bear with me if I, uh, if I get a little choked up or emotional. Um, I actually went, I went today, uh, to get donut king, my, uh, my ex wife and daughter when they meet tomorrow with the cemetery in the morning and we're going to have breakfast at the cemetery. And when I was at donut king they, I asked them if they could write happy birthday on the donut and I started getting choked up. So if I'm getting choked up with strangers, that donut king, if we're really going to delve into some of this and, and that

ends up being a little bit of a therapy session for me, just, uh, just bear with me. And uh, thanks for being patient.

James: [00:25:58](#) Well, mate, like I said, I told you before, you would not be the first person chokes up on this show. And this is so beautiful about the courage of people like you that come on in and tell the story and not some bs, pg 13, you know, edited version. But the real, the real raw emotion behind it. So just to interject as well, I've got a little 10 year old in my home right now, my son. So I might just, my heart for, for you and being so fortunate to have, you know, a healthy 10 year old in my house now.

Steve: [00:26:31](#) Yeah. It's um, yeah. I mean, you know, we'll, we'll, we'll, we'll cover it. I try to make sure I tell people that even after I tell the whole story or parts of the story, I have a healthy, amazing eight year old daughter and I like to think that hopefully camdon took all of the, uh, all the bad stuff, you know, with him and we'll, we'll have a, an uneventful life from here on out when it comes to a sicknesses and things like that. So, so Camden Camden was born, um, like I said, February 28th, 2008 and healthiest can be a. my ex wife, um, I'm just going to say Janae, Janae breastfed. And she had a heavy whipping cream in, uh, in those babies because he was, he was a big, fat, chunky baby. Big Old, big old fat cheeks, big old fat legs with plenty of roles in them. A healthy as can be. He was about three months old and around three months of age. I don't remember exactly what it was, some of the details I've lost, but JANAЕ had taken camden over to Tampa where her family lived and I had stuck around Orlando.

Steve: [00:27:52](#) I don't know if I went out of town or whatever it was, so I hadn't seen him for about 10 days. And before he left, his eyes were blue and they started to change color. Uh, they were, they were turning Brown, which is pretty natural. And I went over to Tampa after the 10 days or so that, that I was away. And when I, immediately, when I saw him, I had realized that the iris that was turning Brown, it wasn't the Iris, whatever the brown color was, it was, it was a little bit milky and color. It was, it was almost more like an opaque tan color, Moreso than like the Brown eyes that we know of. And they were actually occluding his pupil a little bit and it hadn't taken up a whole thing. I, if they were at this point, they were, they were spots on his eyes.

Steve: [00:28:42](#) Um, so we, we took them home and we went to to, you know, get his eyes checked out by a specialist and they wanted us to go down to the University of Miami to, to do more testing. So we headed down to Miami and they ended up putting him under anesthesia. You show at three months of age. And um,

they did a biopsy on his eye and they said, OK, go ahead and go home and we'll see you in two weeks. So we had at home and we came back in two weeks because of course in the medical field, they don't tell you anything over the phone, you have to be there face to face. So I'm Camden now is, he's just more irritable. He's not, he's not sleeping, uh, as much they had given us. They've given us some eyedrops. And the concept was they were afraid whatever the, whatever the mass or the lesion was on his eyes, they were concerned that it was going to create pressure and that inner ocular pressure was going to force his pupil to constrict.

Steve: [00:29:57](#) And I guess the way it works is if your pupils stay constricted too long, they may never come out of that position. If you dilate the pupils, they'll always be able to construct again. So they put him on some steroid drops and another drop, uh, that basically just kept his eyes always dilated. So think of yourself when you go into get an eye appointment and you come out as an adult and your, your eyes are very sensitive to light. Everything's blurry. That's basically the way he lived from, from about three months until he was about four and a half months. Um, there were about six weeks there where he was on the ops and we ended up making. We made another trip down to Miami.

Steve: [00:30:47](#) Um, and we got down there and they said, OK, good news. He doesn't have cancer. And I was like, well, that's great news because it was never, ever a consideration, like never in all the research, nothing. Nothing ever made me think that it was cancer. And so when he said it, I just, I just kinda took a deep breath or whatever, and then I kind of dismissed it because it was like, OK, yeah, we knew it wasn't cancer anyway or we didn't think it was. Um, and he said it was a rare disease disease called JXG and it's a juvenile mild disease, um, that can affect the eyes and you grow out of it. So they said by 14 or 15, it'll go away. We just need to make sure that we keep the pressure off the eyes. They said, but we want you to come to town. Um, another follow-up visit. We're going to do another biopsy on it. So go ahead and go home. And if he happens to spike a fever for any reason within seven days of your next visit, then let us know. But we won't see him because there's just a chance that his body will be too weak to go under anesthesia. So this is now a June and a late June and he, he spikes a fever,

Steve: [00:32:15](#) um, and we go a few days where we'd go to the pediatrician and we're going back and forth between Ibuprofen and Tylenol, things like that and his favorite won't go down. And um, and so I was with him one day and just kind of playing with them cause uh, uh, Janae was at work and I was kind of playing with them

and I was holding him and trying to console him and um, I felt what I, what I thought to be like a bump on his belly and considering how, how fat he was, the fact that I could feel a bump meant that it was a pretty big bump because it was coming through all that fatty tissue. Right. So now I'm Kinda like, you know, a little bit more of a panic mode. A, he's got a fever, he's got these illusions and his, I now I feel like I feel a bump on his stomach.

Steve:

[00:33:13](#)

Am I going nuts in my, one of those crazy patients we run on that's just blowing everything out of proportion. And I, I'm now examining him and um, and I felt one also on his back and this one, if you, if, if you look close enough you can actually see it versus actually having to kind of press down to feel it. So Janae comes home and I'm making phone calls to nurses and long time paramedics that I've known, asking them what, what we should do and every one of them, you know, go, go to the hospital, you know, go to the or just better be safe than sorry, just go ahead and go to the or. So we say OK. So we, we load them up and we head to the or, and it was interesting because we show up to the or, and we're there and um, I think we had flip phones at the time.

Steve:

[00:34:11](#)

We didn't have smart phones or anything like that. We were Shanea and I have always been a few years behind the times and um, so we had texted a few people and let them know, you know, I texted my brother and stuff like that. And so we're sitting there in the waiting room at Arnold Palmer Hospital and family just start showing up and some friends just aren't showing up. And you know, everybody that showed up, I was like, what, what are you guys doing here? And they're like, oh, we're just, we're just going to hang out, you know, we're, we're just going to chill out, you know, and, and wait it out with you. And I don't realize it now. I mean, through this whole process, I was very naïve, but it was looking back and it's quite obvious that plenty of other people realized just how serious this was and whether it was denial or whether it was some false sense of security. This couldn't happen to us because we've done everything just right. You know, where the all American family, we, we, we bought a house, I got a more stable job. We paid off our vehicles before we had kids. We saved up money before we had a file that we, we felt like we did everything right. And, um, and people just came up and just kinda hung out and everything. And finally we, we were taken back and we were in the or for hours and

Steve:

[00:35:43](#)

people kept coming in. All they want to do is focused on the fever. So we were telling them, listen, it's more than just the

fever or like all of these things have to be related, this, this, this has to be related to between the eyes, the fever, the bump, I felt on his belly, the bump on his back, the fact that he just refuses to, to, to calm down and things like that. And I remember this, this high school girl came in and this is, this is in the evening now. It's probably nine, 10:00 at night and this little high school girl comes in and I'm sure it's, it's either volunteer work and it's her after school job and, and she's Kinda like their q, a girl. So she walks in and she's got this little clipboard and she's like, um, you know, ask a few questions.

Steve:

[00:36:27](#)

And then at one point she was like, how do you, how do you rate your overall experience so far? And I'm not one to berate somebody, especially a stranger. But I was pretty frustrated, so I was like, listen, nobody is fucking listening to us, like there's more going on and nobody will listen to us. And so she was like, OK, thank you. And she walked away. She didn't do anything. She didn't say anything, she didn't do anything. And I was like, oh, I could kill color. I'm just now I'm even more upset. And about I'd say five or 10 minutes later, the head of the, the hemonc floor, which is the hematology and oncology floor came in and he said, we're going to go ahead and admit them overnight and we'll do some more blood work and more blood tests and we'll get a better understanding of what we have. So that was the first time we felt that somebody actually finally listened to us and we were going to get some sort of direction. So that night we got admitted in the hospital, it'll an aph right. And then what happened after that? Ho, um,

Steve:

[00:37:38](#)

a lot happens after that. Um, so that was July fourth weekend. We wake up the next morning, it's our first night and we meet a, a young lady with the southern draw named Sarah Sarah the nurse, and Sarah comes in and she's like, how do y'all, I'm going to be your nurse, and she proceeds to try to comfort us in her own way, things like that and give us the rundown of what exactly going to happen and come to find out about later on in our stay that nurse Sarah was actually a pediatric cancer survivor and because of what she went through as a child, that's what made her decide to become a nurse and get into the pediatric cancer field on our own. So we automatically had that connection with her and she was our first nurse and she has this amazing, which actually has a really cool ending, um, later on in our lives. And so we, we kind of went through the first two or three days, they test after test after test. And it was, it was ultrasounds, it was a spinal taps, it was blood tests, it was all sorts of stuff. And they,

Steve: [00:39:00](#) they narrowed it down to one type of cancer and then a couple hours later they changed it to aml, which is acute myeloid leukemia and I believe they told me back in the time, I think it's a one out of 480,000, says, you know, uh, or children get it and to, to, and I, as far as we were concerned, it was one for one. We've got one child or one child had it so you can take all your stats and all your numbers and percentages. And I didn't mean anything to us because, um, because to us a hundred percent of our children now had cancer. So they sat us down and this, this, uh, doctor proceeded for, I don't know, half hour, 45 minutes, proceeded to tell us about all of the possible things that could affect him. And I mean it was everything developmental you could think about physically, emotionally, and mentally. It could be everything. You know, he, he may have stunted growth, he may be sterile, he may go double blind, he just, he may have a low Iq, just anything. And everything you could, you could not want to hear as a parent were all things that

Steve: [00:40:23](#) w e're told that could happen, you know, to Camden because they s aid he is his cancer. So. So for those that don't know, um, normally acute cancers, the ones that are fast hitting are not good for children. Um, and, and so, um, and then the chronic ones are not good for adults is usually what they say. So they go through all this stuff in their little snow. Everything, every nightmare we could think of that could happen. And when she was done, do you have any questions? And I can. I remember looking at Janae and we were both in tears and in shock and

Steve: [00:41:11](#) we just kind of nod to each other. We didn't have to say a word and looked at her and said, when do we start? And she was like, that, that's it. And we were like, what do, what do you want us to do? Like you say, you have all the answers or you know, you, you, I don't, I don't, I can't give him any chemo treatment. We don't seem like we have enough time to go to Texas or go anywhere else to get another opinion or anything like that from as aggressive as you guys are telling us it is. So this is it. We're here and whatever you guys need to do to, to help save them is his worst sign off on it. Um, so Janae, you stayed in that hospital every day. Um, she stayed with them every single day and when we started the chemo treatment responded really well and they were telling us he's going to get food, which is, um, you know, it's, it's sourcing mouth, you know, which are going to affect his ability to swallow and eat things.

Steve: [00:42:16](#) And uh, he's going to have nausea, diarrhea, vomiting. He's probably not gonna want to eat all these things. And he would, he, he exhibited those things. Uh, they, they ended up calling him man baby because he would come out of a spinal tap or a

lumbar puncture as they call it. And he would come out of that and he would be prescribed up to 20 hours of morphine every four hours. And he came out of first, the first dose and he was smiling and so they were like, well, do you want us to give him another one? And we're like, no, we'll just, we'll just hold off and see how he does. And he was fine. Like he a, he did really well. He responded really well originally to the chemo. Uh, he kept eating and uh, he kept his weight up. I don't want to say that he would just continuing to gain weight, but he kept his weight up and at one point he didn't have a lot of time on, uh, with the county.

Steve: [00:43:24](#) So I was, I was running out of sick time. Um, and so I ended up going back to work and at the time I was at a station [inaudible] and uh, there's, there's actually I should back track when I was at 58, my first shift at, at my station and I bought pizza for the crew and I was just so excited to be there. And everything else will. Fifty eight is, is a very busy ems house. They don't get a lot of fire, but they run their ass off on auto accidents and um, and they have two nursing homes, homes and so a lot of medical, auto, auto accident and things like things like that. So they were conditioned to basically just eat whenever you could. They didn't have a specialty unit, it was just an engine and a rescue, so they didn't have a chief or a captain or you know, a tanker.

Steve: [00:44:20](#) They didn't have anybody else who could cook them food. So they became very conditioned to do fend for yourself and eat whenever you can because we're going to be busy, especially when people are coming home from, from work and things like that. So I bought pizza the first day and I came in my next shift and I was kind of, I'd already talked to Mike because Mike was at 50 and, and we were on the same shift. So we, as soon as we got off shift, we call each other and we compared stories and calls and we had already. And we were all [inaudible] up of course. And um, and he was already starting to tell me about the comradery that they have at the state and just some of the things that the crew did together back then they're rescued in transport. We had a different company that transported to the hospital so you wouldn't have an engine in rescue that would show up on a call and then they would wait for another, another rescue company to show up to actually take the patient into the hospital.

Steve: [00:45:22](#) And if that, if it ever came a situation where. And it actually happened on his first shift where the rescue had to transport to the hospital, even if it was at three or four in the morning, the engine crew would stay up and wait for the rescue to get back. And then they would all go back to bed together, you know, just

to kind of show that, you know, we are a team type of atmosphere in, in, in mindset. So he's telling me these stories about his first shift and, and things. So here I walk into my second shift and I, at some point, early, early afternoon, I said, hey, you know, what are we going to do for dinner? And one of the guys, I remember, he put his hand on my shoulder and he said, Steve, you've seen too many Hollywood movies, man. It's just not like that anymore.

Steve: [00:46:11](#) And I remember that sticking with me and of course you're the pro rights so you, you know, you are seen and not heard. And I remember that sticking with me, but at the back of my head I'm like, yeah, but all my other guys that are all, you know, that I, that I graduated with, that I went through school with, you know, we, we talk and everybody else has really great story because I, this can't be the case. Um, and, and so fast forward a little bit and, and like I said, [inaudible] was a very busy house. So now I've been out a couple of shifts. I'm at the hospital and things like that and I need to go back to, uh, to the job. And so I show up. [inaudible], my first day back after a couple weeks off and when I show up at 58, they're like, what are you doing here?

Steve: [00:47:01](#) And I said, well, I'm, I'm here to work. And they said, no, no, no, no. Uh, the lieutenant over at 56 requested you to go over there because they were very slow house. He goes, so he talked to his crew and they're going to float somebody out to 58 every shift. That way you can get some rest and you can get some sleep. So when you go back to the hospital in the morning, you're rested and you can be there and be present with your family. And I remember thinking already, I'm thinking, wow, the other guy at 58 said that it's a, it's a Hollywood dream that I had is already being proven wrong. So, uh, I'm, I'm at this station 56 for a handful of shifts and after a couple of shifts, the same lieutenant, um, his name is Rick Reynolds. He became a chief. Now he's retired. He, he asked me every day how house Camden doing, how are you doing, how's Jenae doing? You know, things like that, and, and I walked in one day and I knew what he was going to ask me and he said, Steve, he goes, W, why are you here? And I was like, well, what do you mean you? And he goes, why aren't you at the hospital? And I said, well, because Camden's having a good day. And he goes, that's exactly why you should be at the hospital.

Steve: [00:48:31](#) He said, you should be there on those good days, Steve, not just the bad ones. And he sent me home. He called up the chief at the time and he said, hey, Steve's got to go home. And uh, uh, and so the next shift I had, I'd call them up because he's now

who I'm kind of report to. And he told me that he didn't tell me who. I found out later on this amazing woman named Christine Skis, who, uh, who worked for us at the time. Um, she had created a, a, a, a time trade list. So for anybody who doesn't know what a timetrade is, basically if I was supposed to work on Monday and you're supposed to work on Friday, but you have plans and I have plans on those days and we just swap. So it's a body swap. You work for me, I worked for you and everybody's, even everybody gets paid the same type of thing. So Kristin had created a list of people that volunteered to work my shift and it was an anonymous list and I was never able to find out who was on the list and I was never able to pay anyone back. They were just volunteering their time. And um, Camden was in the hospital for five weeks before he passed away on August fifth, uh, at the age of five months of age and I was out another,

Steve:

[00:50:02](#)

another three months. Uh, I didn't go back to work until October and we were roughly 10 shifts a month. So there were over 30 shifts that, uh, that the firefighters in Orange County worked for me and I don't know who did it, uh, and I can't pay them back. Um, and so it's things like that that I'll never forget, um, you know, about the fire service and um, and so like I said, we were there, we were at the hospital four or five weeks and uh, there's so many stories of, of being there and um, I can remember being there and we again, we at this time we had like limited texting, right? Like you're paying for texts, you know, they didn't have all these unlimited plans and things like that and we had so many people asking us for updates and stuff. So we started, uh, a blog, started up a website, we started the blog and we had some pictures up there and I was really, I'm a big music guy and I had the night shift so I'm, Janae slept as much as she could through the night that way.

Steve:

[00:51:17](#)

She was up in the morning and, and uh, and I had the night shift so I was up one night with him and with Camden and I was looking on the Internet, trying to find like the perfect song to start this website, you know, d and this blog. And I was looking at lyrics of different things and nothing was, was quite right and everything. And I'm a big Beatles fan. So I started looking at some of the Beatles songs and I came across, let it be by the Beatles. And a lot of people think that mother Mary is, you know, like the religious mother Mary in, in the song. And it's actually not, it's actually a Paul McCartney's mom came to him when you look it up, uh, he was struggling in his life and she came to him in a dream and said, you know, you, you can't do it all, all the time and you just need to let some things be just hand the one thing at a time and just let it be.

Steve: [00:52:14](#) And I was like, well, that's, that's pretty good. I mean that's really good. And it's the Beatles. It's perfect. So in the morning I was, I was excited to tell Jay about it and Janae crier. So I start playing it for. And I had already let her, you know, read the background on the song and things like that. And She just starts bawling. And so I start bawling and now we're both crying and we're holding each other and through our tears we hear cam in and he had this little mobile or mobile mobile, whatever you call it, and it was going around and there was a orange silk butterfly. And every time it would go around, even with his eyes dilated, he would still see this orange shape. And he was giggling. So while we were sitting there crying over this song and, and, and we thought, we found this perfect song about how to kind of just enjoy the moment that you're in and only deal with one thing at a time and be present.

Steve: [00:53:11](#) Just let everything else be. Our son who was sick basically without using his words, basically said, yeah, mom, dad, listen to the words right now. Like, I'm right here, you know. And he was giggling and laughing and we took. That is a sign, you know, that, yeah, this is, this is a good song. So, so, uh, so we started the blog and I would write every day, I would do all the research. I would get all the, the CBC, the, the complete blood towns, the white blood cells that, this, that, the other thing. And I would update people with all these big technical terms every night. And um, and I can remember

Steve: [00:53:53](#) we, we had one night where he had difficulty breathing so they moved him to the, uh, they moved him to lcu and the next day a was like, I don't, I don't want, I don't want people to hear, like I just want it to be honest, you know, and everything. And I was like today, like we have, my mom had driven down from Ohio. My Dad had come in from South Carolina because that's where he was living at the time. Her, her parents had come over from Tampa, like we had tons of family that hadn't, hadn't been able to spend any time with him or with us or anything. So we, we made the decision to let people come in and say hello and not stay very long and things like that. And it was a busy, busy day and we were exhausted a firefighter and he was like a young, you know, a little bit self ish, you know, like partier type of guy, like not somebody you would think that would, that would call you up or text you and ask you, you know, what do you want, what do you need?

Steve: [00:54:53](#) And this guy did it. And uh, and he, he asked me, hey man, what do you need? And I said, I need, I need two things. His name was John Dunn. I said, I need two things. I said, I need the Casey at the bat and I need a copy of the poem if by Rudyard kipling.

And he goes, OK. And he goes, when do you need it? And I said, I think I need it tonight. And he was like, OK, I'll make it happen. So I don't know how much time, I would say an hour, maybe two hours or whatever. He's, he's there in the hospital and it gives me, you know, this brand new book. And then a few copies of the poem that he had printed off. And the book was one that I had read to Camden at home, um, you know, not every night, but it was something that I read to him and it was baseball and again, and he's fan.

Steve: [00:55:42](#) So, you know, it was just a, a good book to read to his type of thing. And then the poem if by Rudyard kipling, I don't know if you've ever heard of it, but it's basically a father telling his son how to be a good man as he grows up in this world. And um, and so we went about our, our routine. We still read books to him every night. And I'm sorry, I guess I should say at this point, I'm earlier in the day they had, they had said, hey, he's having some difficulty breathing so we're going to help him with his ventilations. And I said, oh, OK. And he's awakened everything at this point. And um, engineering wouldn't leave. I'm like, she just, she just sat there and held his hand and she was crying and everything and they had given us a family room down down the hallway.

Steve: [00:56:42](#) And they said it'll take a half hour to do what we need to do. And I was like, come on, we gotta go and, you know, they got to get started and she just wouldn't leave them. And this was another one of those moments where I was just completely naïve because we walked away, we went into the family room, it took us, it took them longer than they originally said it took them over an hour. And when we came back out, what I didn't understand until I saw him and, and I basically collapsed to my knees, is that he was on life support. Um, you know, I didn't connect the idea of ventilations with him being on a ventilator and being on life support. So I didn't really get a chance to say goodbye to them. Um, when he was conscious, you know, I told him I loved him.

Steve: [00:57:31](#) I know I did that, but there was no sense of goodbye. Um, and so we came back in and it was very hard to see him. It was very emotional and we just spent some time with them. And, and again, this is the day that people started coming up to, to stay, to say hi to him, just spend some time with us and things. And so by the time we got done reading the books that we wanted to read and I read the poem to them for the first time it was, we took some showers, it was about 1:00 AM and we laid down and around three in the morning, the staff came in and they said, ah, you know, they woke us up and they said his vitals are

trending downward. And so we're going to change his, his treatment, his medication treatment and see if we can, uh, help them out.

Steve:

[00:58:24](#)

So we said, yeah, of course. So from about, from about three, 3:30 in the morning until 5:00 AM, we sat on the wall in the back of the room and just watch them do whatever. They were doing it in a very fast pace. And finally somebody turned around and she said, is there anything we can do for you? And I said, I just, I just want to hold my son when we just want to hold him. He's, he's a five month old baby and he was in a crib with wires everywhere and she goes, OK, we can make that happen. So it took him, took them a little while now and they untangled some of the wires and things like that. They moved the crib and they brought in two recliners and Jeanine and I, we took turns holding him and um, we just took turns holding him in and telling him we loved him and um, and things like that. And I can remember at one point I was holding him and I fell asleep. Well holding him. And I've had a lot of people tell me that, you know, that hadn't been such, such a great moment for, you know, for you and for him because it was just so peaceful and pure. And I try very, very hard to understand that.

Steve:

[00:59:45](#)

But being in a, being in a field where we run them on crack heads, we run on toe pains. We run on people that call you at three in the morning because they can't sleep. I've had plenty of nights where I've never made my bed at the station and the guilt that, that can come out of the idea that I can stay up all night for, for, you know, less than 20 bucks an hour for a bunch of strangers. But I couldn't do it for my own son. That I knew was going to be his last night was. It was tough. It was tough. So at 7:00 AM, the new staff comes in, the, the, you know, they, they come in and Jenny and I had already talked about it and we had asked that morning staff, you know, if he's not viable then than we would like to take them off life support where he's, he's fought too much. He's, he's too small and in the state of Florida to three doctors to sign off that, um, that somebody is not viable to take them off life support. So, uh, they had three doctors rotate through and I can remember, I can remember this little Irish, Dr Lewis Little Lady came in with her accent and, you know, she told us, she was like, OK, you know, all three doctors have confirmed that we don't believe that he would be viable. Um, you know, we think he's, he's suffered too much, too much damage and there was a good chance that he was just going to be, um, in that vegetative state, even if he ever came off life support.

Steve: [01:01:37](#) So when you told her, OK, um, we would like to take them off life support and just let him go peacefully. So she said, OK, uh, you know, we can do that. And so she walked out and I got up and I actually went over and I put but let it be on. I just put it on repeat and I just put it low in the background. And Janae held Camden and um, she was in the chair to the right of me. And so I was kind of turned a little bit from the door. The door was on the left. And um, so let it be, was this band playing in the background and we just kept telling him that we, that we loved him and we were going to miss him and um, and the next thing I know I felt a hand on my leg and when I look over it was the Irish doctor and she had tears in her eyes. And once again, uh, me being in denial or whatever, I was like, yes. And she was like, he's, he's gone. And um, so yeah, he passed away, um, August fifth of 2008.

Steve: [01:03:02](#) So he lived a hundred and 60 days. A hundred and 60 days, um, to, to continue on with the, uh, the comradeship and the family that, that you can get in the fire service. And then I'll tell you as I'm focusing on the fire service now because that's, that's kind of where we're at in, in the, in the, the timeframe here, but that, that community is out there past the fire service. Um, you might have to go search it out and you might not find you but, but it can be there. So, so uh, his funeral was on August eighth and it was at the University of central Florida. Janae and I both graduated from there, so somebody in the family was taking care of all the arrangements and we didn't know how big the room was that they had for us or anything like that. And we were in a, another family room with our family.

Steve: [01:04:00](#) The, the whole thing was supposed to start at sometime in the afternoon and it was delayed like 30 minutes and then 45 minutes and then finally, you know, it was kinda like, Hey, what's going on? And they said, well we started off with 300 chairs and that wasn't enough, so we found another 300 chairs, but that's not enough. So we're trying to figure out what we're going to do. And so when they finally did walk us out, I don't know how many chairs that were, there were at least 600 from what they tell us, but it was those two to three rows deep of class, a firefighter uniform in this ballroom. And remember I had had like a year and a half on a, you don't, you don't get to know tons of people with a year and a half on your first six months, you're at one station, you don't float anywhere. And then when you do start floating, it usually kind of stay in your battalion, in your area. So I knew a couple of hundred people maybe,

Steve: [01:05:13](#) and that's probably, that's probably high. And so yeah, were, I don't know the exact number, but there were, there were a lot

of people that were there and they all stayed. That was the, that was the crazy thing is after the service they, they formed to, you know, greeting lines and very, very few people left and they stayed for a long time. And as you can tell them, I'm pretty long winded, but I don't like to, I don't like to sell his story short. I like to, you know, I, I, I think he deserves that. And um, and so he stayed and gave their condolences, things like that. And we went back to our house and family and some friends came over and um, we had people. Wendy gross is one of them, actually. She's a chief now. She was Michael's lieutenant at the time.

Steve:

[01:06:08](#)

She showed up three straight days law, walked into the house, dropped off food, and then left. She didn't stay. She didn't say hello. She didn't do anything other than here's some more food and left, um, when I was, when we were at the hospital, my brother called me one day and he was like, Hey, somebody's mowing your lawn. And I was like, somebody [inaudible]. He goes, yeah, who'd you, who'd you get to mow it? And I was like, I haven't told anybody to mow it and I didn't even think about it. And it ended up being this Guy Scott feeling and he had his own lawn service at the time. And so he had come over and just started to mow the lawn. Well, even after, uh, after we got out of the hospital and we were back home, he still came over every week. He came over to mow the lawn.

Steve:

[01:06:53](#)

And so finally one day I was in my boxer's having a beer and football was about where do they come on. And I heard the, I heard the lawnmower start up, so I walked outside and I was like, you know, Scott, what are you doing man? And he said, Steve, he goes, I don't, I can't pretend to know what your loss is. He goes, but what I do know is that for all those people that were there at the, at the funeral and things like that, a lot of those people are going to go on to support other people and other causes and other tragedies. And he goes, and I don't want you to ever think that your loss is temporary. So as long as I have, you know, this lawn service, I'm going to mow your lawn. And he did it for over three years. Every week. He came over for three years and mowed my lawn before he actually did sell the service. And when he did sell it, he came over to me and tears apologizing that he had to sell it, you know, for financial reasons. Um, so, so yeah, I'm just a few stories about the camaraderie and everything in the fire service, um, that I like to tell that far, far outweigh that, that first interaction I had with a guy in my station telling me that it was a Hollywood movie.

James:

[01:08:18](#)

Well, I can, I can attest to some of those names. Just go from again, Rick Reynolds, amazing chief. Wendy was my lieutenant on and off when I floated in now. And amazing chief as well.

Scott Theelen, an incredible brother firefighter, um, was Kristen Skees related to Cole Skees?

Steve: [01:08:35](#)

Yeah, they got married.

James: [01:08:36](#)

Oh, there we go. So Cole was the Crich master in Orange County. Oh yeah. I know all those names and they are all phenomenal people and I witnessed that. And the way I look at Orange County back then when I came on is organizationally, it was a freaking disaster and you know, they were understaffed and the training was terrible and they're, they're, they're in a much better place now. But that's what made me so proud to the battalion four and call men and women like that. My brothers and sisters, because they did that despite some of the working conditions that they worked under.

Steve: [01:09:10](#)

Yeah. Yeah. No, and I'll tell you, I don't want to. I mean they're all, they're all great people, but getting back to the family, that whole family, like his wife Jen came to visit her. She's a nurse at, at Arnold Palmer, so she came to visit us, you know, when we were in the hospital and then his brother is a firefighter for seminole county and then his brother's wife, his sister in law, like they all, they'll all family is, is a really, really good family. And they all, they all supported us definitely throughout that, that whole situation in years later. They still do.

James: [01:09:47](#)

All right, well we'll move on then to that story you just told and, and like you said, it warrants every single moment of that, uh, you know, timeline being laid out. Um, what we're. And I'm not going to say. Well, what did it feel like? I mean, obviously that's an extremely insulting questions. So, so the relationship with you and, and uh, and Janae and, and the trauma of that. Um, and then obviously having, having a daughter a couple of years later, what were those first few years like as a family unit?

Steve: [01:10:24](#)

So, you know, you hear a lot about how the loss of a child, you know, things like that, um, can, can destroy a relationship. Um, and, and that's true, and if, if you weren't listening, she's now my ex wife. So, uh, so some of this is going to seem a little odd, but honestly, Janae was always, she was always a little bit of a worrier. Um, you know, she was the one that was like overly careful over safe things like that. Always. What about this, what about this? She, she thought everything out before we ever took a vacation or anything like that and I was really, really concerned going through all of this that, that, that would overwhelm her. And um, and she was, she was as strong as I was. Um, you know, I mean, we, we were, she was amazingly strong on, like she was surprisingly strong through the whole

thing. And those first few years were, they weren't the best years of our marriage. Um, obviously you lose a child and it's the worst time in your life, but when it comes to the two of us, there are no two other people that understand the loss of Camden, like Janae and I, right? Like nobody like her,

Steve: [01:11:55](#) her parents, my parents, friends and family, like we lost this one child. So it's something that we were the only two people that have this significant incident in common when it comes to losing a child. And, uh, and we were closer, you know, we, we had that bonds, um, and, and it was, it was hard when it came to the idea of having hope again about having, you know, good positive days. I still had the, we started a blog and we blog every single day for years. Um, Camden, Camden would've been 10 tomorrow and Kendall just turned, uh, eight in late January or so. There's roughly a two year gap, um, or a year and a half, I guess from the time when it can then passed away, uh, that we didn't have any children and we still wrote, you know, every single day we wrote. And then, and after we had Kendall will, you still wrote every single day and some people are like, why are you, why are you still writing?

Steve: [01:12:59](#) And our mindset was we started this thing in the world of situations like the lowest of lows and all of the people that still read it and are still following this journey, they deserve to see something happen. Like they, their, their, their journey with us shouldn't end. It, shouldn't start at its lowest and never have a happy moment. And so we kept, we kept journaling, blogging for years until Kendall was a couple of years old. And at that point, you know, we thought we had given, you know, our, our followers enough happy times, um, to kind of say thank you to them for, for being so supportive. And it was good therapy for us to, you know, um, it was good therapy for us to, to be able to, to, to blog and get our feelings and our emotions out there. We had some good days, we had some bad days, but then it Kinda got to the point where it was counter productive because now even if you had a great day, you, you could wake up in the morning, you could have an amazing day with Kendall, you could put her to bed, you can have a smile on your face, and then it was we got to ride on that blog.

Steve: [01:14:16](#) So even on the best days afterwards, we were still brought back to the end of the night. We were showing our life and how our life had changed and how it had been affected by the loss of a child. And finally, Janine and I had to, you know, we were going to go ahead and shut it down because we don't want to get stagnant. We don't want to get stuck here where every single day we're reminded of of that. He's passed away in a room on

the negative things. So we, we shut it down and we actually, we paid for it to stay up for years after that. And then finally through the separation and through the divorce and then move moving and things like that. I actually dropped the ball and I missed. I missed one of those. Go Daddy, you know, hey your subscriptions about to run out. And I missed it by a couple of weeks.

Steve: [01:15:06](#) And then when I called them they were like, nope, it's, it's, it's gone. So we have, we have the first year or so on pdf and you know, there are, there are talks tonight I've talked in the past about possibly making that into some sort of book of, of some sort. We don't know if it would be a novel or a self help book or, or just, uh, listen, you're not alone. Um, and not only are you not alone, but you can get through this no matter what you think because I hear that a lot. I don't know how you did. I couldn't do it. You'd be surprised, you know, you'd be surprised at Edd that you can put. Um, but. So Janine, I, um, we had Kendall and Kendall is amazing. I mean, everybody loves their children, but I am, I am pretty much convinced that Kendall is the perfect human being.

Steve: [01:16:02](#) She is polite. She's funny, she's smart, she's considerate, uh, well, well beyond her, her age of eight. And it started when she was younger, but somewhere along the line because you originally had asked how, how kind of the marriage was going. So it seemed like everything was going, going well and we had Kendall and she, she had reflux, so that was hard for Janae. It was, it was hard for me too, but it was harder on Janae because she wasn't working at the time so I would get a break. And uh, and she, so Kendall was to, was colic and reflux. So janae never really got a break for a couple of weeks until we figured it out and have core every single, every sneeze, every cough looking at her eyes everyday. Are they, are they, do they have lesions? And I'm feeling her bellied feeling her back, you know, going through all those same fears and, and checking all the signs of.

Steve: [01:16:58](#) Does she have the same thing? You know, the Camden had and um, and she didn't, she was healthy and she, she has always been healthy and somewhere along the line in a, we started doing a lot of charity events. Um, when he passed away, before we had Kendall, it was a way for us to just kind of stay busy and things like that. So we were, we were laying there one night in bed and we were both in tears and, you know, obviously depression, headset in and everything. And we had never gone on any medication. We didn't go on medication. We, we saw a counselor. We'd, neither one of us had ever been to a counselor for anything. So we didn't actually know what, what we could

do and what we could do, but we saw a counselor and he was, he was like a 60 year old man and we just didn't have any connection with, you know, we had asked him at one point, you know, what was your most significant loss?

Steve: [01:18:02](#) And he was like, Oh, I lost my grandmother and I, I can remember Jenae even saying, your grandmother not, not like your mother. And he goes, no, no, my grandmother. And so we just had no connection with him because we didn't think that he could understand, you know, and relate to us at all. And so we did the minimum number of therapy visits that we needed to do, um, you know, for, for our insurance to cover it basically and no medication and everything. And that was something that we were out of. We, we have come out of this and neither one of us is on any kind of medication and we've seen some people that it helped and some people basically they never have been around the lows, but they also never have the peaks and you, you have to, you have to go through those to recognize that your healing.

Steve: [01:18:53](#) Because if you're just constantly out of five, then every, it's the same. You know, you can be at a two and it sucks. I mean, it sucks bad, but then when you have a seven or an eight and you don't remember having a seven or an eight for the last six months, the last year, that's, that's a good feeling. That euphoric. And so you, you, I believe, you kind of have to have those, those ups and downs to realize, OK, I'm starting to have more ups. I'm starting to have more ops, you know, I am healing. I do see the, all those cliches we heard, you know, time heals all wounds and all those things. At the time I just wanted to kill those people. But I also understood that there is no book, there's no book on, on how you support someone, you know, how you consult someone that loses a child.

Steve: [01:19:42](#) So we did a very good job of looking at the idea that any time anybody's said anything to us, if they donated their time, if somebody's out of the kindness of their heart gave us, you know, a check or something like that or prayed for us, whatever, whatever it may be that we knew that was their way of helping and their way of, of telling us, I care, I don't know how to help you, but I just want to let you know that I'm here to help you. And so as time went on and we started doing more events, um, we at one point we were on a pace of doing like one event a month and that was too much. And then we had camden or I'm sorry, we had Kendall and we slowed down some and we kept some, some big major events in our lives.

Steve: [01:20:30](#) We, there's one call, 24 hours of booty and that's a, a bike ride in Charlotte, North Carolina. And you start on Friday night at 7:00 PM and you ride until Saturday night at 7:00 PM and you get off and take breaks as you need them and everything. And we have a few rules to be on the team and they're pretty simple rule is, is you ride a hundred and 60 miles because he lived a hundred and 60 days. Another rule is you don't sleep. And the idea of not sleeping 100 percent stems from the night that I fell asleep holding him. And so it's kind of the team's way of, of kind of given a nephew, you know, to that night that I fell asleep and we have people that come onto the team and they're like, I don't know if I can do a hundred and 60 miles.

Steve: [01:21:25](#) What about a hundred or what about 150? And they come up with all these numbers that aren't him 60. And I've been told I'm kind of an asshole about it, but I don't, I don't, I don't move off of that number. And there's a reason behind it. So this is something you've never done before. A staying up all night, you know, you pull an all nighter, everybody knows what that feels like. You're irritable, you're tired. Um, but also emotionally you're very weak emotionally. Um, it's more likely that you're going to break down in tears or something like that. So we have, I did it my first year when I rode with my cousin Paul. I actually had this moment the first year, but he sat on a hundred and 60 miles. I'm not a cyclist by any means. I didn't do much training and I'd come in and I had five miles to go.

Steve: [01:22:15](#) I was a hundred and 55 miles in and I sat there for over an hour. And Paul, it was just Paul and I, we were the first two on the, on the, the team when I did it, he did it the year before that, uh, by himself. And he did over 330 miles while we were in the hospital. So the next year we're doing this event and it's over an hour and Paul comes over to me and goes, hey, are you ready to go out there? And I was like, no, I'm not. And he goes, well, what do you mean? And I was like, Paul, you don't get it man. Like I'm about to go ride symbolical play the last days of his life. Like I'm going to ride the miles that were in the ICU. I'm going to ride the last day of his life. And then my son is going to die and I can remember Paul.

Steve: [01:23:02](#) He got up and he walked away for a second and then came back. And he sat down in front of me and I don't remember every bit of what he said, but I do remember at one point he pointed to my heart and he said, your son has been there the whole time and he's not going anywhere. So it doesn't matter how many miles you go, he's never going to die in your heart. And it's like, well, that's pretty fucking effective, Paul. And uh, and so I got up and I rode those last few miles and I had let it be

playing, you know, in my, in my ear buds. And I couldn't even see the finish line when I finished because I had so many tears in my eyes. And uh, and so we do events like that. And now it's the same thing. Other people, they joined the team and, and they, they question whether they can push themselves as hard and then they get out there and they do it and they come back and the first time they do it they always have that ugly cry.

Steve:

[01:24:05](#)

And they always tell me, thank you for pushing me and making me do the [inaudible], the full one, 60, because if you don't experience those last shitty days of his life when you're sleep deprived, when you have malnutrition, when you're emotionally spent, you're physically spent like it hits you. And it's pretty impactful. So, so we've done events like that. Um, and uh, she did those events with me and she's, she finished every year. She finished before I did that girl can just get on a bike and just ride with, with no pain and just smile and wave at everybody and, and, and finish the ride. And um, but sometimes, um, I feel like I'm bird walking a little bit. But um, at some point after Kendall was, she was, she was probably like one and she, we had kind of gotten past that idea that, OK, we understand that, that Kendall's not going to be sick like Camden.

Steve:

[01:25:09](#)

Um, I, we both started to kind of like come out of the fog a little bit. And I, I look back now, I didn't, I didn't recognize it at the time, but I had started doing a lot of avoidance. Um, we would do events and um, and I would have to, I would have to go do some work on whatever the charity event that was working on and I would wait for her to get home tonight to get home and then I would go do the event. Cause at this point now she's working and she would ask me, why didn't you go during the day, like, why didn't you go so we can have a, you know, a, a good night to eat or where, you know, something as a family. And um, and I, at the time I was just kinda like, well, I just didn't want to put 10 people in the car.

Steve:

[01:25:56](#)

I would rather play with Kendall and enjoy time with Kendall instead of driving her all around town. Uh, and missing out on that that I'm with her. And so I, James, I honestly, it's been, we, we separated in August of 2013. And to this day I, I, we're, we're divorced now. Um, we took over three years for our separation and we did that on purpose for Kendall Sake. We took everything very, very slow, slow. Um, we may divorced, sucks, there's no way around it, but we managed to respect each other, you know, through throughout the whole process. Any, any real topic that we had to, you know, have mediation over, we would talk about it on a Monday and we would just simply say, hey, we need to talk about, you know, what, you know,

how we're going to split up, you know, the child support or whatever it may be, but then we wouldn't talk about it that day. We would take a week or 10 days and then we would come back to it. That way nobody felt attacked. Nobody felt ambushed or anything like that. And then we were able to have a good, respectful conversation about it.

Steve: [01:27:10](#) And so I, I honestly, to this day, I couldn't tell you what exactly caused us to divorce, what, what kind of caused the, just kind of the emotional void. I guess. I, it took me a long time before I was willing to admit that the loss of Camden had something to do with that. Uh, I felt guilty that blaming my son for, for being a part of that it took me a long time to come to terms with not being perfect and being what everybody, you know, what everybody sees on the outside because we would, we would get text or facebook messages or phone calls, whatever it may be from people. And it was, it was simply, you guys are amazing. You guys are so inspiring. The fact that you still managed, you know, to, to keep your marriage together and you've had a beautiful daughter after such a loss, you know, things like that. And it took me a long time to peel that back and realize that I wasn't happy for, for, for whatever reason it was. And I'll tell you, Janae is an amazing person. She is a great mother. Um, she is, she's a hard worker and I have the utmost respect for her. But somewhere along the line there was just a breakdown.

Steve: [01:28:45](#) And um, so now we co-parent very well, like I said, we were able to maintain that, that respects and we, she's, she's getting remarried actually next month and we still to this day, the old lot of us will get together and go trick or treating. We've gone to look at gingerbread houses down at Disney. All of us together. We've gone out to dinner, you know, we, we do things like that every so often. Just just let Kendall have both of her parents together in the same room and a. and um, we don't fight, we don't, we don't call each other names. You can do a very good job of, of never putting her in the middle of any kind of, um, any kind of miscommunication or breakdown that she and I may have through this whole process. And, um, so yeah, I, I don't know, I don't know if I'll ever know the, the, the reason, the, the exact reason. And obviously there's some white elephant in the room of, of what, what helped it out

James: [01:29:58](#) When you tell me about, um, what you guys are doing that as far as, like you said, talking about an issue and then giving it a week and letting it resonate. And it's amazing the maturity that you guys had in, you know, closing down that relationship thing with relationships is I think a lot of them just have expiration dates. Some of us is supposed to be like these golden a silver

screen romances where you meet in high school, then you die holding hands. But there's a lot of other ones that just don't. And I don't think that that's, you know, a tragedy as long as both people are in agreement when it does. But it seems like the trauma that you guys endure together get made you far more mature than, for example, me and my ex wife, I mean ours was not amicable whatsoever. And I harbored a lot of, you know, uh, emotion on that for quite awhile. But um, it, what you went through and you know, uh, the experience with Camden definitely created such a different environment that probably would have happened had your marriage falling apart and Camden had never gone through that.

Steve: [01:31:03](#) Yeah, no, you're right. And I mean definitely we wanted mediation when we went to mediation, neither of us ever got a lawyer. We drove to mediation together. Um, we sat there and mediation and then they, you know, they a catered lunch for us and so we ate together and everything. And there may have been three or four moments of tears. There were another two or three moments. So you're still mediating, right? And you're still trying to be respectful but not feel like you're getting, you know, walked over and things like that. Um, but at the end of the mediation, the mediator, she started crying and she told us, she said, and I don't know how long she been doing it, but she was like, I've never seen two people so willing to put their child first and then still maintain that level of respect going through a divorce.

Steve: [01:32:04](#) And then she even jokes, she was like, are you sure you want to get divorced? And, uh, you know, but, um, but yeah, we, but again, a lot of people don't have the luxury of having two people willing to go through three, three and a half years where neither one of was, you know, really look for another big relationship to get into, to push it through, you know, things like that. So, so we were, our circumstances were ideal. I mean, if there are ideal circumstances in a divorce, then we just had two people. I mean, I'm the one that chose to leave. So she was pissed, right? She's still probably pissed on some level people. Um, she's human, but she did a very good job of, of swallowing that and moving on. Um, and not showing it, especially not in front of Kendall.

James: [01:32:58](#) Moving on just to, to something that you're doing as well as 24 as a buoy. So when this goes out and we're getting, we're going to put it out before I'm the middle of March. Uh, the one, one of the charities that I know you always are very, very involved with to this day as symbols. So if it's OK with you, can you tell us the background of symbolics in what the money goes towards and

then um, what the, uh, what, what and where, and when the event is going to be in Orlando here.

Steve: [01:33:28](#) Yeah, absolutely. Um, so St Baldrick's was, it's actually a national event based out of California and the idea is sometime around St Patrick's Day, you get a group of people together, they grow their hair out and they raise money to have their head shaved. So you get somebody with a beautiful head of hair, you know, Fabio hair, the nicer the hair, the more money you can raise. Right? And so Fabio says, Hey, I'm going to do this events and if you guys raised \$10,000, I'll shave my head bald. So now he gets all his families and friends. He goes on social media, things like that. He raises the money, he shows up and we shave his head. And that's kind of the, you know, that's the, the, the nuts and bolts of the events. Um, I got, started in it in 2009. My lieutenant at the time Troy Broadway told me about it.

Steve: [01:34:24](#) I didn't know anything about it and he told me about it and so we did our first event at station 80 and we raised \$1,300 and we kept doing the event and we raised a little bit more every year, every year. And then I noticed that the city of Orlando, which is a smaller department, they were doing their event and they had actually done it two years or longer than we had and it got to the point where they were, we were doing it on the same day and there's, there's plenty of support go around. But I was Kinda like, well, I feel like I'm spinning my wheels on some level because it's hard to get people to commit to such a big event every year, year after year. And I said, so let me, let me get in contact with, uh, with the Orlando side of it. So I called this Guy John Clayton and he was running the Orlando side of it and it kind of felt the same way.

Steve: [01:35:20](#) He was like, yeah man, absolutely. Like, I would, I would love to join up, but we can't do it this year. You know, we both were so far into our events. So the following year, which would have been four years ago, we, uh, we did our first event. We combined forces and we called it, we called it central Florida St Baldrick's event and the idea is to get more fire departments involved, um, and get more teams, you know, more fire department teams, create that friendly rivalry, um, things like that. So all the money we raised, a hundred percent of it goes to St Baldrick's and that money goes to a, to a research and also to survivorship programs for pediatric cancer. And so my biggest problem with leaving station 80, which was a very family friendly event, is that John and the city of Orlando, they were always doing theirs at an Irish bar.

Steve: [01:36:18](#) So I had a very family friendly event and it was in the memory of my son was only five months old, so I never wanted to quote unquote sell out, you know, and just do it for the money. I always wanted it to have a family feel. So when I approached John and we talked about it, he said, well why don't you come on out to my venue, which is Johnny's filling station. And he goes, tell me what you think. So I go out and I realized there's plenty of space to combine and our events and to have the best of both worlds if you will. So, so this is year four and again it's, it's called St Baldrick's. Um, it's central Florida, St Baldrick's. You can find it. You can go to my facebook, which is Steve Kibbler, K I B L, e r a m on there. You can go to St Baldrick's Dot Org, O r, g.

Steve: [01:37:08](#) and you can, in the search bar, you can type in Orlando or you can type in Johnny's and you can find the event and it's going to be on March tense from 2:00 PM until 6:00 PM. And we have a bounce house, we have pony rides, we have petting zoo, we have face painting, we have a cornhole tournament, we have home depot, they come out and they do the little wooden kits where you bang a hammer, you know, and make a bunch of noise. And the kids always love that. And there's plenty of raffles were raffling off a Sony TV. We're raffling off an I pad. We have some power beats by Dre, um, and we have a yeti package. And, uh, we're actually for firefighters that are listening, interested. We're, we're giving away a or we're raffling off a, a, a paramedic scholarship. And so it's, it's a great event.

Steve: [01:38:05](#) We've, we've been able to, to keep that family friendly atmosphere at Johnny's, um, and still combine the events two years ago. Um, you know, when I'm, years ago when I raised \$1,300, that was, that was a big deal. And two years ago we actually went over \$50,000. So, uh, so it's, yeah, we're, we're, we're becoming kind of a big deal. So the, the, the goal is to, you know, someone, the counties on board. I'm actually, um, I'm here now to put the challenge down to you and Reedy Creek. Um, we know, we know the mouse, they've got some, got some pull and they've got some good people over there. So, uh, you know, I'd, I'd love to see, uh, you know, put something together, started team, maybe come on out and uh, and support and then keep this felon and, and obviously, you know, the ultimate goal of having a central Florida events and having not only all these fire departments involved, but the, the more first responders you have that the public, you know, looks up to the more chance we have of getting corporate sponsors and, and more support from the public and things like that and getting bigger and better.

Steve: [01:39:22](#) And it may be, it may be, but my ultimate goal would, would to have us, you know, um, be in camping life stadium, you know, with more than one bounce house and have food trucks and, and things like that. And just have a big carnival like atmosphere. I'm doing all the same stuff.

James: [01:39:44](#) I'm gonna I'm going to do two things. I'm going to push this, like I said, pushes ahead head so it goes out before I'm going to definitely be there and one of my guys are already signed up from the creek to have his head shaved creek, the creek. But I will be there and I'm also putting, you know, a challenge for everyone that's listening to the show to go on there and donate to that specific region. Um, come on down. If you can think of other ways, if you want to donate stuff for, for uh, raffling or you know, any other way you can help than a let's rally the troops and see if we can give you even more punch this year.

Steve: [01:40:17](#) Yeah, absolutely. And I know, um, you know, I, I, I have a very tough time being too forceful on things. Um, it, it's interesting, you know, I listened to your, I've listened to a, to a bunch of your podcasts actually, but I, some of the ones that stick out, one of them you interview Jason Wheat in a, in a Dave Coughlin from, from my department. And Jason had made a comment. He was frustrated with the, the three, four, three challenge, you know, just, it should be growing faster than it currently is. It's an amazing event. They a great job with it. And he was kind of, he was Kinda like, man, just like some people just don't get it. And you know, in, in nine years of doing this, I think it's more donation fatigue. You know, when you look around every weekend, there are a hundred 5k's, you know, there are gofund me accounts, their stair climbs, there are, there are walks for autism, heart disease, cancer, diabetes.

Steve: [01:41:19](#) You know, there, there are, there are hundreds of things, especially here in Florida where we have such great weather. Um, and, and so I try to take the mentality of I'm just going to keep throwing things out there and people will pick and choose, you know, some people will donate to booty but they won't show up. The St Baldrick's you came out and you did your thing. Some people may not do anything. Well maybe, maybe they just had a loss of someone in their family from a heart attack. So they want to put all their, you know, all their efforts into that. That's fine, you know, so, um, so I don't ever want to make anybody feel guilty or anything like that. Um, as long as they're out there doing something, you know, I don't care what the causes. But I, I do some public speaking and, and one thing that I try to let people know is there, there are three types of people.

- Steve: [01:42:10](#) There are caretakers, right? So I was a caretaker and I suffered this traumatic loss but I didn't have a choice on if I was going to be involved in the cancer community or not. And then you have the patients. So the patients are, are just like the caretakers in a way of they were forced into this, they didn't have a choice but they're the bad asses because they're actually going through it and then you have possibly the most important people and those are just good hearted people that haven't been affected and haven't been thrust into this and they're volunteering themselves to get into this community, into see some of the suffering and some of the pain. That way they can also see the triumph and, and the, the good results as well. So, so for anybody out there, like, you know, I, I, even if you, I would love to have you come out to this event and, and, and come up to me and introduce yourself. Uh, but just do something because for, for all the patients and all the character takers out there, there are more people that haven't been affected that make this whole, this whole thing move.
- James: [01:43:19](#) Yeah. Like I said, I couldn't agree more. And like you're saying I had Andy Stumpf on a little while ago and navy seal and that was his thing. His, his thing was the navy seal foundation was his, a charity that he raised money for it, but he made a great point. He said, whatever you are passionate about, doesn't matter which one, just go out there and donate to someone.
- Steve: [01:43:39](#) Absolutely. Absolutely. So, yeah. Yeah. So that's St Baldrick's. We also ladies, anybody out there listening or any, you know, any of the guys to that have a, a, a, a sister or a mom, a girlfriend, wife, whatever it may be, ex wife, whatever it maybe, um, we also, we collect ponytails now that we give back to locks of love, pantene beautiful lengths, you know, things like that as well. So, um, so we're trying to find other ways to get the ladies involved. Um, and, and so that's one way we found.
- James: [01:44:16](#) Brilliant. All right, well, like I said, I'm going to be there. We'll do maybe like a little facebook live thing while we're there to show shows, show some head shaven and uh, who knows, I might even get my head shaved. We'll see. Awesome. Yeah, I have no problem doing it. So I just might want to try and see if I can do it. Actually raised some money between now and then. So I have no problem with even a dollar that'd be worth it. So absolutely. I'm. All right. So let's do a few closing questions then. I'm very first one I always ask is, is there a book that you recommend that people can be about anything at all?
- Steve: [01:44:50](#) Well, right now I'm Reading Ivy and bean, which is right there for the eight year old girls to uh, to follow. No, it's, it's a, uh, it's

a book series that I read with Kendall, but um, I mean off the top of my head, some of my favorite books, like just in general, I love catch 22, um, by Joseph Heller. It's a, it's a satire takes place in World War Two and basically, you know, this guy is a, is a bomber pilot and he has to get to so many missions and then it can go home. But right before he reaches his, you know, missions goal, they always add more on and so he wants to, he wants to go in and say, listen, I'm, I'm nuts. Like I'm going crazy. I can't do this anymore. You need to send me home. And the psychiatrist says, well, a crazy man doesn't know that he's crazy, so you obviously must be sane.

Steve:

[01:45:47](#)

And so, uh, so they go through a bunch of different characters and it's a, it's a funny, funny you read if for anybody who likes history or anything like that that, that hasn't, uh, read that one. Another one of my favorites is the little prince, um, the, the French children's book. But really if you read it and you pay attention to it, it's all adult life lessons package. And this little prince book, uh, there are lot of, a very good learning points, um, for adults in that book. Um, some things a little bit more on topic. I don't know if anybody else out there has, has ever lost a child or, or, or know someone. Um, there was a book that we actually read to Kendall and it's called someone came before you and it's just that idea of, you know, you have a child and to introduce them to the idea that there was somebody, you know, a child before he passed away.

Steve:

[01:46:46](#)

Um, so, but my, my actually from listening to you, I'm a tribe by Sebastian Junger. It's funny, I bought this book a few months ago for two to my brother's completely designed to have them read it and then take one of those copies and read it myself. And um, Mike is just so busy with his two jobs and the other one that I gave it to Tony, he has two kids. So really the only time he has to read it is when he's sitting on the shitter. So, uh, so that's on my wishlist, but I haven't been able to read it yet. And then another one that I actually just bought a copy for my current girlfriend is a firefighter by Ellen Kirschman that you had on as well. Absolutely. Yeah. And that's one that I, I honestly, I wish I would've read. I wish I would've been able to read, um, before, you know, um, like when we first, when I first got into the fire service, I don't know if it would've made a difference, maybe, maybe it would've been, but now that I am 11 years in and uh, I kind of feel like anybody who, who I think is going to have a significant, you know, time in my life, it's something that I Kinda, you know, it seems like it's a good idea for them to understand, you know, a little bit more of what our lives are about.

James: [01:48:09](#) Yeah. Yeah. I couldn't agree more. I mean it's such a, such a crazy profession. Crazy, uh, impacts on the family. It definitely does more than an entire like how to book to prep these pull men and women before they, uh, enter our lives. Right. So what about a movie and or documentary?

Steve: [01:48:31](#) Ah, again, I'm just, one of my favorite movies is Dr Strangelove by Stanley Kubrick. It's a, another comedy and it's about the Cold War and its, its, its hysterical. Um, it might have to watch it more. The ones who are black and white, for anybody who you know isn't into that, you know, just give it, give it one or two chances and, and you'll, you'll find it pretty funny. But now I'm a, I'm a guy's guy, like gladiator. I like 300 or things like that. But I'll tell Ya, one in one movie that really has affected me in my life, um, is American sniper about Chris Kyle. And by no means am I comparing myself to a navy seal, a to, to him or anybody else. I've never been in the armed forces. Um, you know, uh, I was, I was raised a mama's boy on some level. Um, I've, I've become more of a man now that I have three brothers and three nephews that are, you know, we're everything.

Steve: [01:49:40](#) But in the movie when it came out, I think it was 2014. I was at that point separated for about a year and I saw it. I made the mistake of seeing it on Kendall's birthday. Janae was having a birthday party and then I was getting her that afternoon. So I was like, oh, I'll go to the movie theater and uh, you know, I'll, I'll buy some time and a waste some time instead of just sitting here being sad about the fact that I'm not with, you know, Kendall on her birthday, so I go to see this movie and I'm sure I'm sure most of your listeners know something about it, but he does for tours and um, he never feels like his mission is over because there's an opposing sniper on the other side. Um, and he keeps going back to finally finish the mission and it almost cost him his marriage.

Steve: [01:50:43](#) He doesn't have a great relationship with his kids and, and things like that. And I'm sitting here watching this movie and again, I'm no navy seal, but I'm a year into my separation. It's on my daughter's birthday and I'm watching this guy on the screen try to go and fix something that isn't necessarily his responsibility. He takes it on his responsibility, but it isn't, it's not. He's not gonna Save the world with this one move. And I'm looking at it going, I can relate. I, I do 24 hours of booty. I do, I do St Baldrick's. I do an event called, you know, key to keys where I, I rode from Baltimore down to key west. I, I do skype conversations with people that have recently lost children, uh, to, to kind of counsel them like I do all these things and this is, this is me trying to, trying to complete the mission, right.

Steve: [01:51:45](#) Like I'm trying to beat cancer by myself and my, a family in my marriage or suffering from it. And uh, and so it's just something that really resonated with me on, on some level. Um, yeah. So, and you know, uh, the movie obviously ends up, he, his family makes it through it, uh, and then, and then he ends up getting killed. But um, so, uh, so yeah, American snipers one that for, you know, for anyone who feels like they, that they have something they have to complete, it may be bigger than you and that may be a good, a good example of, of kind of something you can take as a reflection. Very cool. Yeah, that's a moment, the token. Oh yeah, Yup, Yup. Fantastic. My own advice. And then, uh, you know, I, uh, it was interesting. I think the most recent documentary I watched was 13th. Have you heard of that?

James: [01:52:52](#) Oh yeah, yeah. The, um, the incarceration movie. 13th amendment.

Steve: [01:52:57](#) Yeah. Have you seen it? Oh, was phenomenal. Yeah. Yeah, it is. So I, I, I tread lightly with documentaries because is, there are very few of them that are just informative. Most of them have an agenda and so I watch everything kind of with that skeptic guy, but it's interesting because I watched that one and uh, you know, it's, it's talks about how they abolished slavery. Well that's great because then here comes to Jim Crow, you know, time period and basically they just turn all of these former slaves into criminals. That way they can continue working and you know, uh, and it goes forward to how we have mass incarceration now. So when I found interesting about that is your, your last podcast that you did with, uh, was it Eberhardt? Is that what his name was? Tom? Yeah. And it was, you know, the guy who is in, you know, he's running a prison in Oslo. Good, good job. By the way. Can I tell you that I felt was, I mean, how you do what you do to get some of these people didn't know, but when you, when you look down and see, you know, Sebastian younger, you see John Travolta, and then you've got, you know, people from Oslo and you have navy seals and you know, uh, it's, it's, it's, uh, it's going to be interesting to see Steve Kibler on their next to some of these other people.

James: [01:54:21](#) So many people have said that too. But when I sat with Tom is people care what I think all it is. And you look down that list of people that are coming on the podcast. It's a list of people that have inspired me. And the reason they inspire me is they also give a shit about their fellow human beings. So when we reach out and say, hey, please fire medics, military, er personnel, morticians, you know, all these people that do these kind of out

of the box, a professions have got some really crappy information about a lot of things that we deal with, you know, I'd love to bring you on and talk about topic X. So, you know, with Tommy, you know, it was a good job because I, I, you know, again, just all I did was, was sent out emails and the good job is not on my part was on his for looking at this and go in. This is worthwhile for an hour of my time. So I was always a just amazing and just so grateful for every single person, including yourself. It takes an hour, hour and a half, two hours tonight, um, to, to put, you know, whether it's just their information, that knowledge that they could keep to themselves so they could charge for, just to make the world a better place.

Steve: [01:55:32](#) Yeah, no, I, uh, you know, I agree and I'll be honest, like, you know, I, some people shy away from me or they don't do it as much anymore, but they, they were, they didn't know, should they ask, they ask, you know, am I going to get upset or whatever it may be. And I mean, listen, as a parent, all you want is your kids to grow up and be healthy and to contribute to society, right? Like you just, you, you would prefer them to not go to jail and, you know, be good human beings and you know, Camden had five months with us, but his story still resonates with people and uh, and I'll, I'll talk until I'm blue in the face about it, you know, I'm, I'm proud of. I'm proud of what he continues to do and how he continues to motivate and inspire people.

James: [01:56:24](#) Yeah, I remember the first day of Orange County, I think my first shift, I was assigned 73, so I was floating all the time. So I remember going to 50 and obviously, um, you know, Mike was there and Camden's picture was up and that was obviously just happen though. He passed away and then, and then, um, you know, I got hired on right around that same time. So it's crazy to think that here we are now in 2018 having this, his little faces still burned in my brain and I can see that picture so clearly even now with the big blue eyes and his face chubby cheeks. Yeah. Ten years. Ten years tomorrow. Yeah. It's, it's incredible. All right, well, I want to let you get back to, to your family. So, um, a couple more wrap-up questions before we go. The next one is, uh, is there a person that you would recommend as a guest to come on this show?

Steve: [01:57:17](#) Um, uh, you know, I deal, I deal in the cancer community, right? So obviously mine are probably going to be, you know, somewhere in that at realm. Um, I think the two names, two names that popped in first, Doug Ulman, who, um, he has beat cancer multiple times and then he went onto a, uh, he went on to be the CEO of live strong. Uh, he actually started the Ulman,

the Ulman Fund in Baltimore and now he is the CEO of Pelleton, which is the largest, I think they raised, they, there is like some un-godly \$20,000,000 to do this bike ride through Columbus, Ohio. Um, so he'd be one person. Um, and, and if you're like, if it's somebody that you would be interested in, you know, in hearing his story and what he's gone through and how he has obviously turned his story into, you know, more than one very successful endeavor of just getting the word, uh, you know, the support, the awareness out there.

Steve: [01:58:27](#) Uh, he would be one, um, that I would suggest. And then another guy, I'm a pretty good friend of mine now over the last couple of years. His name is Woody Roseland and he's another one. Uh, you know, he was a young and he battled cancer multiple times. He lost his leg, he had his leg amputated because of cancer, and he tells a very, very good, passionate version of his story. Um, which is, it's inspirational. And the interesting thing about woody is at this point in his life, he's a, he's close to third party now and he will tell you, even though he, you know, he, he's got an amputated leg and he's got his prosthetic now and everything else and can't answer has been such a big part of his life. He'll, he'll tell you at times that he doesn't want to do anything with cancer. He just wants, you know, he, he, he just wants to live his life and just be as normal as possible. And it, depending on the day, sometimes it feels like, yeah, it's great to go out there and talk and raise awareness and things like that. He goes, but at the same time, almost every day I do that is cancer winning.

Steve: [01:59:47](#) It keeps, it, keeps sucking him back in, uh, you know, to that, to that life and back to those days. So, um, so those are two people that, uh, that I would highly recommend, very bold, very articulate. They both have a great story and um, and they're both, they're both good enough people that uh, if, if you reached out to them that I think, I think you could get one, if not both of them.

James: [02:00:14](#) Brilliant! Well, yeah, I've got them both written down now. They both sound that you got great stories to tell. I'm hundred percent. So the very last question before then, we've, we've talked about where to find St Baldrick's. Where do you go. so that said, this will be the last question. What do you do now to decompress, to let it be and just find that zen moment?

Steve: [02:00:35](#) Um, you know, like, just being a is going to sound cliché but you know, just being with family, uh, you know, we, it, it's a bunch of boys in the family and then Kendall, um, so we have to try to fit her in where we can or sometimes a lot of times we have the

family over and I do my own thing with Kendall and then I just kinda check in with everybody else in the family while they're playing board games or whatever it may be a, I like sports, so, you know, go watch a game on tv or something like that. I'm Kendall and I, he's an only child and I truly, I truly do cherish the time that I have with her. Um, so you know, some people may think zen moment is reading a book or, or you know, being out in nature and those are all great. But man, I'll tell you, playing school with her

Steve: [02:01:34](#) is one thing that she loves to do and she loves it when I'm like the kid that acts up, you know, so like I literally just get to sit there on the couch for 45 minutes to an hour and just act up in, in, in her quote unquote class while we're trying to go over, you know, what second graders go over and she sends me to the principal's office and she puts me in time out and, and things like that. But you know, it's those moments with her, you know, that uh, obviously are, are great. We wrestle a lot. I have a king size bed and I, I took the frame off on purpose that way we can wrestle and if one of us does fall off, we don't fall very far. So, uh, so we, we, Russell and I have a, I have a looser library mask and so at least once a week I pull that out and I put it on and then go surprise her and her face just lights up.

Steve: [02:02:24](#) It just, I mean, it just lights up because then we go and we'd go running into the bedroom and it's on, you know, and, and you better get both shoulders down for a pin and she likes to count fast and I don't let her do it. And, and uh, you know, again, sometimes she wins, sometimes she loses, but uh, those things, uh, those are uh, moments. Um, and then I go to the cemetery, I go to the seventh, Gary, and, you know, that's the, my quintessential zen moment. I guess that would be the closest to what a lot of other people do where all I hear is, you know, the wind and the birds. I don't take my phone, uh, it stays in the truck every time and you know, uh, and, and I go and I have my time and I talk to them or just, I mean fall asleep in the grass.

Steve: [02:03:14](#) Um, you know, go, we'll go and have picnics there and we play hide and seek, you know, in the cemetery. If I do take him with me. And then at times, you know, I'll, you know, after we have those moments all I'll come back and I'll grab my phone because, because we're, we're so technically, you know, or technology now, like you still have to capture those moments because we don't have a Kodak anymore. So if I want to have a moment just for me, whether I share it on social media or not, but if I just want to have this moment with, you know, with Kendall and Camden, there I go grab my phone and I'll take a picture. But, but no, the, the initial, the initial visit to the

cemetery is a, you know, there's no phones, no technology or anything like that and we're just, we're just there. And uh, whether, whether I have kindle or not, it's the same. So, so those, you know, those, those are for me, man am.

James: [02:04:11](#) All right. Well I'm gonna let you get on with your evening. Uh, we'd been talking for two hours and it's been incredible. So thank you so much. I am definitely gonna. See You on March 10th and come hell or high water. I will be. There will become enough shift on the night shift on the ninth, so I'll have a no excuses. So I will see you at Johnny's filling station on March 10th. You said 2:00, is that right? Yeah, 2:00 PM until six PM. Fantastic.

Steve: [02:04:40](#) James, man. Like I said, it's, it's crazy to me that, uh, that 10 years later people will still give me two hours of their time to, uh, to share Camden story and to anybody who actually listened to my Bible this whole time, you know, thank you for, for being patient and letting me tell my story and letting me honor my son.

James: [02:05:04](#) You summed that up perfectly, mate. You've got, you've got the patients, you've got the caregivers and then you've got the rest of the people that I think the ones that are good conscience, it's just so damn grateful that they were spared, you know, the pain of whatever scenario. And I know myself as like, just just tell me what, you know, anything we can do to, to, uh, to, to just be a tiny part in making you know what's left as good as possible.

Steve: [02:05:34](#) Like a James. Honestly man, like I'll be on it like, like I set up front, like just, and at the end if, if, if nothing that if nothing that you've done or that we've just done, if it doesn't raise a dime still to me, you'll hopefully you never understand how appreciative I am that 10 years later, you know..

Steve: [02:06:15](#) ....that 10 years later people still think about, um, think about him and my family. So, um, so like this, this to me, it was just amazing therapy. Just a very cathartic just for me to be able to get it out. And then there's certain things, you know, there, there were probably another hundred things I could have talked about and I know that you will lose an audience if, if this is as little song has gone with the wind, you know, but uh, but, you know, one thing that somebody told me, it's OK to schedule your grief. You know, you can, you can literally say, OK, on Thursday I'm going to go to the cemetery and I'll go to the cemetery and I'll just get it all out. And you know, some days you'll cry and other days you won't cry, but, but you went there and, and you, you mentally and emotionally went someplace

and, and, and kind of worked through some things. And so that's what, you know, you've basically let me do for the last two hours. And I'm in it. I'm very appreciative. James.

James: [02:07:23](#) Well, I'll tell you right now, and I'm not just blowing smoke up your ass every episode I've done and remember a lot of them have not had any kind of moving content, but every single that that's, that I've done, people have written back saying this would resonate with me, but with the ones that were, were a lot deeper, um, you will never, and that you and I will never know just how many people this is going to resonate with, but it's going to reach people that have lost kids, is going to reach people, but had near misses is going to reach people that, you know, never knew what it was like, you know, like myself for example. And make them just be so damn grateful everyday and hold their kids tighter. So, you know, just know that this catharsis for you and, and, and that's amazing, but your gift of the two hours and telling Camden's story is also gonna have a butterfly effect to everyone that listens to it.

Steve: [02:08:17](#) That's awesome. That's awesome. Well, you know, I'll see you. Um, I mean I'll definitely see you in a couple of days obviously. But um, but yeah, I mean, um, you know, th, you can, if, if for some reason anybody reaches out to you and they're trying to get ahold of me because they're looking for some sort of support or anything, feel free to give them any bit of information, you know, unless they seem like a psycho killer, I'll try and I'll try and um, you know, filter them out. But yeah, if, if there's someone that the but it. Yeah, absolutely.

James: [02:08:51](#) Brilliant. All right mate. Well you go have the rest of the, you know, good rest of your evening and I will see you on the 10th.