



TOM DURKIN INTERVIEW
JIM: THE JAMES FOLEY STORY
LIFE STORIES

Tom Durkin, Friend of Jim
August 14, 2015
Interviewed by Brian Oakes
Total Running Time: 1 hour, 19 minutes and 35 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Life Stories Presents

00:00:05:00

BRIAN OAKES:

All right, so, let's go to-- let's start--

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Tom Durkin

Friend of Jim

00:00:11:00

BRIAN OAKES:

So, let's start Marquette, like when you first met-- when you first met Jim.

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TOM DURKIN:



I met Jim at Marquette during the first week of school freshman year. Jim was the first guy from out, East I met. And he was interesting because unlike a lot of members, he didn't really have the accent. But he would throw in there like, oh, that's wicked cool. And so you'd be like, oh, this guy's, this is different. Like, you know, there's there's something quirky about him. I didn't really know Jim's background at first. I mean, when you're you get there, you just you hit it off with certain people. Thing with Jim was early on, he was. Let's go check this out. Let's go check this out. And, like, I'm the type of guy that wants to go do a lot of stuff, and ultimately, I, I probably will. But Jim gets an idea. He does it. And so he's like, all right Bobby Seals talking tonight. We're going to see Bobby Seale like I'm in. We're going to go let's go check out this art museum. Let's go down on the south side and see what, what's going on in the barrio, like like. All right, let's go, let's go. And like, he he was very persuasive. And so he was an easy guy to be with, especially when you're new in college because you want to meet all these new people. And he just would go do it. So we felt kind of brain being with them.

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BRIAN OAKES:

For Jim to like go, you know, out west or, you know, Midwest anyway. And then he had this like, sensibility of wanting to like, just go out and experience things. Did you kind of get that feeling that he was like, I'm coming to call. I'm ready to like, kind of see the world kind of mentality in college. Like when when you first met him.

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TOM DURKIN:



Yeah. It's weird when I first met Jim in terms of like the East Coast. Pardon. Like, what do you want to experience? I always thought it was interesting that he was playful and like goofy as can be. But he had like an older I don't want to say soul but an older like more you seem more experienced. And it's weird because he was so goofy and like, I mean, when the guys on the rugby team, when you played rugby, they were all meat heads and they they prided themselves on being meat heads. And I think he liked that idea. But he also was he seemed much more, aware of what was going on, like socially, politically, just his interests. I remember a story like he went on a date with a girl, and it didn't work out because he took her to see Nixon and then afterwards debated the merits of the film. Nixon like, it's not really good date material, but that's like, that's where his mind was, like he was he was a little bit more, aware, I think, than than the rest of us.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Do you kind of have any stories about how Jim's ability to connect with people was like one of his, like, real strong characteristics?

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TOM DURKIN:

Well, I think about Marquette, you kind of in a bubble because, I mean, sure, Jim came from, the East Coast, but he was able to fit in with us. But we're in this Marquette bubble. When I first think I really experienced him just going into any situation and like kind of just being part of it was when I went out to visit him, when he was doing teach for America, and he's with all new guys. Graham wasn't from the East Coast. There are people they didn't know



before. And then I had the experience of going in the classroom with them. Is teaching, in a rough part of town. He had a way of just connecting where they trusted him. And I just to see it from a perspective outside of Marquette, was really I think it was profound for me to see how somebody could to, could just kind of go into that situation and be comfortable. And it's not like he commanded respect, like some people walk in like they're authoritative or they're like domineering. He he knew how to ask a question and then do what most people don't do. He would listen and he would let, let people talk. And he cared about what people say, saying without injecting him in himself into the story or one upping you, or like you wanted to hear what you had to say. And I when I saw him in Phoenix, I really like, kind of blew my mind to see him, like outside of our circle.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Let's talk about like, Phoenix, because that's a really interesting part of his life. Do you think he felt like he failed as a teacher in Phoenix?

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TOM DURKIN:

As a teacher? When I think he thinks about his Phoenix experience. And I wouldn't think that he thought he failed. I do think he felt like he could do more. And I think there was something beyond being a classroom teacher for him, but I don't think he ever stopped being a teacher. So I think if there's any sort of failure would be that, that he couldn't just accept, like, this is all this, not all I'm gonna do. This is what I'm going to do. Like, there was more he wanted to do. He wanted to help all those kids. Like each one. I mean, so I, I



think you would view it as a success. And he was a successful teacher, but it just wasn't what his career was going to be or what he would be doing his whole life.

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BRIAN OAKES:

How involved were you with his life when he was in Phoenix?

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TOM DURKIN:

I have family, so in Phoenix. So I would go down. The first year I was still, first year out there, I was still in the Midwest, and I went out there a couple times. But then I moved out to Idaho, and I was in and, at Boise State. And so I would come down at least 2 or 3 times a year and we'd hang out. So I got to see him quite a bit. I mean, I was fortunate, like, you know, you're a graduate student of free time, and I had a little bit of money from working side jobs. So I was able to travel down to Phoenix, stay with family like he did Thanksgiving with my grandma and, and my aunts. I would go down, we go hiking, throughout there's travel down to San Diego, things like that. So I got to see him quite a bit and see him through the progression of, three years as a teacher.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Did you ever see him struggle in Phoenix.

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TOM DURKIN:

And teach for America?

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BRIAN OAKES:

America? Did you already over tell you about, like, what it was?

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TOM DURKIN:

Well, yeah, I mean, I sounds like I was in the classroom, like you're trying to control 25, fifth or sixth graders, and they they've already formed an I hate Mr. Foley club. So I saw him struggle in that way. Just, kind of like a time thing. Like he wanted to devote all his time to these kids. But he also was at this point, he was he was already writing fiction and writing stories, and he was trying to balance, how much time he could devote to either. So I think that was a little bit of a frustration that he couldn't he had to give up some control in the classroom because you can't always have kids doing exactly one. And so I think that was a struggle for him.

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BRIAN OAKES:

As he started to like, write fiction. And who were the type of like, what were the subjects early on?

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TOM DURKIN:

It was always like, he had a story published, a Jimmy, a story published in, I believe it's the Hayden Ferry Express or Hayden Ferry. And it was about a



young girl, third in a third world country. When he was working in Phoenix, he end up writing a short story that won the Indiana Review Prize. That was all about the kids he was teaching. And then later on, when he goes to, the jail, he's working with younger, younger males. So I think he was he was very focused on younger, younger people and their struggles. And I don't know, part of it seems to me, because he came from Wolfeboro, that he had like a very idyllic childhood and like, and he was seeing kids that didn't have all that he had. And it seemed like those were the stories that he was always trying to tell. Those are kids. He was always trying to reach, always trying to help. I think the difference, between Jim and a lot of people is he understood and accepted that he had that he got a lot of the breaks growing up, and he would never say, like, we all start from the same point, like we're like he. I think he realized that some people struggle more than others or have more obstacles to overcome. And he cared about those people that had obstacles in their way. And he wanted to either help them get over those obstacles or in some ways, knocked down those obstacles for them.

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BRIAN OAKES:

When Jim started to, like transition into journalism, can you kind of like, talk about that transition from like fiction writing into journalism, and why did you choose to do that, do you think?

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TOM DURKIN:

In terms of Jim's transition from fiction to journalism, I believe that it occurred or started to occur when he had finished the MFA program at



UMass, and he went back to Phoenix, and he lived there for a year, and he was trying to write a novel. And it was about the kids, that he taught. And I think part of his own experience, and I think he realized at that point, just based on our conversations and where he ended up going, is that he realized he couldn't go back, like he couldn't go back to this, this Phoenix, that Phoenix was gone. That part of his life had passed by. And I also think that he was getting frustrated with fiction because I think for him, fiction came at the expense of the stories real people had to tell. So he's creating a fiction based on kids or that struggle. There are people who are struggling. But he was also seeing people who were struggling. And when he left Phoenix and took the job teaching, inmates, I think that really hit him like he was seeing young guys that came from just terrible neighborhoods that never really had a chance. They're locked up. And I think he started seeing, like, there there are people who need their stories told. I don't need to make up a story. There are stories to tell that need to be told. And I think he saw himself as as that, bridge between the people that need to tell stories and his ability to tell them.

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BRIAN OAKES:

So Jim's in Phoenix, right in this novel. And you go down there, can you like paint as a picture of that story?

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TOM DURKIN:

I went down to see Jim, the end of May, early June in 2004, and he had been in Phoenix for almost a year after he'd finished, UMass. And I knew that everyone else that was gone, all the Tfae guys, teacher America guys had left



and went on with their lives. And he came back and he didn't really have that many friends left there. And he was trying to write this novel. And I get down there and he just seemed he seemed a little bit like, almost like morose, like because he didn't have this group around him anymore or the novel. He was struggling with it. He was wondering where he was going, what he was going to be doing. And we went down to Mexico. And oddly, it was like the one time we traveled, like we had no problems whatsoever. We didn't fight. We used to fight like brothers, and it was just real relaxed. We were right on the drive back. I said, like, you know, why don't you come to Chicago like, my dad runs this boot camp? It's young felons. You should just come to Chicago. And I thought for sure he'd say, no, I'm staying here. I'm working on this now. He's like, you think I can get that job? I'm like, yeah, you can get this job. I'm like, let me call my dad. I'll call him from the road right now. So we're driving through Mexico and I called my man and I'm like, hey, dad, I got Jim Foley here with me. You know, he's bilingual. He's been teaching in, inner city schools. I you got you got a teaching position open at the at the boot camp. He goes, well, we actually do. Some guys just dropped out and we have a spot open. He's like, Can Jim be here in two weeks to interview? I'm like, Jim, can you be there in two weeks? He's like, I don't know. I'm like, Jim, can you be there in two weeks? Like, yeah, I'll be there. I'll be there. So we make make plans. Jim's gonna fly in fine. From Phoenix and interview. So my dad sets up everything up. Up for him. And when you interview at the bootcamp, yet you still have to go down. You have to go downtown and interview with the with the Cook County. Like the board, there's a hiring board. And Jim goes there and he's all excited about his job, and he goes there for the interview, and I call him afterwards. And I'm like, how the interview go, coach? He's like, oh, was great. I think it went great. I'm like, I, I call my dad. I'm like, he did. I talk



to Jim. He said, the interview went great. He goes, he said it went great. Did he say what he told you? Because I just talked to the lady at the hiring board. And when she went out there, she found Jim sleeping in the in the waiting area with his head back on a wall. He's wearing jeans with, like, paint or something all over them, and he's got like, an untucked shirt. And I'm like, I'm like, all right. He didn't tell me that. I. He didn't tell me that. And I hang up with my dad. I called Jim back. I'm like, Jim, that'll happen at the interview. It's like, what are you talking about? I'm like, did you have jeans on? Did you fall asleep? Did you like it was hot in there, Tom. It was hot. I just put my hand back. I knocked it off and I'm like, did you have jeans on with pant? He's like, I had jeans on. But yeah, they had these x tables on there. They were painted but I what was I supposed to wear. I'm like, Jim, it's an error of you. It's an interview. You can't do this. And so my dad has to call this woman talks her through, says this guy is exactly what we need at the bootcamp. We got to let him in. I guess my dad, the business and fine guys aren't fine will hire him. So they. They hire Jim. And on the first day of work at the boot camp, which is a pretty relaxed place, Jim comes in in a shirt and tie and my dad's like, oh, a little bit overdressed today, aren't we? Jimmy. And I guess he just laughed about it. And my dad always said that. Jimmy had \$1 million resume and ten cent interview.

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BRIAN OAKES:

What was his. His, his job at boot camp. What did he do?

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TOM DURKIN:



Jim's job at the boot camp. At first, he was with another teacher, and they had guys that were the lowest of the low. These are guys, that, either learning disabilities couldn't. I mean, didn't know the alphabet, couldn't read or write. And his goal was trying to get them somewhat literate. And he did that for about a year or so. Then he he moved into another classroom and a different teacher left, and he was actually teaching reading and writing some literature. And he is really he's really good with these kids because Jim Jim was into hip hop and rap and, he liked to like to grab him like himself. I, I will never vouch for how good he was at this, but he liked to do it so he would get he would teach these guys by letting them rap and, get them up and perform in class. And so he had his own classroom at the bootcamp, like, like you got guys that are in jail. Your goal is to try to help them pass a GED. There's no real, strict formula you have to follow. So Jim had a lot of freedom, and he was connecting with these guys, and they liked him. They liked him. That that he was authentic, that he learned their names. A lot of people at the boot camp, like, didn't didn't know who these guys were. It didn't care. Like it was a paycheck to come in. Jim, connect with these guys. You can find out about their backgrounds, talk to him. Get to know him more and more. So, I think that was I think that I mean, I think all his experiences were profound. And I think that's another one where it was just like, all right, I mean, these real people that have these real issues, and I'm connecting with them and they have stories to tell. Jim followed some inmates, from the from the boot camp when he was at northwestern, when he was in middle, like one of his projects, he came back. I was already teaching there because after Jim, when Jim was leaving, the boot camp, it was exactly when I was finishing up a grad program at Marquette. And so he he left at the end of December of oh six. And I started the first week of January oh seven. So I just took his job over. So I



was teaching and I had a couple inmates, and he told me what to do. You want to film them? So what he did is, about a month before these two guys were getting out of the boot camp. He came in and he started coming in, and he would interview and do interviews there. And then when they graduate from the boot camp, there's a ceremony and stuff, and Jim was there for that. And once they got out, Jim kept following them for the next 2 or 3 months. And he would he'd take the bus down to, into the projects, go check out their homes, talk to them, and, interviewing for this this piece like and he it was not only he was generally genuinely interested in what they were going through. How were they doing it post boot camp? Because one of the things you find in our program was that. Our guys have to say they got a blessing. They got a blessing because they got the boot camp. They didn't go away to the penitentiary for a long time. And they're done. They're done with crime. They're not going to they're not they're never going back. And I know for a fact that at least one of the two guys was back in jail within 2 or 3 months of being released from a when he went back to, back to his home and, you know, didn't doesn't have many skills or whatnot. But Jim Jim can't found them just to see see how they're doing. I can see what that transition is like.

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BRIAN OAKES:

So how long was Jim at boot camp and then where did he go from there?

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TOM DURKIN:

Jim was at Jim was at the boot camp from June of oh four till December of '06. And he immediately upon leaving, the boot camp, enrolled in at MacDill. And



so that was in January of oh seven and at Northwestern's, Middle School of Journalism. Yes. And, he was there for five quarters. They work on the quarters. And, I mean, I, I was living in Chicago at the time, so we were hanging out a ton. I know that he loved what he was doing. And then his fifth quarter was when he went out, he did it out in DC, and that's when he did, war reporting because he had made a decision that that's what he wanted. To get into. So it's last quarter, and I actually went out to DC when he was staying up there. And another friend of ours, Diego, came down from, he's in New York and, New York at the time, and we, we hung out together for a few days in DC when Jim was going through the, military style reporting.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Do you, like, struggle with, like, trying to figure out what do you want to do with his life? Did you get that sense, like during that period?

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TOM DURKIN:

During that that period? Like the mid 2000? I don't know if I would say, flopping around as much as I think he was just trying to get his footing. Like, I think he always felt he could be doing more like like he he got the job at the boot camp and he was really excited about it. But then it becomes, you're just doing this job over and over and over, and then it then becomes Groundhog Day, and that's what you're that's what you're doing. And he wanted to do something beyond that. And I think that's when you look at some like work for him. Well you're not going to have the same day every day. I think there was I think he saw that as a as something where he could tell meaningful



stories so he could use his skill as a writer. I know he liked adrenaline. He was a risk taker in a good way, like he was. He would take necessary risks, like in order to get to experience something. Okay. I mean, I can remember climbing in, in Phoenix with him, and we get to this rock straight up, and I'm like, all right, we're done. He's like. And like, look at me like I'm crazy. And he climbs like to the top of it. And he's up there and like, that's awesome Jim. I can down. And he's just like, I don't know. Like I don't know. I'm getting down. And I just like, like, what are you doing? And like, I don't I, I sat down like. And I'm watching like just looking in the distance. And about two minutes later you sit next to him like, how did you get down? He's like, I don't know, like so I think he like, he it like the adrenaline of these things. And I don't know if it's flopping around, I don't, I don't he was never satisfied like in a good way again. Like not content to just do the same thing over and over, like a lot of us. Like that's a good, steady job. Let's raise a family. It's this. I think Jim wanted more out of life than that.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Jim's faith. And like religion, it was a Catholic, and it was like a really important part of it. What was his mind space during that time?

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TOM DURKIN:

Jim, in terms of religion, I remember when he was out at UMass, I don't remember which year it was. And in about 99, in 2000, he came back to Chicago and we all met up in Chicago, and I had learned that he had joined a group. And, that's not me. Like, that's I, I don't I have a lot of issues with that.



And I felt comfortable enough to say stuff to Jim like, Jim, this is bullshit, like, I don't what are you doing? And I found out, like, what he was doing. One of the things was you joined this group and he wanted to be a writer, and he had a room that could be locked on the outside, so we'd have people lock in the room so he couldn't get out to write. He'd have, like, a bucket there if he had use the bathroom, like have water to drink. And it was like almost like a meditative type place. He would be in there. And I'm like, what is that? I'm like, all right, I can buy this. All right, I like I like that you're like forcing yourself to write. I'm like, what's going on with this religion thing? He's like, well, it's hard to explain. And like, they I'm like, are you doing are you trying to is this for a girl? Because I always assume when you get involved in something new that he was doing it because some girl he liked was involved with this group and he's like, no, no, no. And I'm still not convinced there wasn't. But he comes over and we're at a friend's house, we're about to eat. It's about 8 to 10 dudes sitting around a table. He goes, all right, let's all join hands and pray. And I'm like, F*ck that Jimmy, we're not sitting and praying. We're not doing this. This is not what we do. We're not sit around a table with ten guys praying because you have some religious conversion going on. We're going to eat a chicken right now. That's all we're doing. It's like, I don't know why you got to be. I don't know why you got to be like that. Why can't we just say a prayer? I'm like, you can stay your own prayer. And we got past that. I think he did say his own prayer, and I just. I was all fed up with it, frustrated. And about a month later, we were talking to God. He's like, thanks for doing that. I don't know what I was thinking and like, but I think it was part of like. Like it was exploratory for him. Like, I'm gonna try this out. I'm gonna, see. And I can't even tell you what the religious group was, and I don't know if he was able to, but it was like he. He was searching for something, I think. I think



anyone who knows him knows he was always searching. He was always looking for something. And I think that was one of his failed attempts.

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BRIAN OAKES:

He wanted to experience things right. And he was kind of like the experience guy.

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TOM DURKIN:

Yeah. Like, I mean, I remember his time some we went down and, most of his friends and films were Hispanic and Hispanic neighborhood, and they were doing a hunger strike and something to do with an immigration proposal or whatnot. And a girl I knew we liked was involved with it. And I'm like, Jim, you have joined more causes for women than anyone I've ever met in my life. And he's just like, Dirk's, come on. Like you tell me that's not why we're here. Oh, are you tell me that. He's like, come on. And we sat around singing songs and I had some people on a hunger strike.

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BRIAN OAKES:

What is Pilsen? What was that area like?

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TOM DURKIN:

Pilsen, where Jim ultimately moved. When he first went back to Chicago, he actually moved into Lincoln Park, which is a very well-to-do, kind of yuppie



...tied neighborhood. And we had a friend who had an apartment with an extra room, and he was able to stay with him, but Jim was not going to stay in Lincoln Park. That's not he did not want that type of comfort. Pilsen is on the south side, just south of the city, and it's, largely Hispanic. The east side of Pilsen is being gentrified slowly, but the majority of it is is, Hispanic, Mexican restaurants, bars, very artistic. They're a very artistic community. And I and that just drew Jim in. And I'd say over the next two years, he probably lived in five different apartments. A lot of reasons why he had to go from apartment to apartment. But he stayed in Pilsen and he met a lot of different artists. Like, every time I go and see him, I, run into people like Rosie, Roxann or Rudy. And they were all, artistic people, whether painters, poets, creative in their own way. I remember I'd go down there and Jim, like, tonight we're going to the drum circle and we just go meet friends and, in a loft. There are people with drums. Jim would just walk in like he'd been doing it for 20 years. He would start playing the drums with people. And I mean, I it just that place of all the places I, I spent time with Jim and, you know, New Hampshire, D.C., Chicago, Pilsen was a place I felt I always felt was most at home like he he that was his community. That was. Those were like, these were his people. This was what what he loved. And Jim, was this settled down? I think he would have I know he would have ended up in Pilsen or right near it. I mean, it just it everything about the neighborhood. I mean, he he just. I've never seen I never saw him look, look or feel more at home than I didn't were until I actually lived in Bridgeport, which is the part of the city just south of Pilsen. And I felt like Tulsa was. Like a great place and a place like I could see myself, but I belonged in Bridgeport. And it's where it's cool. It's closer to, USL, where the Sox play. It's, white and Asian and mixed, but it's a little. It's a little



more traditional South Side than than Pilsen. I love the Pilsen, but. I belong in Bridgeport.

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BRIAN OAKES:

Why do you think Jim was such a transient person?

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TOM DURKIN:

He stayed in Pilsen, but he still moved around a lot. Sometimes it was. Some of them just couldn't do anything. Like there was a there's a heroin addict across the hall from you, and in one of your apartments, you're going to get out of there and move, you get into a car accident because you're trying to read Chomsky and you total your car, and now you need to be closer to the elf. You're going to move. Other times, I just think that that was his nature. Like, hee hee hee hee hee would find a better deal. He would find a better, like, a sum closer to where he wanted to be. And he just. I'm packing up and moving and usually just give me a call, get a get my parents van and be like, all right, let's move you. I mean, you never had that much stuff. So he was he was easy to move. But I think the the the transients isn't is also I just think associated with him wanting to. Find new things, do different things. Like he didn't want me. I don't want to be tied down to anything like. Or beholden to anything, really. He wanted to be his own man. The only possessions I think Jim cared about were, books and CDs. Like maybe Ian's camera. Ultimately, when he was in, we got more into journalism, but he's never had, like, you just he didn't care about possessions, clothes, things like that. That wasn't. I mean, he he he cared what I looked. I mean, he was he tried to be stylish. I



mean, tried, but I mean, he not possessions. That meant matter at all. I think it was partly his disinterest in possessions was as much to do with the areas where he was living, has to do with the fact that he didn't. He wanted to be able to get up and go and everyone to go. And the more stuff you have, the harder it is to do. I mean, I don't think he he wanted to. I think he. He didn't want to be tied down. Like I don't like when I think about possession, I'm thinking when Ruben first came to live with a Ruben, he had taught Ruben out in Phoenix, and Ruben came and Jimmy's like, you got to come to Chicago. You got to come to Chicago. When you had this apartment on Troup Street, and it was a small little room. Jim was sleeping in the living room on a futon. And Ruben, I come in there and I'm like, he's like, and I met Ruben. I met room one. He was like 10 or 11 years old. And then I met him again in Phoenix before, really, even to where Jim was leaving to go to boot camp. And then I come out there and Ruben is sleeping on a cart. There is no whiter than this in his metal. I'm like, that's your bed. He's like, that's what Jimi gave me. I'm like, I, you can't go out and get him. I'm like, I'm like a twin mattress or something. He's like, he's fine, I like. And he just didn't have stuff and he didn't care to get it, like. Yo, who is Ruben? Ruben is a kid that Jimi taught in Phoenix, and I remember being out in Phoenix. Like, that's the first time I met Ruben. I was out in Phoenix, and Jim was there. Basketball coach as well as their teacher. And these guys are playing a game like on the other side of town, and they don't have a way to get there. And so Jim calls the other school and they're like, well, we have a bus. We'll pick you up and take you to the game. And Ruben's part of our this group of kids, and we go out to the game and they play and I, I don't know if they won or lost. It's fun. Little game with fifth and sixth graders and the game ends. We're like, all right, let's get on the bus. And the bus driver says, oh no, we can only drive you here and we're not



allowed to take you back. So we're sitting there with Ruben and all these kids, and Jim's like, anybody got somebody with a big truck or a car or something? Or so one of the kids calls up his uncle and uncle comes in a flatbed and it's me, Jim, and about ten little kids in the back of a flatbed driving through like Central Phoenix, like at dusk, like just Jim, just smiling, like with the kids. And I'm like, what the heck? He took them. But Ruben really was part of that crew. And Jim, I think, had a connection with Ruben early on. Ruben, like, I, was into writing, like doing that. And when I came back in 2004, before Jimmy took the job in Chicago, we actually met up with Ruben, and Jimmy had been writing with Ruben. They meet up in coffee shops, and Ruben was, I think, maybe 18, 19 at the time, and they made a coffee shop and, they just write together. And Jim is like, you can do this, you got to do this. And, he was trying to, get Ruben to perform more because we're like, excellent musician. I really good hip hop. And Jimmy convinced them to come out to Chicago, and he, ended up living in Jimmy's place for at least a year. I bet in, like, just picking up jobs. I know I went to that coffee shop, and Jimmy was convinced, to get out in Pilsen and perform. And just like that, it was their best friend. There was also, like, a father son relationship there. Like, Jim was a mentor when Jim was in, NFA in New Mass as an old one, I believe, and I fly out there and my mom had give me 50 bucks each to get something nice for Jim. And you get there, you know, take care. I mean, he's in grad school and I'm like, I'm in grad school, but whatever. She gives me 50 bucks, I fly out there and I land. Jim's like, hey, I got to go teach a course or an ESL course to these women at a factory. I'm like, all right, let's go. And we get on the expressway. We go about two miles and we run out of gas. I'm like, what the hell are you doing? You know, we're going to the other side. Why don't you have gas? Like I thought I could make it? I'm like, well, my mom gave me 50 bucks. Why don't you. We'll



call triple A's. We got, like, three gallons of gas for 50 bucks. I'm like, that's for my mom. Congratulations, Jim. Like, we. He picked me up from the airport. He's like, the light was on. I'm like, why didn't you put gas in it? Couldn't explain it. He could not for the life of me explain why he would put gas on when the lights on. And he knew we were traveling 20 or 30 miles.

00:32:03:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Do you remember him when he. When he told you he was you wanted to do journalism? Like, what did you feel about that?

00:32:08:00

TOM DURKIN:

When Jim told me I was going to journalism, I was, I was happy. I thought it'd be perfect for him. He didn't originally tell me. War reporting. First thing I remember about him being interested in covering the wars, was when he went to do the quarter in DC. And then after he finished, we were hanging out in Chicago. He was back in Chicago, and he goes taking a train up to Michigan and getting my Kevlar tomorrow. Like what? It's like, yeah, I'm getting Kevlar. I found some guy who's got extra Kevlar, so I'm gonna go get it. I'm going to Iraq. I'm like. When did this come about? Like he always was someone who kept things close to the vest. Like you didn't always know what his next step was, but like, even that, that scared me. I knew it was working with the National Guard who told me that he would be protected by the military, but I was still like, why are you going into a war? Like what? That guy. I remember being scared and just like, I'm all right, good luck, man, I. Just be safe. And then it was like he got there. And I remember he was excited by it. And he be



frustrated because he's like, in the walled in compounds, like, I mean, he couldn't really do his own exploring, which I'm sure frustrated him, but made people like me feel good.

00:33:28:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Maybe you could kind of talk a little bit about how being friends with Jim, that's kind of. Presented opportunities to you that you might not have maybe other done in kind of like a world traveling the world kind of way.

00:33:43:00

TOM DURKIN:

When we are graduating. I actually didn't graduate with my class. I never spent an extra semester because we were getting to the last semester of college, and I wanted to I had never gone overseas to study abroad, and I was like, man, I'm not going. I'm out of chance. And it was. Jim was really like, dude, don't, do not go, go. Who cares about graduation? Like, you'll be fine. Like I remember him saying, you got to go there, you have to go. So I went, I went abroad to England and studied for a semester. And I actually missed our whole last semester as a group, and then of graduating the following December. But I can remember back then it's like, you got to do this. You're not going to have this opportunity to travel for 4 or 5 months and and without worry and, and see all these places. And then just even after that, like, I remember when we go to Phoenix and like, all right, we're going to go hike here. I mean, he was the one, like, I wasn't taking the places. All right, we're going to go to San Diego, right? We're going to Puerto Rico, Mexico. That's what we're doing. And like, so it's like, I almost felt like I was just



tagging along in a way now after losing him. I feel more frustration. I think though like I, I can't stop. Looking at stuff on Syria. I can't stop looking at stuff about ISIS, and I hate it. And I don't want to read it and I. You know, like I said, you can't go on the Huffington Post or some web site without seeing the picture of Jim Nealon. In some ways, it's now it's made me more like angry at the world in some, some capacity. I don't know. I. Is there a place that I wish you didn't go now? I admire that you did all these things in your place. I just wish you never saw.

00:35:39:00

BRIAN OAKES:

How do you think Jim's parents, Diane and John, influenced? Jim, did you see Jim kind. Of cut from the mold of either one of those guys you had? Diane?

00:35:50:00

TOM DURKIN:

I'm going to have to say that Jim is, his mom. He's Diane's I mean, she's a strong woman. She's she's got her opinions. She. When she wants something done, she's going to get it done. Which I admire and which I think that's that's what Jim was. And, I mean, if there's one thing in the world that Jim love, it's his mom. That's. That's what he wanted to make proud. That's what we loved. That's all he cared about. Not to say he didn't care for others, but, I mean, he was a mama's boy. And I think that's he was. That's where he got most of his. Passion for for everything.

00:36:33:00

BRIAN OAKES:



Jim was also really a loyal person. Well, friend.

00:36:37:00

TOM DURKIN:

Jim advised, loyal as it gets. He. But, you know, he probably wasn't going to be on time. He might miss, a scheduled, date that you had to do something like, we're going to go on this day and we're going to be here. He might miss that, but that's just because he had a lot of things going on. He was about as loyal as it gets in terms of. Keeping it that you could trust them. Anything you told them was not going anywhere. He and he'd come. He'd defend you. I mean, the first thing he did for me was defend me from a senior college. So, from the earliest time, you. I mean, he would he would help give you whatever he had twice. My family had to move, once that to their house. And in Illinois, they were moving. And we had a lot of stuff. I have a, younger brother who's, who had an accent very young and a lot of medical supplies, all this stuff. And. Jim came down, spent a weekend just moving us. And then, my parents had a place up in Michigan, and they were moving from one house another. Again, I'm calling them like I'm a Thursday. Like, listen, man, can you can you, come, come help us? And, it's like, yeah, no problem. And, so I get home and we have to drive my car to some small town in Michigan. They pick up the truck, and it's this big 18 footer that I didn't really order. And it stick, and I don't know how to drive stick. And he's like, I'll drive it. So Jim gets behind the wheel and go to my parents house, the one where they're moving from, and it's down this driveway. And he runs into a tree, knocks down the neighbor's fence, hits another tree, parks right in front of the house, and we load it up and he's like, let's get out of here. And so we just take off with all the stuff from the house and leave. And he just, I mean, he had no problem, like, just dropping



everything, like, on my family needs your help. I can't do myself. And he's like, I'll. I'll be there.

00:38:39:00

BRIAN OAKES:

As far as, like, Jim's kind of. Failures in life. You're going to see failures in gym life and how they kind of shaped him.

00:38:52:00

TOM DURKIN:

The failures that Jim saw would be just that he couldn't help everybody. And when you. It can be frustrating when you're giving everything you have to help somebody and they either can't be helped, don't want to be helped. And any teacher you you're not going to reach every kid. But those are the ones that you remember. And it's weird, like you don't remember a lot of times, all the successes and all the kids you helped. You remember the two kids that got away that you couldn't you couldn't save. And I think for someone like Jim, that's that's unbearable. You want to you want to help every kid wise in this kid. Why can't I reach this kid? And instead of, seeing that it can be outside factors in the. And then the kid's life and the family life, you internalize it, and it becomes my failure to connect with that kid. Like, my job is to connect, I didn't. Where did I fail? And, if you're going to do that, you can't do it long. And I that's probably, in my opinion, where Jim was like, you couldn't keep you can't keep doing if you're going to internalize that 2 or 3 kids that that you that you can't help. I don't know if he felt he failed with the novel. He was always searching for the voice, like he I did a lot of editing with him. He would send me whatever he was working on. I'd respond. I'd say, this is this, I get



this, I'm not sure this is I get this, I'm not sure this is. I don't. I think the failure wasn't in his ability to to write it. I think he just kind of was losing interest in creating something fictional. When there are stories out there to tell, like, why? Why am I not listening to this person's story? Why am I creating a fictional story that might resemble this when this person has had something going on? They don't have a voice. I can tell that story. I feel like for him. And he. This is a guy who love fiction and love stories. But for him, writing fiction was almost a waste or something that came at the expense of others. Like, if I spent all my time doing this, I'm not listening to this person. I'm not telling this story. So I think fiction just became something that was secondary in his life to the stories that were actually out there.

00:41:09:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Did you ever see Jim get into a fight?

00:41:13:00

TOM DURKIN:

The closest I ever saw Jim get into a fight was with me, and we were in New York City for TJ's wedding, and it was a couple nights before and we were all in a bar, and it's getting near the end of the night, and Jimmy decides without telling me. And we had no place to stay. That he's going home with this girl he knows, and he's like, you can just stay with Jago, like, all right, where's Jago live? And yeah, I was like, all right, you can stay with me. I'm like, come on, Jimmy, just be honest. Mean, where are you going? We're going. And he ducks away into a subway and he's gone. And so I'm like, I'm with Jago. We had left our stuff in Bayonne, goes up in Harlem, and we're coming from, lower



Manhattan, and we're pretty far away from there. And, yeah, I was going to teach in the mornings, like. But you can stay here if you. You can stay here. I'll teach. I'll leave you a key. So I go to Jago and Crash. I've never driven in, Manhattan before in my life. So this this is kind of important. It's, about 640 in the morning. Jago wakes me up because. Yo, bro. Sorry, man, you can't stay. I don't I got an extra key, so you got to go. I'm like like I'm waking up, I'm groggy, and there are two, rucksacks. They're mine and Jim's, and. I said I saw him using the bus. He ditched me. So I leave his bag there. And like, this is a number of years ago, I got a cheap cell phone. I'm trying to call Jimmy. I can't get a hold on. We have another friend, Rich Fink, who stay in Chinatown, so I get a hold of. Think I'm a guy. I'm coming to get you, man. So I'm driving through rush hour from from Harlem down to Chinatown. And I get down there and I'm circling Chinatown, and I finally find rich. I'm like, now we got to find foliage. I don't know where the hell he went. He didn't tell me where he's going to tell you. Staying with. I'm a I'm frustrated and we're circling Chinatown. I'm not kidding you. There is a bang on the back window, and Jimmy's like, where you been? I'm like, where are you coming from? He's got a coffee in his hand, and he gets in the back seat and he's like, all right, we got to go out to Jersey to Ricky C's house. We're going to meet there, and we're going to practice a play that we're putting out for DJ's wedding night. The play is in my bag. I'm like, well, your bags not here. He goes, where's my bag? I'm like, I don't know. I couldn't carry it. You ditched me. I couldn't carry your bag. It was too heavy. And he was like, what do you mean you couldn't carry my bag? I'm like, f*ck, man, you did you. You ditched me last night. You can't just ditch me. You expect me to carry your bag and I'm looking all over for you. And as this guy Rich Fink is going to not turn into the Lincoln Tunnel. Whatever you do, not turn in the Lincoln Tunnel. And I'm yelling back at Jim,



and Jim is yelling me! I think he's about to throw the coffee at me. He's like, I need that bag. The play is in the bag, and Richie's like, turn right. And I hit a hard right, right in the Lincoln Tunnel. And so I drive in out of out of, out of New York. We end up in Jersey. I is trying to calm us down. I mean, I think Jim's ready to go. To come to blows me. He's like, I need that play we're supposed to be in in Jersey in three hours. We got to have a play with us. So now I got to drive into the Bronx, where Jago teaches. We have to get him to come down from his classroom, get his key, go get a key made, drive back to school, drive back to Harlem, get the bag. We drive all the way out to Jersey because we got to meet Ricky C, and we're going to be late now. James telling. We're late. We're going to miss the play. We're going to. We're not gonna go practice. We get there. There's not a soul there. Nobody's there. We start getting phone calls like we're around 4 or 5 hours late. So we're just sitting on the porch and Ricky sees house and I'm like, you got to apologize now. He goes. Sorry. You should have brought the bag, man. I I that's part of the clothes. I saw him like he was enraged. I thought I was. I thought I was gonna get a coffee or a punch. It was his fault. It was absolutely his fault. But I should have brought the bag. I probably should have. But you know what? He ditched me.

00:45:24:00

BRIAN OAKES:

You ever see Jim cry?

00:45:29:00

TOM DURKIN:



I never saw Jim cry. Like full blown cry. The closest. That. I think it came as after Libya. He was at our apartment. It was late and I had had some drinks. My wife and daughter were asleep, and we were talking about like, just what had happened in Libya. And he was telling me. And then he started talking about and time. And when he was talking about Anton, he was like, well enough. And. Wasn't like a full blown cry, but it was. He was. You can see the sadness and you can see how. That impacts them. I think. I mean. That's probably the closest I ever saw.

00:46:22:00

BRIAN OAKES:

So he decides to go into Libya. Can you kind of talk about how Libya was different than. His past experience.

00:46:34:00

TOM DURKIN:

We were we were emailing relatively frequently, at that point, and he always framed it as a freedom. Because now you can explore the stories you want to explore. He wasn't confined, by the military, by where he could go. I my perspective was like, all right, well, who who's protecting, who's paying you? Who's protecting, who's taking them places? And like, oh, we just we just meet up like, I met a bunch of journalists and we go here. I'm like. And it was so foreign to me in terms of an experience. I'm like, well, how do you get into Libya? How do you like I'm thinking things like passports, like, are you going to a checkpoint like. And I was just trying to figure out that angle, so I didn't quite get it like that. You're just going. You're just. I found a passage like. And then when he starts telling the stories, I'm like, all right, are you safe? Well,



we had to sneak out between trucks and do this. And like, it was really becoming more apparent to me, like, okay, this is the real deal. Like, this is like, this is he's he's winging it. I mean, they have plans and they're the other networks, but that whole U.S. military backing up thing is gone. Like, you're you're on your own.

00:47:56:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Did he tell you, like, how he got into.

00:47:58:00

TOM DURKIN:

I don't ever remember him telling me exactly how he got in. I don't I don't remember it. I don't know if I blocked it, I don't I but I don't remember him saying like, this is how I got in the first time this. I learned how to do it. It was just almost like I'm in Libya. Like, like as if that would make perfect sense to the person who's saying that to like, what are you talking about? Like gadhafi? Like, what are you doing? Like and then but then you start seeing the videos. I was, I was so unaware of, like Twitter and things like that. Like I wasn't following. I mean, I was I was seen his post, he had his blog. I would go on his blog all the time, like things, share things, things like that. But I, I wasn't following on Twitter yet. And so like I didn't see how rapid it was. But it was it, it changed the way I saw his job and saw him in terms of, all right, now you you are you're on your own. I didn't know part of me was like, I didn't know if it was, how serious it was, you know, like. All right. You work for GlobalPost or do you, your freelancer. Like, who wants this? Who's buying? How are you getting paid? Are you? Like, what if something happens?



Like things like that, like I didn't I was still trying to put that together. But again, I think from his perspective, the way he always framed it was I had the freedom to do what I want. I can I can explore these stories from any angle I want. And so I think that's how he sort of wanted to see like it was it was it was freeing in that sense.

00:49:35:00

BRIAN OAKES:

In that first kind of go before would be in captivity. You remember any stories?

00:49:39:00

TOM DURKIN:

There's one video that always stands out to me, and it's like when he's standing in the the square, he's like, he's got the glasses up and he's talking like he's just talking about what's going on, like the shelling that's taking place. And the rebels are doing this. And just like, how does my guy know this stuff? Like, how does Jim Foley like, what was he like, this is the guy that's reporting this thing, like, it's like, almost like a surreal thing to see your friend like. They should be sitting in a bar with me. Standing in the middle of. A. A courtyard or wherever it was. And then like, just I remember, like, just seeing the pictures of, like. Like, how closely is the shelling? Like when are the rebels sending out mortars or incoming stuff like it just. It all blends together. I'm not surprised that Jim ended up in Libya and then ultimately Syria. I'm not surprised. I wish it didn't happen. I mean, I just. I'm not surprised in the player. I mean, that's where the story was and that's that's that was the story that was getting the least attention. I mean, that's the guy that wanted to tell



stories that weren't being told. And so you go to places where people aren't telling the stories.

00:51:12:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Where you heard that Jim had been kidnaped by the gadhafi regime.

00:51:23:00

TOM DURKIN:

Well, immediately whenever I think about whatever. I mean, that's not like that would ever happen in my life where I heard something that that someone I knew, but I immediately thought, like, torture. I'm like, oh my God, he's in a cell. He's. Handcuffed to a wall or beaten on whatever might be. But I also I remember the sense of urgency and there was so many people like that just came together so quick. Like, I feel like I'm fortunate at that. I got to transcend a lot of Jim circles. Like, I knew that, noone from Marquette, I knew all the people at TFA. I knew Jago and the guys from UMass. I knew the people in Pilsen, so I felt like I got to see how all these people came together to try to figure out how do we help him. And. I just remember hollow feeling like, all right. Are we really going to be able to help him? Like, how how do we help someone get out of Libya? Like, I just where I remembered I get. Do you feel like kick kicked them in the in the gut and I don't know what to what to think. But at least. I mean, it's weird because now you have. Syria to. Measured against, and let me assume so you see now. Like we knew who had them. You knew that it was a government, so you could probably negotiate. It's just a weird thing. And now. This is another thing where it seems like a blur. It happened so fast after Jim was captured in Libya. I remember hearing from



Donnie and then Pete Pedroza, and then Joyce and the Marquette people. We started doing something, but then the TFA guys started doing something like, why are we both doing separate things now? So we're all in this together. And it was just like events were happening. The story was it was powerful enough, cause I remember getting calls from like the Chicago Tribune and, and things like that, and they wanted to tell a story and then like, let's do vigils. So we have one in Tulsa. And then there was one out in Boston, and there was one at Marquette. And we were doing conference calls every day. And with Libya, the difference was, is we wanted more and more and more press. We wanted the story always out there. Pete Pedroza, who, is well versed in public relations, was like, here's a press release. We're putting this out today. Call this people. And we were calling everybody. And just tell them to make sure that that that story stayed in the news. Weirdly, it just seemed like almost like organic. Like it just awesome. Everybody was involved. And no, there was no no ego. No, nothing was like, all right, we need to get Jim out. How are we getting Jim out? And I mean, it's weird, like, you write in letters to heads of state and like, people like Sanders and things like that, and you're it just. It seems bizarre, surreal and absolutely normal because you have to do it.

00:54:28:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Like after you get back. What was the atmosphere of that party like?

00:54:33:00

TOM DURKIN:

The atmosphere of the party? As I remember, it was so euphoric. Both DJ and I were there and we both had young daughters at the time. I mean, we're



talking one two year old one. Everyone there was just happy. I mean, there was food everywhere and drink and, it was just such a. A relief. And like I. Jim is back. And this is probably just me being able to look back now, but I think even then you sense that Jim. Like. Well, I'm not going to just sit around here. I hope you people realize that, like, I'm not going to come home and take a desk job, which he tried to do, but at that party, I just remember everyone just being so, just so happy. Like, I mean, what better thing to celebrate than your friend coming home? It's unbelievable that he came back like. That's. Yeah. I mean, I have a picture of me and him sitting in my apartment, and I got these. I've made these posters. When we were doing the free Foley thing, I made him sign it and dated, and I'm like, I'm not making any more of these posters. So this is the only one you get. Don't do this to me again. It's like, come on, come on. I'm not going to capture him again. And I remember. Going to all. And you come back from that that and going to like northwestern. He's giving talks and he's saying how you can put your family through this. And then he wanted to believe like. He meant it. I mean, probably meant it just wasn't going to follow. Through on it. I think Jim, after Olivia. This is this is how I see it, because I think it reminds me of how probably a lot of us reacted after Libya and Syria when those things were going on. When he got back, Jim had a had a purpose, and a purpose was all about Anton and his family. And he organized, I think, at Christie's. And they raised the money for Anton's kids. He wanted to go back and try to find Anton's remains. And there was a purpose, just like, hi, this is what I have to do. Once that's done, I think, then that's when you like. All right. What's next? And he stayed in Mike's, basement for a while. He took that desk job in Boston. That's not him. He's like a caged, caged animal. Like in that. Like that, in that environment. So I think initially after Libya, when he has this thing to do for his, his for himself,



for his own sanity, like, I mean, he he loved Anton like a brother and like, he admired him. And so he had this, this singular purpose to do something positive for Anton. Once he accomplished that, then it's back to what am I doing? And that's it. I think that him in his mind, he could tell you 100 times, can't put your family to this. You can't risk it. The story is not worth it. But that's what he did. That's what he was. He was a storyteller. He had to go. He was going to go to Syria. There's no way he wasn't.

00:57:50:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Like, what was your attitude when your position when Jim was like, I'm serious next to me.

00:57:59:00

TOM DURKIN:

I was not part, but I was never going to try to talk my friend to doing something that he believed in, and I wasn't going to be able to talk him out of it anyway. So that and it's pointless to try to make an argument to someone who's not listening to that argument. I think Jim truly believed he'd learned something in Libya, that he would be safer. I also it's I mean, it's easy to look at Syria right now and say that place, ISIS, all that stuff that wasn't that wasn't like that in 2012. It was not safe. But it wasn't like we're seeing it right now. Actually, the last conversation ever happened to me, Murat and Carlson and I, I said, like, do you remember why you keep going back into Syria? Like, I mean, what's it like? And he's like, it's crazy, it's crazy. I'm like, well, is it more dangerous than Libya? It's like, yeah, it's more dangerous than Libya. I'm like, you got captured in Libya. Why are you going into Syria? Dude, I gotta go



back. I'm like, I'll be safe. Don't worry. Like. So. You are, but you couldn't talk him out of it.

00:59:10:00

BRIAN OAKES:

What is your take on Jim? Settling down. With Jim and we're going to do it.

00:59:19:00

TOM DURKIN:

I think Jim was able to romanticize the idea of settling down. He said to me a lot of times, like, man, you found a great girl. You got daughter, you got the life. I. You could. You could have this life. And I think he I think. And like the recesses of his mind, maybe it was a pretty idea. Do I think he was going to settle down? No time soon. I think that that his nature. Was just not to be confined to a place I think even a hell of a dad, a great dad. But I could also see him. Like I got to go like it's time to go do something. Not that he would ever do that, but I'm just I didn't I don't see I didn't see him as someone who was going to be content having a life like I have. I don't think that would have been. That would have been. I don't think that would have been healthy for me. That's not how he he lived. But I think it's some I think some it's some he was able to romanticize.

01:00:26:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Did Jim ever tell you about John Cantley?

01:00:30:00



TOM DURKIN:

The only mention I had of Cantley. Was in some passing emails and not even something I would have recall if I didn't have to go back over memories like I'm hanging on, hang on, travel with this British cat, John. And, that's about all I knew. Of of candy. I remember after learning. I'm not sure exactly how, but after I learned that you have been captured in Syria, and I'd learned because I'd posted some on Facebook, after Thanksgiving Day, after, like. Jim. Where are you, man? You told me you're gonna come visit and my photos. Are you gonna take that down to Jimmy? I got captured again. And I remember hearing in the next few weeks, man here a month later that he was with Cantley. Then I was able to put it back together that that's the guy you mentioned. And then, you know, you did. I did some research on Calendly and saw that he had been captured previously, and I'm like, oh great. I to there's two guys there that have already been captured and.

01:01:43:00

BRIAN OAKES:

What was your reaction when you. When you heard that Jim had been captured again.

01:01:50:00

TOM DURKIN:

For real? From Michael, that's horrified. I mean, I'm like, it's like lightning strike striking twice. And you just even at that point, you knew that Syria's much different than Libya. There's talk about, whether like, Assad's forces got him or at that point, Jabhat al-Nusra. And, I remember going in my basement and watching a video. Probably in early December when I. I'll lose. Sure, I had



like ten guys on the ground and they just start shooting them in the head. I'm always just looking to see if I could see Jimmy's face. And now I'm going to see it. And then I just I just felt like sobbing and. Like I. I don't know what we can do. What? What do we do? What do we do? And. My kid told me not to tell anybody, and so I wasn't speaking to anybody about it. Friends would ask, I like, I don't know, I think he's still in Syria, maybe covering something and trying to find videos every day and having to watch them because you want and you want to know and not want to see it. And it just was so different from Libya, so different. And there is nothing to mobilize against. I remember early on, like I have, I have files and Pom files of things are doing like I remember early on just having like the flow charts again, like we did for Libya, like trying to connect who would who's the leadership of Jabhat al-Nusra, who's the leadership of this? Who's this? And in Libya, it was, again, you look back now, it seems so simple as like hurt gadhafi, work your way down. That's what it was like. There are all these factions and we don't even know where the hell has them. Where do you go? What do you do? Like, I focus on the fixer. They're focused on this group here. Just are so helpless and and you're not telling people and you're trying to keep it. Like I wasn't telling. I didn't tell my wife. I didn't tell my family. I mean, my mom and dad. You, Jim, like a son. And I'm like, I'm just tell him I he's finally back home. It wasn't till like, mid December that I was able to say something to anybody. In some ways it was better because I never explain it. Because again, there was there was reaction once people didn't like, why do you go into Syria? And like I didn't want to explain them. My friend doesn't need to explain why he's a journalist. My friend's a journalist. He got abducted in Syria. He. There doesn't need to be the explanation why, when or. Well, you know, Syria is really dangerous. Yeah, I know Syria is really dangerous. So in some ways, it was kind of nice not to



have to tell people and have to deal with them almost because at times it can feel like accusatory, like, well, he was in Syria, like, that's not fair. I. You don't do that with police or firemen or something like that. Dangerous jobs. Don't say, well, you in a fire. What do you think would happen? Like this is what he did. So not not having to tell people in some regards is easier. It's big. It's like bottled up. And I was. Don't get me wrong, I was pissed at Jim and I was pissed. I'm like you. God. Why we. Why do you mean? Like, don't do this. Like. Early on after Jim was captured. I was doing the phone calls and stuff like that when we first started to mobilize. And then it became apparent that, like, I didn't have anything to necessarily offer. Like, I don't I didn't have connections. I don't have this, and David Bradley and like, The Atlantic were taking the lead on this and I, I'm, I'm in Chicago at this point, I, I can have the only things I did is like we had 2 to 2 vigils in and, Milwaukee the foleys came I believe it was in April. Then in that first year and we had a vigil, and then I think we did a second one. Later in the year. I was getting updates from Pedrosa people, drivers who were still involved. And you still don't tell anybody, but there's talk that he might be here. They might be here. We're pretty sure he's here. So I was I always felt like I was close enough to the circle, but I definitely was not on the inside. It's just. It's just too far. Away. Like I have some idea.

01:06:33:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Where were you when you. When you. When you find. Out Jimmy had been killed.

01:06:38:00



TOM DURKIN:

I was. I thought I was killed. I was in my apartment in Chicago. I'm taking the day off. I was working on a resume, and I was already thinking about getting out of the bootcamp and leaving Chicago. Go back to Milwaukee, and. Sitting there. And my my parents had Delaney that day. I don't remember why, but they were going up to where my brother lived, in a place called misericordia. And they're bringing Delaney. To misericordia. It was probably 320, maybe in the afternoon, and I was supposed to pick her up at 4:00. Just work on this resume and I get a text from Kathleen Fink. Sister of Rich Frank, who's a good friend of Jim's. And so I'm so sorry about Jim, but what, why I like, I don't know, I'm like, oh, no. Flip on the TV. And there's the picture of him kneeling there. And says that he's been. Beheaded. And I called my wife. She was at work. I'm like, don't turn on the don't call on the internet. Do not go on the internet. Something happened to Jim. Please do not call the internet. And I called my mom and they were driving and my mom. I. They killed Jimmy. And like she started, like, sobbing. Like, I'll meet you in 20 minutes to get Delaney. And she asked what had happened. I just said it real quick and I said, my friend and I said, Jim is beheaded. And I went and got. I got Delaney, picked her up, brought her home, and I just started calling people and like you guys got. Be careful with the news that just going to happen. Watch watching news. You don't want it to be him. And you're like, I'm like, I know that's my boyfriend. I know it's him.

01:08:38:00

BRIAN OAKES:

What was. It like to see. Jimmy become this figure? He's now like, you know, in a.



01:08:50:00

TOM DURKIN:

It's so. It's so surreal. Like, I'm so proud of that guy. I'm so proud, Jim. I mean, just the stories you hear when he's in captivity, the things I know about him. This man, he's just my meat head friend. You know, like I don't know. Like I don't I don't know if like it doesn't. I don't know if it it'll ever sink in. I don't know if it'll ever seem real. Maybe I don't want to be real.

01:09:21:00

BRIAN OAKES:

The grieving process. Like if you you've gone through it or you.

01:09:28:00

TOM DURKIN:

You, internally like grieving, like I the the only thing I can do is I just try not to stop. Like, right in the days after, Tim's death, like the they started. This couple has started a scholarship at Marquette. I think it helped me. Like when they did the vigil at Marquette, I was able to, like, give a eulogy. So I was able to talk, talk through it, I like. And it was like a letter to Jim. So I was able to talk things out in a little bit in a way. But we did for the for the, scholarship. We did a concert at the Vic Theater, the Boat Ends and some other bands, and it was it was nonstop. We were making shirts, making posters, getting bands, getting, all the city and county tax stuff. We needed like a it just kept my company busy. I'm running the marathon. Taylor. Fourth, I'm gonna do the five K on October 17th. Just like I just try not to stop, because if I stop and think. It's. It's too hard. I mean, it's crazy. I lost my own brother two months



ago, and that hurts like hell. But it doesn't. It's like they're totally separate things like that. And I think it's. It is the public nature of it. It's just. Unfortunately, I never saw the video, but I did see the pictures like in that film. Never leave my. And like those. So I don't, I think. I just can't stop and think to long. I do it. I get in a bad place.

01:11:08:00

BRIAN OAKES:

Was journalism like ultimately like. the best fit. And the stories of these.

01:11:15:00

TOM DURKIN:

And so this is a story that I always go back to. I can't remember the exact specifics, but I remember hearing that when Jim was there for the fall of gadhafi. When they're taking it off his body and they're, are they're in the process of go ahead and kill him. Everyone was trying to get this money shot of gadhafi. And I remember hearing a story that Jim went to the side and was interviewing a citizen. A guy was watching it to see. How he was reacting to the fall. Gadhafi. How does he feel about that? And more than anything, that makes me understand why he did what he did. He didn't need everyone to see this image of gadhafi. Gadhafi's unknown entities, a powerful leader. And Jim cared about this guy. Watching it was a citizen who probably been oppressed by gadhafi, how he felt. And that always I always try to think about that as a reminder. That's why he was there. He was trying to tell that guy's story. I think that's about as normal as it gets.

01:12:29:00



BRIAN OAKES:

Tell me about the memorial and what you Witnessed in New Hampshire.

01:12:35:00

TOM DURKIN:

That was probably. I almost felt like I met a guy I didn't know. I. Listen, I was friends of for 20 years. I consider my best friend, and there's probably a lot of people I consider miss Pat. Consider Jim their best friend. I. I left there wondering how we ever had time to hang out. I'm like, there were so many people that were so touched by Jim. They have stories to tell about how he influenced them, how he inspired them, how all these writers like Jim, you just you just write, damn it, just right, like or like, you see, you saw the other captives talking and like, how, how good Jim was even when he was hungry, when he was cold, like, I just couldn't I cannot believe how many people and I don't. It's not because this was a public. Murder or Tom because Jim's face was flashed across TV. It's because these people are honestly touched by this guy. And like, God, if I could reach a 10th of the people that were attacked and I consider my life a success. I mean, it's just it was overwhelming. The hair person after. I could have sat there another six hours, and there probably was another six hours of stories that could have been could have been told. It was just, I don't know how many hours that guy had in the day because I just I was overwhelmed by what people had to say. This is fascinating. Those guys from Teacher America print out a little skit in the sand, or Jimmy went off and the car got stuck in the sand and he's like, oh, I'll get it out. And he goes and finds like, I don't even remember. They were like, cops are like, dressed up in military fatigues and got him to go do it. But what I remember when I think about that story is just the profound happiness. And these guys up there



telling this story about Jim, and it wasn't so much about what he did. It was just it was just it was just him. Like it was just Jimmy V and Jimmy. And it was just like. It's just. Just.

01:14:59:00

BRIAN OAKES:

What do you think? That Jim's family's. Learn so much about him. Michael. Diane. John. You've seen them kind of learn a lot things about you. But they didn't know.

01:15:18:00

TOM DURKIN:

I remember Mike telling me something is about their uncle Fernando, and Fernando is a great, great guy and just telling me how Fernando at one point said. And this was after Jim Statham said something along the lines like, I feel bad that I often thought what Jim Do was like a gimmick. When he first went over, I was doing like a like it wasn't like a career necessarily. And. In some ways when when Mike said that, I, I felt a tinge of guilt because I think that's how I felt at times like, all right, when you're done with this journalism thing. I don't. I think the reason that the, the foleys and all of us feel like we're learning some something because Jim wasn't this one and this is what made him a great journalist. He wasn't a talker. He didn't have to explain his. He didn't explain things to you like, I'm gonna do this, this, this and this. I did this because he like it was his actions. And so what? What? I think the family and I think all of us are seeing is we're not learning something we didn't know. We're seeing something we didn't see. Like, we knew he was a good guy. We knew he cared about others. But now you're hearing people actually tell a



story of how you how it was so. He didn't. I mean, this is a guy that won the Indiana, National Review, which is a major award and didn't tell anybody. He didn't have to. He won it. All right. I wrote the story, I want it. People are finding out by word of mouth, by someone else who actually finds out. People like, are seeing again. I don't think they're. I don't think any of us are learning something we didn't know about him as a character trait. We're just learning more stories that prove that character trait.

01:17:12:00

BRIAN OAKES:

The viewer to. Describe Jim's legacy. It's a pretty big question, but you can go anywhere you want. But would you say. Jim's legacy is.

01:17:27:00

TOM DURKIN:

I think Jim has so many things to so many people, and he embodies things that we wish. We could act on and we can do. Jim was really close, like with my family. And I see like my, my nieces, they're 16 and 13 and they're, they talk about their Uncle Jim. I mean, that's how they view this as their uncle. And. I see how like they in class. Like when they in their classes. Like they'll those are reports on gym and they want to tell you about gym that they know gym not because he's a non fear but because they were devastated when something happened to him. I don't think there's anybody. Who knew him that doesn't fill a void. And I've lost other friends. In my life and nothing. Nothing hurt like this one. Like losing Jim was. Like there's just an an emptiness that. I can't explain, I can't fill. I don't know if it's because it was so public. I don't know if it's because it was so gruesome, but I think Jim's legacy



will always live on me because I don't. I don't know a single person that will. Doesn't think well of him. Like doesn't. Isn't moved by what he endured, wasn't moved by what he attempted to do with his life, what he did do with his life.

END TC: 01:19:35:00