

ROBERT IRVINE

MAGAZINE

WINTER 2022

Nothing is Impossible

HELL OR HIGH SEAS

INSIDE THE
MISSION TO
SAVE AMERICA'S
VETERANS

STREAMING
EVERYWHERE
NOW

ROBERT IRVINE MAGAZINE

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

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THE BEST YET

This is our biggest issue ever. It may also be our best.

OK, I'm guilty of having made this very claim before. *It's our best issue ever!* Yeah, well, what do you want from me? All I can be is honest, and as I looked through the pages of this Winter Issue, all I could think was that this was our finest work yet.

Let's start with the cover: That's a shot of Taylor Grieger, former Navy rescue swimmer, checking out a glacier after completing his harrowing sailing journey from Pensacola, FL around Cape Horn, home to some of the most dangerous waters on Earth.

As you'll read in our cover story and interviews with Grieger and fellow sailor/filmmaker Stephen O'Shea beginning on Pg. 19, Grieger undertook the journey to raise awareness for the epidemic of suicide and PTSD that plagues the veteran community. I was so moved by his mission that I threw the weight of the Robert Irvine Foundation behind the project and helped produce the documentary film about it—entitled *Hell or High Seas*—with any future proceeds due to me, going to the Foundation and thus back to America's veterans.

I was so thrilled that I was able to help Taylor and Stephen with my Foundation, and I hope you'll read their stories and rent or buy the



Follow Robert on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

ROBERT'S LETTER

film. It's not just for a good cause; I can promise you won't be disappointed by what you see.

This magazine, though, has always been nothing if not well-rounded. As inspiring as the story of Hell or High Seas is, I think you'll find additional motivation in interviews with three incredibly hard-working and talented individuals who we're proud to present later in the issue: Jenn Lyon, Garfield Wilson, and Eric Rogers.

Lyon is an actress perhaps best known for her most recent work on TNT's *Claws*, a darkly hilarious show about a criminal enterprise run out of a Florida nail salon. Moreover, Lyon overcame an eating disorder and has become a vocal champion of the body positivity movement. I found her answers pertaining to this issue to be some of the best quotes we've ever published in the magazine.

Wilson, meanwhile, stars in the brilliantly funny *Schmigadoon!* on Apple TV+. (Have a look at the trailer and I bet you'll be hooked straight away.) Wilson is also the proud parent of a trans girl, and his comments on supporting her through her transition are beautiful and thought-provoking.

Last, and most certainly not least, is Rogers, a veteran TV writer whose work you probably know from *Futurama*, and whose work your kids probably know from Netflix's *Skylanders Academy*. Rogers has been in the Hollywood trenches in one of the most difficult and unstable professions there is. His thoughts on patience, finding a process that works well for you,



Robert serving Thanksgiving dinner to soldiers at Fort Bragg alongside President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden. (Photo by Evan Vucci)

and pursuing your passions in the face of adversity have application to everyone, regardless of profession.

And that's not even the entire feature well. We've also got a mother load of recipes featured on *Dinner: Impossible*, our annual gift guide, plus workouts from former Navy SEAL-turned-celebrity-trainer Duffy Gaver, and much more.

You know sometimes my schedule is so packed that putting the magazine together is the only time I get to stop and reflect. (I don't think I even mentioned serving dinner to the troops alongside the President, did I? Well, it's true. See above!) But the whirlwind is worth it because

the cause that underlies all of it—The Foundation—is worth it.

So if you have half as much fun digging into these pages as we had making them then you're in for a real treat.

One last thing: a new year is upon us. As you set your goals and begin to make plans, just remember the words I live by...

Nothing is Impossible,

BEATS N EATS IS BACK

The live return of the Robert Irvine Foundation's flagship fundraiser was a smashing success.

Now that's what you call brotherly love. After the 2020 Beats N Eats fundraiser—traditionally held at the Fillmore in Philadelphia, PA—was canceled due to the pandemic, it roared back to life this past November with a packed house that delivered upwards of \$800,000 in donations to help the Robert Irvine Foundation further its mission of providing assistance to America's at-need veterans and first responders.

The unique live-music-and-culinary-fusion event featured a five-course meal prepared by world-class chefs including Robert, Amanda Freitag, Beau MacMillan, Marc Murphy, Jose Garces, and Lindsay Autry—each course of which paired with a different musical act. The musical guests included Marc Roberge of OAR, Zeek Burse, Stephen Kellogg, and Questlove.

“Every time we get to go out and do this, it's special,” Robert says, “but I'd be lying if I didn't admit that this one was extra sweet. To not be able to do this as a live event in 2020 for obvious reasons, and then to come back in such a big way with so much talent and so many gener-



Above, Robert thanks the crowd, which donated upwards of \$800,000 to the Robert Irvine Foundation. Below, Marc Roberge of OAR performs. “I look at it like this,” Roberge said, “My parents' fathers served so that we can have this freedom to do what we want to do. Anyone who doesn't realize that is crazy.”



ROBERT'S WORLD

ous patrons... it means so much, I'll just say that."

Murphy, a long-time judge on *Chopped* who prepared a fennel salad with red onions, capers, and water cress said he was proud to lend his talents to the event, which he was attending for the first time.

"Robert's a good friend and the work he does with the veterans is very important," Murphy said. "He asks me to do this every year, but the scheduling never worked out for me until now. I'm thrilled to come down here and help out because it's such a tremendous cause."

Likewise, Roberge said the decision to jump in and perform at Beats N Eats was an easy one.

"I've been watching what the Foundation does for a long time now," said Roberge, who performed for the Foundation's virtual concert in late 2020. "So when I see someone who walks the walk like Robert, it's an easy decision to say yes. Look, I get to run around and make up songs, so I look at it like this: my parents' fathers served so that we can have this freedom to do what we want to do. Anyone who doesn't realize that is crazy."

Despite the star power on the stage and in the kitchen, the real show stopping moment came when Robert announced that the Foundation would be donating an iBot—a specialized



ROBERT'S WORLD



Previous page, top to bottom: Questlove performs at the after party; Robert's lamb chop main course; confetti rains down on the crowd at the end of the evening. Above: Chris Kaag, a disabled Marine veteran of the I'm Able Foundation, is lost for words as Robert breaks the news that the Robert Irvine Foundation is giving him an iBot.

wheelchair that allows the user to stand upright and even navigate stairs—to Chris Kaag, a disabled Marine veteran who runs the [I'm Able Foundation](#). Kaag, who suffers from a degenerative nerve condition, has dedicated his life to helping other disabled veterans, and it's safe to

say that on this night, he wasn't expecting to be the one on the receiving end of such assistance. When Robert announced to the packed house that Kaag would receive an iBot—a prohibitively expensive piece of equipment for most disabled people—Kaag was rendered speechless for a

long moment. He finally ought through tears to say, "Robert, I consider you a friend, and I thank you so much."

Beats N Eats 2022 will take place on November 7 at the Fillmore in Philadelphia. Keep an eye right [HERE](#) to reserve your tickets.

IRVINE SPIRITS LAUNCHES

The new world-class player in your liquor store.

Most of Robert's fans have known that for the past few years, he's been a co-owner in Boardroom Spirits, a Lansdale, PA-based distillery and maker of world-class whiskey, rum, vodka, gin, and more.

In the fall of 2021, Robert was proud to unveil a brand new product line from that distillery with the first bottles to bear his name on the label: Irvine's Precision Distilled Vodka and Irvine's American Dry Gin.

Robert has been working on developing both of these for a long time, looking for a way to distill, as it were, his roots as a working-class man and the expertly-developed palate of his world travels into the perfect drinks. After honing the process and finished product, he was at last compelled to share them with the world.

Robert hand-selected the botanicals used to make the gin, which is born of a hybrid distillation process where a portion of the botanicals are distilled in the pot, and the remaining portion are vapor infused, creating a finished product that is complex and smooth, perfect straight up and in all manner of cocktails.

The vodka is precision-distilled



Leave a bottle in the freezer for a delightfully silky mouth-feel and luxurious drinking experience.

from American-grown non-GMO corn for a neutral aroma and mildly sweet finish, making it certain to become your new go-to spirit.

“I think everyone deserves a little taste of the best that life has to offer,” Robert says. “That was the driving force behind this: the idea

that you shouldn't have to be rich to enjoy a little luxury. It's world-class but it's not pretentious or expensive. This is for everyone.”

Irvine Spirits are currently available in select markets, with the nationwide rollout ongoing. Learn more at IrvineSpirits.com.

THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH BEHIND AIDY-X

Sometimes, a product can be so great—so fundamentally game-changing—that it can fly under the radar for ages simply because it seems too good to be true. That seems to have been the case with hypochlorous acid, a disinfectant made from simple, non-toxic ingredients that's 80 times more powerful than bleach, yet is colorless, odorless, and won't irritate your skin or eyes.

Now bottled and marketed under the name AIDY-X, consumers ev-

erywhere are realizing that seeing is believing, with our very own Robert Irvine becoming such a big fan of the product, he became a co-owner in the company.

"It's just such an impressive product," Robert says. "There's no other cleaning agent you could need for your home, office, kitchen—anywhere. It's perfect for getting any job done, and perfectly safe for people—even kids—to be around."

Hypochlorous acid is created when chlorine molecules are dis-

solved into water. In the case of AIDY-X, that solution is created by adding a jolt of electricity to salt water, which then undergoes a chemical reaction that changes it into a potent, broad spectrum disinfectant. Incredibly, once AIDY-X has done its job, it simply breaks back down into salt water.

Hypochlorous acid isn't new; it traces its known roots to 1834, when it was discovered by French chemist Antoine Jerome Balard. However, mass producing a version

of the compound that stayed potent enough to be effective and stable on shelf for commercial and home use proved elusive until recently, when brands like AIDY-X unlocked the secret to creating a long-lasting variety.

"We bottle this product at 500 parts per million," says John T. Julian, CEO of Danolyte Global, the parent manufacturer of AIDY-X, "but it's effective for some applications at 1 part per million. So normally, once you lose 10% of your active ingredient, your product is considered expired.



Click the image above to watch Robert explain the cleaning power of AIDY-X.

ROBERT'S WORLD

AIDY-X stays potent well beyond that threshold.”

Because hypochlorous acid dissolves quickly after doing its job, it is deemed safe not just to disinfect kitchen prep areas and dining surfaces, but also hospitals and schools, has been clinically proven to kill Covid-19 on contact—it is registered on the EPA's List N as a disinfectant shown to be effective for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid 19—and can be safely used to clean food manufacturing equipment, or even used to irrigate wounds.

“One of the reasons it's perfectly safe for humans is that it's already present in the human body,” Julian explains, noting that the hypochlorous acid is used by white blood cells to neutralize harmful bacteria, viruses, and fungi.

Perhaps just as impressive as its incredible potency as a disinfectant is the fact that AIDY-X has practically zero environmental impact. It's not only sustainable to produce, it creates no harmful byproducts and can be easily disposed of without contaminating water or soil.

“It really is a miracle product,” Robert says. “As a business owner and as a home owner, I've read these studies and clinical trials, and all I'm wondering is, ‘Where has this been all my life?’ It really lit a fire under me to bring this out into the world.”

When Robert recently became a co-owner in AIDY-X, he cut a series of video ads for the product, which include the tagline, “Cleaning your home shouldn't be a toxic event.”

It's a slogan with a nice ring to it, but it's also a sentiment that's near and dear to his heart.

“For reasons I understand perfectly well, we as a society now associate the harsh smell of bleach and other chemicals with something being REALLY clean,” Robert says. “Well, I don't know about you, but I can't think of a less appetizing smell to be ruminating through a kitchen or a restaurant. When I walk into a restaurant and it smells like a hospital, all I can think is, ‘It doesn't have to be this way.’ Heck, a hospital doesn't even have to smell like a hospital.”

“I've seen the future with AIDY-X,” Robert continues. “And it's now my mission to spread this message as wide and as far as I possibly can. The pandemic—especially the early days of it—hit everyone really hard, and I often think about how different it might have gone if we'd been prepared with PPE, masks, and a powerful disinfectant like this one. We can't change the past, but it's incumbent upon us to find a better, safer, more sustainable way forward, and AIDY-X is a part of that.”

To learn more or buy AIDY-X, visit www.tryadx.com.

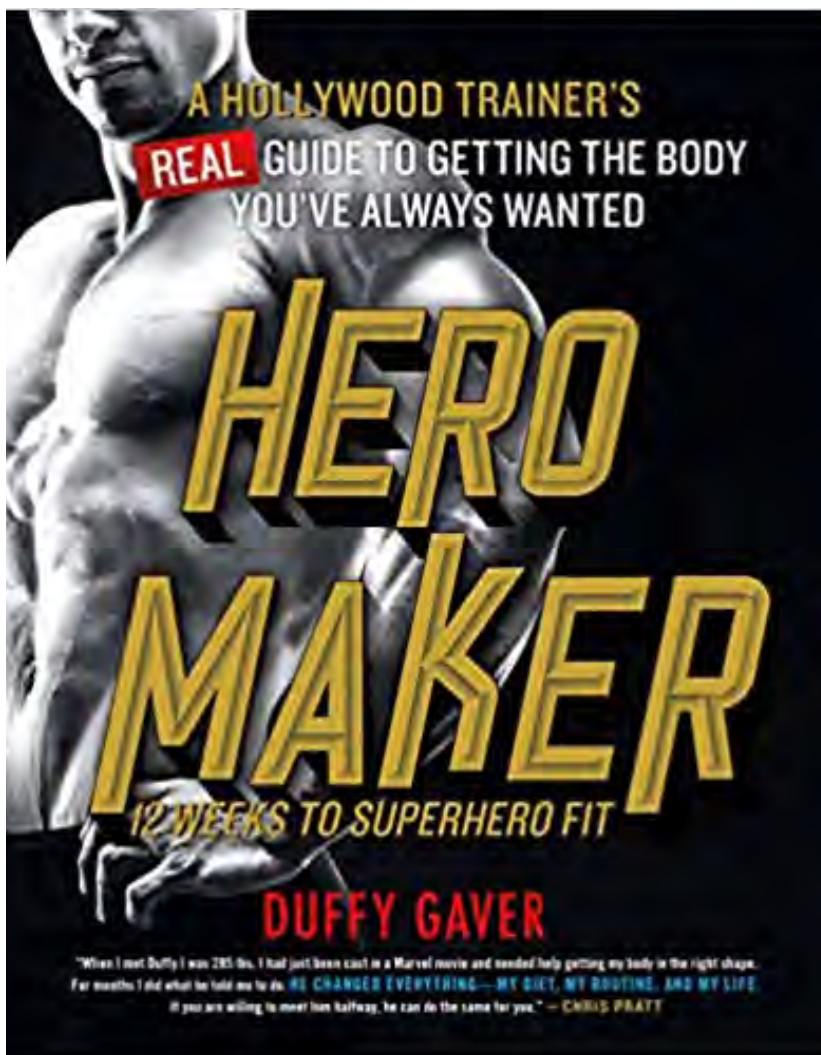


Click [HERE](#) to try [AIDY-X](#).

IN THE GYM: WORKOUT

GET 'HERO FIT' WITH DUFFY GAVER

Our second installment with Navy SEAL-turned-trainer Duffy Gaver delivers workouts used with Anne Hathaway and Tom Hiddleston.



We first introduced Duffy Gaver to the Robert Irvine Magazine readers back in the fall of 2016. The former Navy SEAL was frank about the excesses of the fitness industry and why it behooves supplement, apparel, and equipment companies to overcomplicate fitness and convince you that the body you've always wanted can't be had without first forking over a ton of dough.

"What they want is to make you feel f!\$%ed up and inferior so you'll buy their shit," he said.

Now Duffy is on a mission to fully democratize fitness, giving you the same tools he gives his celebrity clients to achieve the kind of results they did. *Hero Maker: 12 Weeks To Superhero Fit* lays out Duffy's very simple training philosophy and gives you the very same workouts that Brad Pitt used to get in shape for Troy; likewise Chris Hemsworth for Thor, Chris Pratt (pictured) for Guardians of the Galaxy, Scarlett Johansson for Avengers, Anne Hathaway and, and, and... the list goes on.

"It's a workout for every guy and every girl," Gaver says. "You can become your version of them; this is the quickest road I've found to get you as close to them as possible."

The book is just fifteen bucks on Amazon and the workouts don't utilize any highly-specialized equipment, meaning it can be done in just about any conventional gym, from mom-and-pop gyms to budget chains.

"You don't need me," Gaver says. "You don't need anybody. It's all on you."

Click [HERE](#) to buy Hero Maker on Amazon.

Follow Duffy Gaver on [Instagram](#).

Read our original interview with Duffy [HERE](#).

IN THE GYM: WORKOUT

CRIMINALLY GOOD LOOKING

Hey, even supervillains need to be in supershape. In this excerpt from Hero Maker, Duffy Gaver shares workouts he used with Anne Hathaway (Catwoman) and Tom Hiddleston (Loki).

HATHAWAY'S WORKOUT

- From August 20, 2013 -

EXERCISE	REPS x SETS
Treadmill Warm-up	0.5 miles (easy)
Assisted Pullups	10 (80 lbs) x 4
Assisted Dips	10 (80 lbs) x 4
Bodyweight Squats	10 x 4
Sit-ups	20 x 4
Lat Pulldowns	12 (65 lbs) x 1 10 (70 lbs) x 1

HIDDLESTON'S WORKOUT

- From May 23, 2011-

EXERCISE	REPS
Run	400 meters x 4
Pullups	10, 8, 6, 4
Push-ups	20, 20, 20, 15
Glute-Ham Developer	20, 20, 15, 12
Bodyweight Squats	20, 20, 15, 15
Triceps Extensions	(50 lbs) 12, 12, 10, 10
Dumbbell Curls	(25 lbs) 15, 12, 10, 10
Burpees	10 x 4
Ball Twist	(10 lb ball) 20, 20, 15, 15



Cider Braised Chicken Thighs



SERVES 4

YOU'LL NEED

- 8 chicken thighs skin on
- 1 tsp grape seed oil
- 3 cups apple cider
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 2 apples, medium dice
- 1 butternut squash, peeled and medium dice
- 1 bunch sage
- 1 tbsp walnuts, lightly toasted and chopped

MAKE IT

1. Season chicken thighs with salt and pepper and place them in a medium sauté pan with grape seed oil, over medium to high heat.
2. Sear the skin side first, allow to cook for approximately 4 minutes and then turn it over.
3. Remove the chicken from the pan and add the butternut squash and apple. Allow to cook for approximately 3 minutes, allowing the squash and apple to brown.
4. Add the chicken thighs back to the pan, and add the apple cider and the vegetable stock.
5. Bring to a boil and cover and place in a 325-degree oven for about 1 hour.

IN THE KITCHEN: CLASSIC RECIPE



Apple Cider Mimosa

SERVES 1

YOU'LL NEED

6 oz champagne

2 oz apple cider

Fresh nutmeg, grated with a micro plane 4 times

MAKE IT

1. Pour chilled champagne into a flute top with apple cider.

2. Grate nutmeg on top and serve

IN THE KITCHEN: CLASSIC RECIPE



Chestnut Soup

Creamy, flavorful, and perfectly satisfying.

SERVES 8

YOU'LL NEED

2 yellow onions, caramelized
1 stalk celery
½ lb bacon
1 qt toasted Chestnuts
2 sprigs sage
1 gallon pork stock
1 qt heavy cream
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp unsalted butter (browned)

MAKE IT

- 1) Small dice celery and onion.
- 2) In a medium soup pot, over medium heat, melt butter, add onion and celery.
- 3) Cook bacon strips in a separate pan and reserve.
- 4) Cook until butter begins to brown (about 10 minutes) then add chopped chestnuts.
- 5) Once you can smell the toasted walnut, add sage and pork stock.
- 6) Let Simmer for 20-30 minutes, stirring every few minutes to ensure the walnuts do not stick to the bottom.
- 7) Add cream in the last 5 minutes of cooking.
- 8) Crumble bacon strips over top when you serve.

IN THE KITCHEN: CLASSIC RECIPE

Bourbon-Spiked Hot Cocoa

Take the edge off AND feel like a kid again.

SERVES 2

YOU'LL NEED

3 cups whole milk
3 cinnamon sticks
10 oz semi sweet chocolate finely chopped
3 tbsp granulated sugar
1 pinch kosher salt
2 oz bourbon
Marshmallows

MAKE IT

1) In a small sauce pot, add milk, sugar, and cinnamon bring to a simmer.
2) Using a whisk add chocolate.
3) Strain, add 2 ounces bourbon, serve in mugs and top with marshmallows. Drizzle melted chocolate over top if desired.



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TO HELL AND BACK

One veteran's battle with PTSD led him and an intrepid filmmaker on a dangerous voyage to the edge of the world. Along the way, they proved that everything we think we know about veteran suicide is wrong.

By Matt Tuthill

When you sit down to watch *Hell or High Seas*, you're expecting an adventure. The posters, the trailer—everything about the documentary film's marketing—leads you to believe that you're about to witness the extreme lengths to which one veteran will go to get his point across. And on that level, it delivers in spades.

The film centers on Taylor Grieger,

a former Navy rescue swimmer who found reintegration into civilian life so impossible that he attempted to take his own life. But the round he fired that day, by some miracle, didn't ignite. Grieger then—doing a real-life impression of Denzel Washington in *Man on Fire*—takes his new lease on life to attempt a suicide mission: take a small sailboat with him and his

high school friend, filmmaker Stephen O'Shea, from Pensacola, FL around Cape Horn, home of the most notoriously dangerous seas known to man.

Along the way, they sail through a hurricane, the ship's motor blows out, they're beset by pirates, and—as difficulties mount—they brawl. At one point, deeming the seas too dangerous, Grieger leaves port

FILM REVIEW: HELL OR HIGH SEAS

without O'Shea, taking on one of the most treacherous legs of the journey by himself.

The singular purpose driving both men: To raise awareness for veteran PTSD and the abysmal veteran suicide rate of 22 servicemen and women who take their own lives every single day. They sail with a Mission 22 flag flying from their ship, all in the hopes that when the film releases, we can learn something through Grieger's struggles about the crisis facing our veterans.

On that educational level, *Hell or High Seas* delivers something even bigger than its adventure. It explains PTSD in a way that cuts through the myths and can make anyone understand what the condition really is.

In one of the film's terrific animated sequences, we see that chronic output of adrenaline—like the kind a veteran would experience during a deployment—shrinks the hippocampus, the region of the brain responsible for helping us regulate our emotions. Meanwhile, the adrenal gland becomes so overactive that it continues to fire at odd times, long after immediate danger has passed.

Grieger describes

feeling his fight-or-flight reflex kicking in at odd times in the middle of a beautiful day when he wasn't experiencing anything negative. And when adrenaline floods a system with a beleaguered and shrunken hippocampus, disaster often ensues. The trauma of living a life in which his emotions were on a perpetual runaway train led to the suicide attempt—and ultimately, a voyage around Cape Horn.

It spoils nothing to say you'll share in their excitement and hope at the beginning, their disappointment and fear when the journey seems doomed, and ultimately,

their triumph. That's what we expect from any movie. But what you don't always expect—and what I'll proudly spoil—is the fact that you'll gain a brand new perspective on what our veterans face—and never think of PTSD and veteran suicide in the same way.

The more people who can see this, the better off our veterans will be. Making this more than a good movie. It's an important one.

Stream *Hell or High Seas* on [VUDU](#), [AppleTV](#), [Google Play](#), and [YouTube](#). Learn more at [HellorHighSeas.com](#).



HELL OR HIGH SEAS

TAYLOR GRIEGER



The former Navy rescue swimmer's battle with PTSD nearly ended in suicide. Blessed with a second chance, Taylor Grieger is using his struggle to illuminate the dark truths facing America's veterans.

Interview by Matt Tuthill

HELL OR HIGH SEAS: TAYLOR GRIEGER

RI: Your ship was so small and ill-equipped for the task at hand. Were you at a point where you felt, “If I die, this is a good way for it to happen”? Because I couldn’t help but think that there might have been part of you that maybe wanted that at that point in your life.

TG: I don’t know... I didn’t really care how I died, man. At that point in my life, I had already tried to kill myself. So I didn’t really, in all honesty... I didn’t really give a shit how I left this planet at that point. Out there, I mean, I definitely didn’t want to die, right? Especially because I had Stephen and John on the boat. That was pretty stressful for me. I was constantly making sure the boat was fine so those guys didn’t die.

RI: What was so compelling about this particular journey for you? Because again, it was just so dangerous. And you guys got pretty lucky considering the hurricane, the pirates, and all the complications you experienced.

TG: We definitely got lucky. There’s a lot of times where we should not have made it out of it. I didn’t want any of my buddies feeling like I did, honestly. That’s what kept me going. I didn’t have anything else left to lose. But to make sure that nobody else getting out after me felt like I did. And I



Hell or High Seas draw attention to “adventure therapy” which would give veterans a positive outlet for the adrenaline spikes they experience after returning home.

thought the only way we’d get their attention was doing something that dangerous, sailing around Cape Horn.

RI: Had this always been an idea

in your head as something you wanted to do?

TG: Yeah. Sailing and being in the Navy, you always hear old sea stories about people going around The Horn and the kind of seas

HELL OR HIGH SEAS: TAYLOR GRIEGER

they faced, and how rare it is for people to actually do it and live. So that was always in the back of my mind. When we tried to think of something that would grab people's attention, that was a no-brainer. Cape Horn's notorious on the waters. If you have anything to do with the water or work on the water at all, you know about it. I knew about it for a while and I had no desire to go down there, man. When I got out I wanted to sail the trade winds around the islands and stuff and sail over to Australia again because it's just beautiful. That's what I wanted to do.

RI: What made you think *The Old Lady* might be able to make it? I'm assuming that even the horror stories you hear about Cape Horn, people are probably in bigger boats than that.

TG: Yeah. They're in container ships. The *Old Lady*, I knew if we were going to be in those big seas, we'd need something with a pretty wide beam, a tank. We'd have to sacrifice some speed for stability. So she was really slow, man. We would travel about four knots, three knots, which isn't what you want when you're trying to outrun a storm. You want a boat that can go about seven or eight knots.

So that's what narrowed down the search for the kind of boat she was. Just a real beamy, thick, heavy

tank on the seas. And when I found her, she was not in great shape. So, I brought her back to Pensacola where I was living at the time. Pretty much rebuilt her from the ground up. The only thing left was the shell, her hull, that's original. Everything else we had to replace.

"I had already tried to kill myself. I didn't really give a shit how I left this planet at that point."

RI: During the film you talk about the veteran suicide rate and what we're doing about it and you ask, "Well, what if we did something to make sure it didn't get to that point? What if we had a more comprehensive out boarding process from the military?" How do you feel about the prospects of that, realistically? Humans generally are bad at taking preventative measures. Add in military and government bureaucracies and it seems like a very steep hill to climb.

TG: That's true. Throughout the

whole expedition and then about a year and a half when I got back, I was pretty jaded towards it all. We felt like we'd tried everything. Speaking to our representatives, emailing senators, our governor, anybody that we could get a hold of. We got laughed at a lot—how ridiculous that concept would be.

But since we've started screening the film, there's these pockets of people that show up that actually give a shit and want to help in their community. People come. You can tell how interested people are by the questions they ask and if they get it.

We wanted it to be a call of action. Not like a, "Oh, feel sorry for us," kind of thing. But, "This is what we can do and this is what we can start working on." So when we go do these screen-

ings, those people show up. And it gives me goosebumps talking about it. The questions they ask are, "How do we implement these programs in our community? How do we get these programs here to help my son that comes home, or my nephew that comes home, or my niece that comes home and she's having a hard time or he's having a hard time? Where do I send them? What can I tell them and how can they get the help they need?" So that's amazing. It's honestly re-lit a fire in me.

I'm still definitely jaded towards

HELL OR HIGH SEAS: TAYLOR GRIEGER

the government pulling any strings and making stuff happen, but communities are going to start building these programs on their own with or without the government.

RI: And then you run into the British sailors doing the adventure therapy. What are the chances that you run into those guys doing exactly what you ought to have been doing when you left the military?

TG: I mean, in the whole wide world, for two boats to meet in the middle of the Panama Canal—the odds of that happening are just insane. I won't ever be able to describe that. And them doing the same mission we are—actually running it successfully—was incredible. It gives you hope. These programs already exist inside of militaries around the world. It's just our military and our country hasn't caught up yet. So that in itself is motivating. Because it's pretty easy to say when somebody asks you, "Does this work?" and you can say, "Yeah." Israeli Defense Force has been doing it for years, UK military has been doing it for years. We haven't even started.

RI: There was that moment late in the film when you leave port without Stephen and John. Explain what was going through your mind when you decided to do that.

TG: Winter was coming in hard by that time, and we could have left the boat or sold it in Valparaíso for winter time. And that decision to

come back North... I reached out to this guy, he pretty much invented and created expedition sailing down in Patagonia. His name's Skip Novak. So, legendary sailor down there. He actually got back to me and him and I had a couple long phone calls about sailing down there during the wintertime. And he was like, "That's not even worth it." So during the summer you get 90, 80-foot seas once a month. But during the winter, you get 90, 80-foot seas every week. The storms are just that consistent down there. So it's really dangerous.

Stephen said it, he was like, "Well, if we die then all of this will be for nothing if we can't come back and keep telling the story." So we knew we needed to keep on going and staying in Valparaíso [Chile] was just way too expensive. It was going to be about 2,500 bucks a month just to stay there. And that's funny. I mean, we were, I'm sure you saw that in the film, we were pretty broke the whole time.

So Valdivia's this little pocket where sailors go to winter their boats. It's about 500 nautical miles south of there. I made that decision pretty easy. The boat couldn't stay. The boats got to go to Valdivia. The condition of the boat was terrible. I mean, we just caught on fire and we didn't have electricity on the boat and everything was pretty much shredded to bits.

And if we were going to bring the boat down there, I couldn't do it with them on the boat because I'd just be watching the next storm roll in and think it's my fault that

I killed Stephen and John. They weren't happy about it at all. They still fight me to this day about it. But yeah, if I was going to do it, I had to do it alone. That way I didn't kill them. The decision was pretty easy to make, it was pretty black and white. And that's what we had to do to keep going.

RI: Stepping back and thinking about it from their perspective—and knowing that veterans in crises tend to push people away—do you understand how frustrating it must have been for them?

TG: Absolutely. I'd be just as pissed if I was in their shoes... Another man doesn't make that decision for me in my life. But... it would hurt a lot if they got hurt and it was my fault. By some miracle, if I made it out of that situation I'd never be able to live with myself again.

RI: How did you feel about presenting a few key moments as animated sequences? I'm sure being at the center of this film, you would've preferred to have those moments on film.

TG: Well, when we were in storms and things were really bad we wouldn't pick up a camera just because we couldn't, we were trying to stay alive. So going back and telling those stories with Chayne [Gregg, the producer] and Glenn [Holsten, the director] to make this film, they really wanted those sequences to be in the film and animation I think was the best way to do it. I think if it was on film it wouldn't

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do it justice. It wouldn't make as much sense as it did. And in a way, those moments still belong to us because they're not on film... I like the animation a lot more than I ever thought I would just because I think it tells it accurately and the film doesn't get in the way of it.

RI: What originally drew you to the military life?

TG: I was raised in Texas, which is pretty patriotic. People that serve in the military and police officers, firefighters are kind of the top guys, the guys that you respected and that your parents made you stop and tell them thank you and try and buy their meals when we could. So I had this notion that being in military, that's the right thing to do.

If you live here, you've got to serve this country in some way.

RI: The film does a brilliant job of dispelling the myths surrounding PTSD. Can you relate that to your own experience and tell me what was going on in your life?

TG: This is what Stephen helped me out with a lot whenever I first got back to the States... For no reason at all, adrenaline would just start running through my body and I'm not even doing anything. That was the first sign. I was like, "All right, something's wrong. My body never used to do this and never did it in the military." Sure didn't do it before the military. But when I got back, I would just be sitting in the house or I'd be driving, doing

nothing at all and my body would start ramping up on its own. Like I'm about to fight someone.

That's what it felt like. My senses were all that way, adrenaline would start pumping, I could feel my blood vessels expanding, the blood run into my face. And if you don't know why that's happening. You're like, "What the hell's going on with me?" And then when you're that depressed, man, it just compounds into a really dark place. And you find yourself on the phone calling Stephen, it's probably 3:00 AM his time in Scotland when he was working over there.

I'd call and be like, "Dude, I don't know what's going on with me. This is freaking me out." And he was the first one to say, "Everything you're

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saying is exactly what the guys I interview are saying. All this research I'm doing, it's the exact same thing. You're not the only one going through that, and here's why." And he broke down to me what that animation in the film did. He's like, "This is how your body's changed. If it's under stress that long, on a physiological level of your body changes." And once I understood that there was a problem and a reason for it, that's when we started delving into how to heal, how to make it better and how to live with it. And the news there was good.

RI: How are you today? Was this trip enough adventure for you? Do you need more?

TG: It's kind of part of the deal. People who suffer from PTSD, I like to tell them that you find a way to live with PTSD. Those experiences don't ever leave you. But once you've started an adventure therapy program you hold onto these beautiful moments that you see out in the world. So instead of living in a world where you're only seeing the worst things, the darkest things that this world has to offer, you can pull on those memories of sailing in the middle of the night with the full moon and the sky full of stars and reflecting off the water. It's just some of the most beautiful things you've ever seen. And that—a lot of the time—is reason enough not to kill yourself. Because you have that in the back of your mind, the knowledge that his world can be that beautiful again.

The concept I try to explain to

people is, instead of prescribing pills to balance the chemicals in your brain, you prescribe adventure therapy instead of pills. So I can still feel myself when I get pretty stressed out and depressed, I'll need to go sail. And Samantha [Taylor's wife] knows now. She knows I've got to just go sail for a couple days and kind of flip the switch and reset. I still need it. That'll probably happen every couple of months. I do work on the water, so I sail quite a bit. But if I get in some situation and I'm not sailing I'll know I need to take off and then come back and I'm healthy as can be dude, every time. It's amazing.

RI: So you will still have days where that adrenaline comes out of nowhere and it's unrelated to anything that's going on at that moment?

TG: Absolutely. I started wearing this thing called a whoop strap. It calculates your HRV and your heart rate and stuff. I'll be at Home Depot and my heart rate will be at 180, man. And I'm not doing anything. I'm buying wood and I feel my body running away like it did back then. And I'll look at my phone and heart rate's at 180. So on a physical level, your body still reacts that way, that doesn't stop. But knowing why it's reacting that way, you can be a little more patient with yourself and you know what you need to do to get better. And in those moments, I'll just go for a run. But it really helps knowing that when it happens it goes away and I know how to deal with it in a healthy way.

RI: You're a veteran. You know guns. What are the odds of a bullet not firing?

TG: Oh man... So, we would do gun shoots regularly. Hundreds of thousands of rounds I've shot from the helicopter. We had a 50 cal, a GAU-21, and then we had a M240 that shot a 7.62 round. Anybody that's in the military that is around guns shoots hundreds of thousands of rounds. And to get a misfire, I had two misfires my entire time of shooting. So when I saw that firing pin hit the primer I was like, "That's not real. That doesn't happen." It doesn't happen. I still haven't been able to process that or know why, but yeah. That doesn't happen. You'd get jams if your ammo's dirty or something, or you get dirt in your weapon. But you don't get the firing pin striking and not igniting. That's pretty rare. Sometimes you get an audible pop if there's not enough gun powder to get the brass through the barrel. But yeah, you don't just get a dead round. That's pretty rare.

RI: What led up to that day and what you were feeling as you went to do that?

TG: I don't know, man. I just had one of those days. The whole day was just all... Everything from overseas and I was just... Another thing Stephen told me to best help me understand it is, whenever you live in moments where you're about to die or you're in stressful scenarios and your adrenaline's running, memory recall is directly correlated with adrenaline. So if your adren-

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aline's running and you're in a pretty bad situation, that moment is burned in your brain. And that's why you see the worst things like you're there. Like you're actually living it. You can feel it happening in front of you again. It's that vivid. It's the most vivid memories you've ever had.

So I had one of those days, man. My body was running away from me. And I was broke and felt like I didn't have anywhere to live for. I was like, "Why do I want to stay in this world where I don't have anything worth living for? And this world's the most disgusting thing I've ever been a part of. I wouldn't

want to live in this world anymore. There's no reason to.' It's just nasty and dark and painful man. And I didn't have anything. So there wasn't really any reason for me to stick around.

RI: Where were you?

TG: I was in Pensacola.

RI: Now you're married. When did you meet Samantha?

TG: After my boat caught fire and we came back. I met her in San Antonio. We met on a dating app. And we went out and had some drinks and went to a place in San Antonio that does turtle races, which was

pretty fun. The rest was history after that.

RI: And you work on the water now.

TG: Yeah, I work for a charter company down here in Galveston. So I'll sail families for a couple of days or a day at a time during the summer. And then during the winter I deliver sailboats. So when somebody buys a sailboat somewhere in the world and they need it where they are, they'll hire me to go sail it back to them.

Grieger works with the American Odysseus Sailing Foundation, which gives adventure therapy to vets. Learn more at amodsailing.org

HELL OR HIGH SEAS

STEPHEN O'SHEA



There's walking the walk, then there's what Stephen O'Shea did. He put his life on the line to tell a story that mattered. Here, the documentarian reveals what he hopes to accomplish with *Hell or High Seas*—and why making the film was even more difficult than it appeared.

Interview by Matt Tuthill

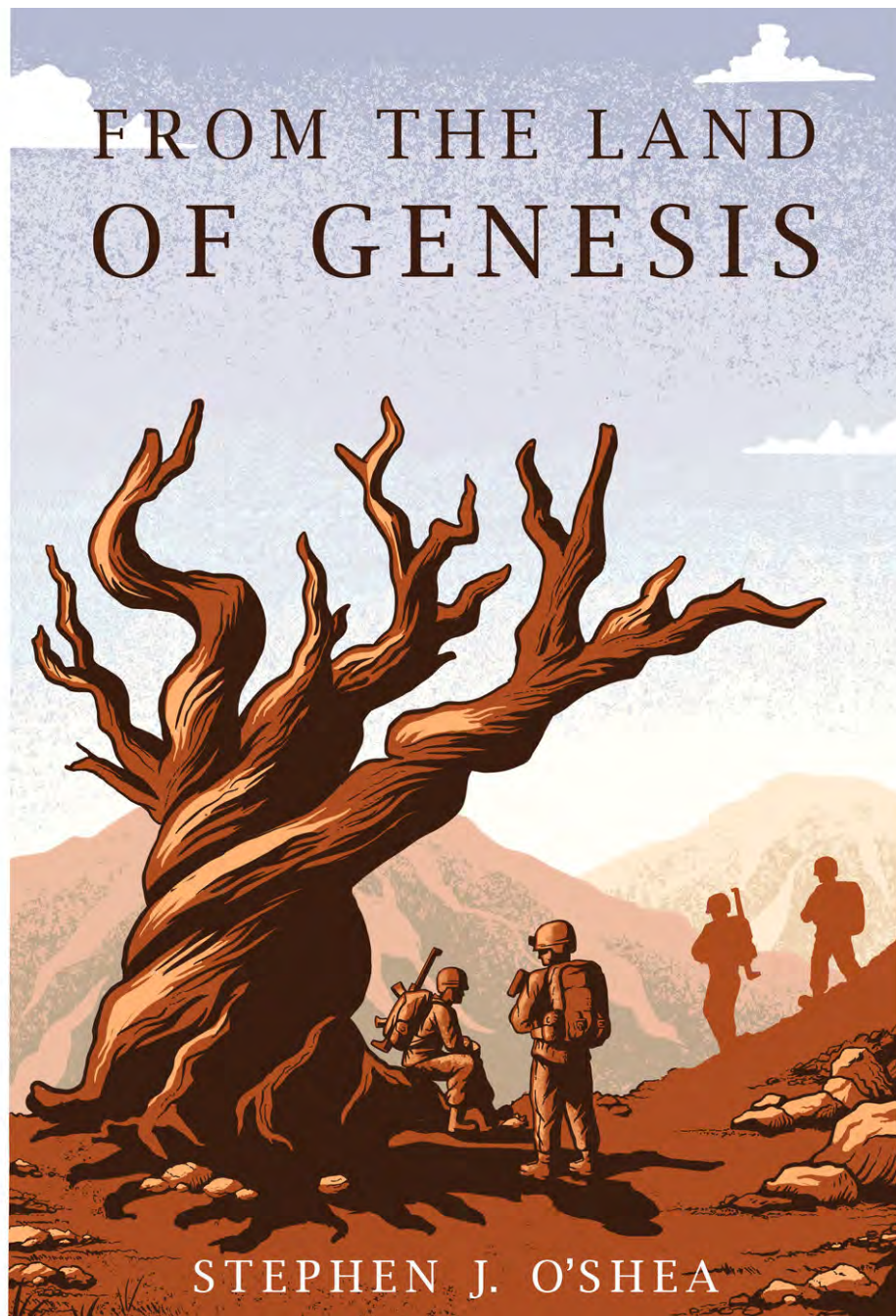
HELL OR HIGH SEAS: STEPHEN O'SHEA

RI Magazine: There was incredible danger in this project. You do a good job of focusing on Taylor and the danger he's in because it's his decision and his story. But what about you? You're holding the camera, not at all removed from the danger. What made you want to do this?

Stephen O'Shea: I think my elevator response is that we were naive to a lot of the dangers that we were going to face. Crossing the Gulf of Mexico, I thought we'd have a better gauge of what the weather would be. The Caribbean itself ended up being pretty destructive. And then I was just naive to sailing in general. I'd never really done an overnight sail before that trip.

But I was aware there were going to be some major risks involved and I think deep at the root, it really ties back to a lot of research that I began toward the end of my undergraduate career, which involves interviewing combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

In that research, we talk a lot about survivors' guilt, and I came to realize that there's something akin to it that is more like civilians' guilt, because especially at that time, a lot of the guys and women that we were interview-



Stephen O'Shea's book *From The Land of Genesis* is a collection of short stories centered on veterans whose lives have been permanently affected by the wars of Afghanistan and Iraq. These interwoven stories offer insight to the struggles that veterans face upon returning home. Order it [HERE](#).

ing were my peers, they were my same age and Taylor is a perfect

example. He went into the Navy right out of high school. Hearing

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about a lot of the shit he'd been through was pretty jarring. It felt like I needed to do more, even as I was writing my first book *From The Land of Genesis*, which is all based on those interviews, it still felt like I wasn't doing enough. And this sailing trip jumped out as an opportunity, not necessarily for me to put my life on the line, but certainly to do something in a way that could make a powerful impact.

RI: There's a moment in the film where Taylor talks about the veteran suicide crisis and

says society keeps asking how can we help these people who are in so much pain and stop them from taking their own lives? But he asks, "Well, what if we acted before then?" But human beings are terrible at taking preventative measures. We deal with the thing that is blowing up in front of us and rarely try to defuse the bombs down the road. So what do you hope to ultimately accomplish with this film?

SO: Right now, I'm working with the Texas forest service on a lot of different things like fire wildfire prevention and mitigation, and it's

the same uphill battle, right? Nobody wants to put money and effort towards preventative measures, but you can save a lot of time, a lot of money, and a lot of lives by doing that. So for the people that that message that doesn't really resonate at the very least, I hope that this documentary reaches other veterans and lets them know that they're not alone in their experiences. And for the active duty guys, I hope that it helps prepare them for what's to come. A lot of what we focus on in the documentary is the physiological response to chronic stress and PTSD.



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A lot of guys in the military aren't even educated about that. PTSD wasn't even mentioned to Taylor as he was being out processed. And whether that's a problem we can fix within the military, or it's something that we have to confront as the general public and as civilians is hard to say, but definitely this film is meant to be a grassroots movement.

It's meant to reach veterans and civilians alike, to educate them, not only on what's going on mentally, physically, physiologically, and emotionally, but on a on a broader spectrum.

RI: We have a tendency to think of it as guys reliving these horrible experiences and certainly that happens. But more often it's what you show: these soldiers live at this heightened level of awareness and alertness and they're ready to kill or be killed at a moment's notice for this extended period of time. Then they come home and these parts of their brain are still at that heightened level of alertness. It would seem to me that you don't have to necessarily work through the memories of each individual, but develop some kind of protocol to wean someone down from the overproduction of adrenaline.

SO: You would certainly think that there should be a pretty

straightforward response to this issue. And that was a huge part of my PhD because when I first started this research, a lot of what the media and other researchers were looking into was that romanticized idea of PTSD where you're having nightmares of the same moment over and over again. And then you would just need to go to a psycho-

“To already be seeing this film impacting people and resonating and having people ask at the end, ‘What can I do?’ is so rewarding, so powerful.”

analyst and have them relive that moment with you, right? Until you can create a story that makes sense. But on the ground floor, what we were seeing more often than not was something that's called complex PTSD, and it's not a single moment. It is an effect of chronic stress. And that's definitely what Taylor was experiencing. A lot of what we imply in this documentary are the benefits of what's called adventure therapy.

There's a lot of evidence to

suggest that after a deployment where you're “go, go, go” for nine months straight, then you come home and rather than just coming to a complete stop and hitting a wall, you go out on a two to three week adventure where you have a healthy outlet for those endorphins and for the adrenaline. And for all those different chemical

responses going on in the body and the brain. And what happens then is your body is able to process those better because they're mixed in with the happy hormones like oxytocin—you throw some of that in there, and then your body's response isn't just negative to these sorts of adrenaline releases. So there's a lot of emerging research that has to deal with adventure therapy and the benefits. There's been suggestions that it could help, “regrow” is probably the wrong word, but restore the hippocampus to its original size and

volume. But I'm really excited to see how that research continues to develop and how we as a nation can begin implementing that in the out-processing of our military.

RI: And when you reached the Panama Canal, you guys came across the British sailors. Was that what they were doing? Adventure therapy?

SO: It was. They had all just gotten back from a deployment and Taylor and I had no idea that the

HELL OR HIGH SEAS: STEPHEN O'SHEA

British Army did this. That was a completely serendipitous encounter. And those guys actually saw our Mission 22 flag waving from the mast of our boat. And so they recognized that first and we're like, "Hey, are you guys associated with Mission 22?" And we said, "Yeah, this is what we're doing, and this is the story we're trying to tell." That's when they explained to us what they were doing, and our jaws just kind of dropped like, "Oh, this is happening in other countries already." People are already understanding the benefits of this concept and implementing it. The United States is just sadly a little bit behind and their arguments I think, Dan Crenshaw mentioned the scale and the scope of the British army versus the American army. So there's certainly obstacles to getting that done here in the United States, but I don't really see any real reasons why we couldn't have similar programs.

RI: There are three key sequences in the film that were animated. When you sailed straight into the hurricane, the fight you had with Taylor after stopping in the bar, and your brush with the pirates. How did you feel about presenting

those moments through animation?

SO: That's a really difficult one. Certainly it boils down to Taylor and I being a skeleton crew. And when our lives were at stake, cameras were put down, and lines were grabbed and the helm was manned, but it was all hands on deck. So there were definitely moments where filming just wasn't an option. And we did learn from that as the trip progressed. So you'll see toward the end, we had mounted GoPros. And so we tried to combat that issue by installing more cameras across the boat and using more GoPros and things like that. But I thought the animations really turned out great. It's funny

that you mention having another camera on crew. This might be getting into the weeds a little bit, but when Taylor and I first were talking about this journey and making it into a documentary, the plan was for me to be the director and for a third person to be the cinematographer-slash-director of photography.

And I won't give his name or anything, but we flew him down to Pensacola when we were refurbishing the boat and we had it on land and we were grinding the hull and repainting it and everything. We mounted the new engine and he helped us film a lot of that. So the early footage where you'll see both Taylor and I, in it was him,



O'Shea (right) and Grieger have known each other since high school. O'Shea went into academia while Grieger went into the military. O'Shea researched PTSD and was able to help Grieger work through his difficulties after he left the military.

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and then we bought his return flight so he could come back to Pensacola and cast off with us.

I think Taylor invested \$20,000 or more into film equipment for him. And then seven days out, he ghosted us and we went ballistic. We were calling his brothers, his family, trying to just figure out what was going on. And about three days out, he sent us an essay-long text message just saying he didn't think we were prepared and he wanted to forego going on this journey. So three days out, I realized I had to be the camera guy and the film editor and everything else. So I picked up a camera, downloaded a few YouTube videos for while we were on the boat and learned videography and video editing on the fly.

RI: That's unreal – and really makes the film more impressive knowing that. Then you were kicked off your own movie. He left port without you. Explain what happened when you realized he was gone.

SO: Oh, in Valparaiso? Yeah. That was a tough one. Taylor and I got into several shouting matches down in Valparaiso over him taking off and trying to sail around Cape Horn in the middle of the winter versus wintering the boat. And at the end of one of them, he kicked me off the boat. And so I flew home that day. And I guess after that, Taylor cast off to winter the boat, because he was getting advice from people who had sailed around the Cape

who were saying if you try and go around the Cape in the middle of winter, you're going to die. It's a suicide mission. Everything you've done so far is going to be for nothing. That's one of those moments where our whole story had been veterans push people away. When they're hurting and when they're at their lowest, they push people away. And my role was to not let him do that to me. But ultimately, he decided that The Old Lady wasn't safe enough for me to be on it.

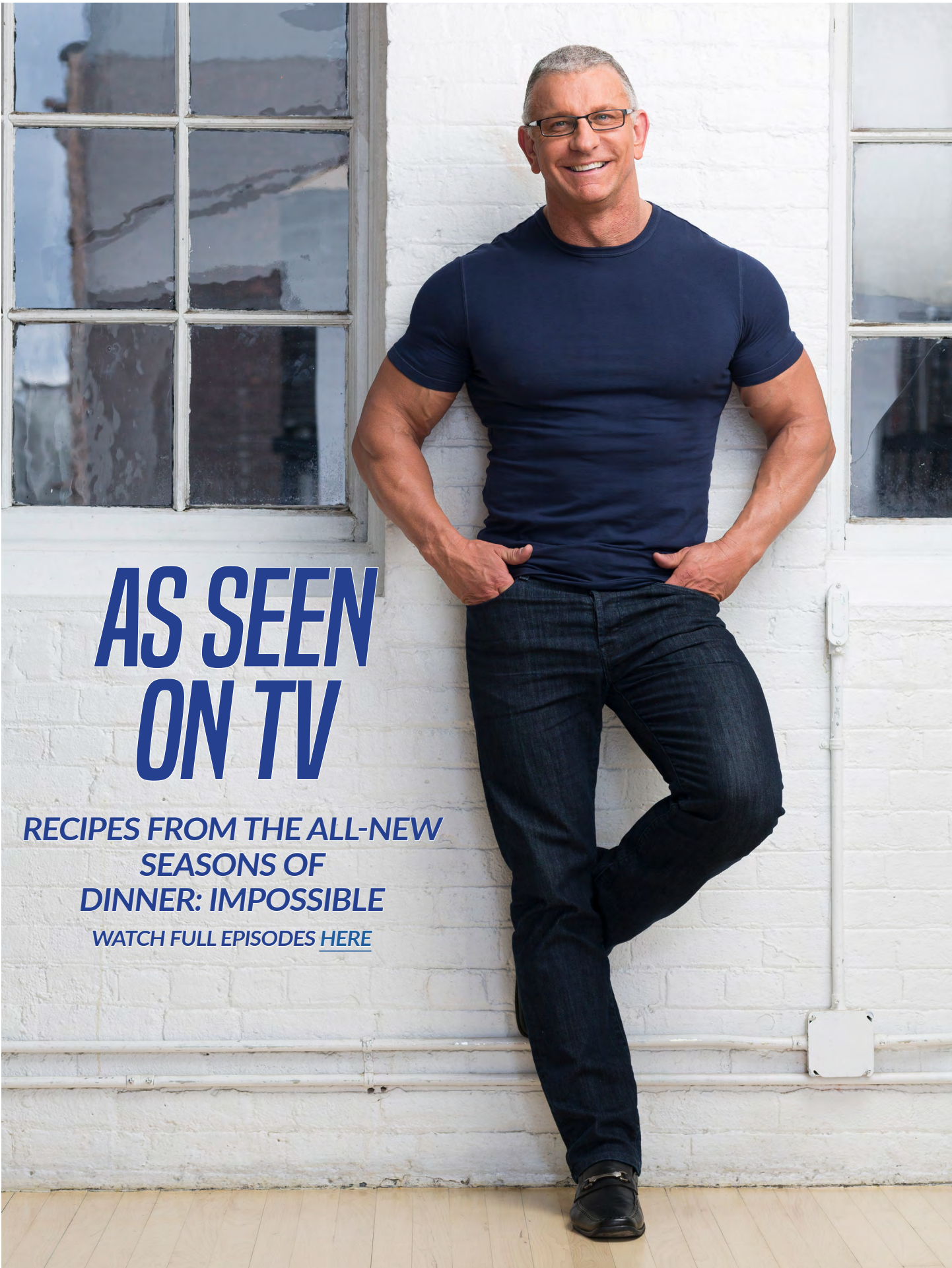
He felt he had to do it alone because he couldn't bear the thought of him killing both of us on that stretch. So it was tricky and it was difficult to navigate. And there's still scars from that moment. But at the end of the day... at that point we had been down to eating rice and jam for breakfast. And we pulled into port and we immediately went to a pub and we got a hamburger and a beer, and once we logged into the WiFi, Taylor and John both got a notification that one of their friends had committed suicide while we were out at sea. I think that was the last straw. That's when Taylor broke a little bit. And so fortunately we got him to winter the boat and regroup. We launched the Kickstarter, raised 20 grand to get back down there and do it properly. And we did it. So it all worked out.

RI: What's your ultimate goal with this film?

SO: There's just so much depth to this story. It's really exciting to have it being released to the public and to really start to have it impacting lives, but already it's done so much and it's reached so many people. And one of the most moving experiences I've had with this whole story to date was in Charleston when we screened it. There's a quote that Taylor gives in the middle of the movie, which is, "Everything that I've done and everything that I've put into this, is it even going to amount to anything?" And I think Taylor and I both had been feeling that for the past several years. When I got back from the trip, certainly I was in debt. I was broke and I had no source of income on the horizon or anything. So picking myself up from that was pretty difficult. And then the pandemic hitting, it's just been a struggle for a long time and—and not to make it about us by any means because you get into this head space where you want to do these things for all the right reasons—but you're not always sure if people care. And to be here and to already be seeing this film impacting people and resonating and having people ask at the end of the documentary, "What can I do?" is so rewarding, so powerful. And I'm just excited to see where it goes from here.

Stephen J O'Shea is a writer and documentary filmmaker. Visit his website at:

www.stephenjoshea.com



AS SEEN ON TV

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AS SEEN ON TV

“Mother Clucker”

From “Food Truck Showdown”

SERVES 4

YOU’LL NEED

FOR THE MARINADE

- ¼ cup beer
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup pickle juice
- 3 tbsp sriracha
- 4 large raw boneless skinless chicken thighs (or 8 small portions)

FOR THE SEASONED FLOUR

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp ground black pepper

FOR THE SPICY MAYO

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp ketchup
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp sriracha
- Juice of ½ lemon
- Kosher salt and black pepper,

OTHER INGREDIENTS

- Oil, enough for deep frying
- 8 Hawaiian sweet rolls, cut in half
- 1 tbsp grapeseed oil or butter
- 1 cup iceberg lettuce, fine shredded
- 8 thin slices ripe tomato
- 8 pickle slices



MAKE IT

MARINADE

1) In a mixing bowl, mix the beer, buttermilk, pickle juice, and sriracha together. Add the raw chicken and toss well and allow to marinate for at least 2 hours.

SEASONED FLOUR

1) In a mixing bowl, mix the flour and all the spices together. Set aside.

SPICY MAYO

1) In a mixing bowl, whisk the mayonnaise, ketchup, Dijon mustard, sriracha, and lemon juice together. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

FRYING AND PLATING

1) Preheat fryer to 350 degrees.
2) Remove the chicken from the marinade and dredge in the seasoned flour.

3) Fry the chicken for 10 minutes and check internal temperature, which needs to reach 165 degrees to be fully cooked. If chicken needs more time in the fryer, continue to fry the chicken and check the internal temperature every minute until it reaches 165 degrees in the center.
4) Toast the rolls golden brown in a sauté pan with a touch of oil or butter over medium heat.
5) To build the sandwiches, place a tbsp of the spicy mayo on all the bottom portions of the toasted rolls.
6) Place a portion of shredded lettuce on top of the spicy mayo coated rolls, followed by a slice of tomato.
7) Cut all 4 fried chicken portions in half and place a half portion on top of each dressing bottom roll.
8) Top each piece of fried chicken with 2 pickle slices, more spicy mayo, and the top portions of toasted rolls. Serve.

AS SEEN ON TV

Rice Bowl with Seared Pork

From "Food Truck Showdown"

SERVES 4

YOU'LL NEED

FOR THE MARINATED BBQ PORK TENDERLOIN

1 ½ lbs raw pork tenderloin, fat trimmed
2 tbsp brown sugar
2 tsp kosher salt
1 tsp Cajun seasoning
1 cup beer
2 tbsp grapeseed oil

¾ cup BBQ sauce (store bought)
2 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tsp hot sauce
½ tsp ground cumin

FOR THE RICE

1 cup cooked basmati rice (follow package directions)
2 tbsp Rice wine vinegar
2 tsp sugar

FOR THE SPICY SAUCE

½ cup mayonnaise
2 tsp sriracha
1 tsp ground smoked paprika
1 tsp grapeseed oil

FOR THE GUACAMOLE

2 ripe avocados, peeled and pitted
Juice of 1 lime
1 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
1 tsp hot sauce
2 tbsp small diced red onion
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

OTHER INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp grapeseed oil
2 cups ¼" sliced green cabbage
1 cup corn
1 cup fresh salsa or pico de gallo (store bought)
½ cup chopped fresh scallions



AS SEEN ON TV

MAKE IT

MARINATED BBQ PORK

1) Mix the brown sugar, salt, and Cajun seasoning together and rub onto the raw pork. Then marinate the rubbed pork in the beer for 30 minutes.

2) In a large sauté pan over medium heat, add the grapeseed oil and sear the pork on all sides and continue to cook for 2 to 3 minutes on all sides. Set aside to rest.

3) Using the same pan used to sear the pork, add the BBQ sauce, Dijon mustard, hot sauce, and cumin. Stir well and turn heat to low.

4) Dice the rested-seared pork into 1" pieces and place the cut pork into the warm BBQ sauce mixture in the pan. Stir well to coat the pork in the sauce and continue to cook for 5 to 7 minutes until the diced pork is cooked through. Set the pork aside while finishing the other recipe steps.

RICE

1) Place the cooked rice into a mixing bowl. Add the rice wine vinegar and sugar and gently toss and cover and keep warm.

SPICY SAUCE

1) In a mixing bowl, mix the mayo, sriracha, smoked paprika, and grapeseed oil together.

GUACAMOLE

1) In a mixing bowl, mix the avocado, lime, cilantro, hot sauce, and red onion together and season with salt and pepper, to taste.

FINISH & PLATING

1) In a large sauté pan over medium high heat, add the 2 tbsp grapeseed oil and add the cut cabbage. Stir and wilt the cabbage for 1 minute and turn the heat off.

2) To plate the dish, divide the seasoned rice into 4 large entrée bowls. Top the rice with the wilted cabbage, followed by the pork, then garnish the pork with the spicy sauce, corn, salsa, guacamole, and chopped scallions. Serve.



AS SEEN ON TV

Beer Float



From “Food Truck Showdown”

SERVES 2

YOU’LL NEED

3 cups vanilla ice cream
½ cup milk
3 oz beer
1 Twinkie
1 cup fresh peaches, sliced

2 tbsp butter
3 tbsp caramel sauce
½ cup whipped cream
6 dessert candied cherries

MAKE IT

1) In a sauté pan over medium high heat, add butter and sauté sliced peaches for 1 to 2 minutes until slightly caramelized. Remove peaches from heat; allow to cool.

2) In a blender, add the ice cream, milk, beer, Twinkie and half of the caramelized peaches. Blend together on high speed until smooth.
3) Pour into 2 glasses and garnish with the reserved ½ cup of caramelized peaches, caramel sauce, whipped cream and cherries.

AS SEEN ON TV

Aebleskiver with Lingonberry Jam

From "A Viking Feast"

SERVES 4

YOU'LL NEED

1 cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp kosher salt
2 tsp sugar
2 eggs, separate the yolks & whites
1 cup whole milk
2 tbsp butter, melted
2 tbsp grapeseed oil
Aebleskiver Pan

FOR GARNISH

1 cup lingonberry jam (from store)
Powdered sugar, as needed

MAKE IT

1) In a mixing bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder and salt together.
2) In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the egg yolks, milk, and 2 tbsp of the melted butter. Next, stir the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients.
3) In another bowl, beat the egg whites with an electric mixer for 2-3 minutes until stiff peaks form. Fold the stiff peaked egg whites into the batter.
4) Heat an aebleskiver pan over medium high heat. Add a little of the grapeseed oil to each well of the molds. Next, add 2 tbsp of batter.

5) Allow the aebleskivers to cook until bottoms are golden brown, about 4 minutes, then rotate and continue to cook until the tops are also golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes more.
6) Place the cooked aebleskiver on a sheet pan and repeat with the rest of the batter.
7) Place the cooked aebleskiver on a platter and top with the lingonberry jam and powdered sugar and serve.



AS SEEN ON TV

Tostado with Watermelon & Tuna

From "Food Truck Showdown"

SERVES 4

YOU'LL NEED

FOR THE GOCHUJANG-BEER DRESSING

½ cup mayonnaise
1 tbsp Asian fish sauce
1 tbsp gochujang paste
1 tsp honey
1 dash Cajun seasoning
3 tbsp beer
2 tbsp grapeseed oil

FOR THE SALT-CURED CUCUMBERS

16 thin slices of fresh cucumber
2 tsp kosher salt

OTHER INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp grapeseed oil
2 8 oz sushi grade ahi tuna steak portions (1" thick)
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, as needed for tuna steaks
2 cups diced seedless watermelon
4 red radishes, thin sliced
½ cup crumbled feta cheese
1 bunch scallions, chopped
¼ cup picked fresh cilantro sprigs
4 each yellow corn tostada crisps

MAKE IT

GOCHUJANG-BEER DRESSING

1) In a mixing bowl, whisk the



mayo, fish sauce, gochujang paste, honey, Cajun seasoning, beer, and grapeseed oil together well and set aside.

SALT-CURED CUCUMBERS

1) In a mixing bowl, toss cucumbers with the salt and allow to marinate for at least 1 hour. Rinse the salt off the cucumbers under cold water and allow the water to drain from the salt-cured cucumbers.

FINISH & PLATING

1) In a large sauté pan over medium high heat, add 2 tbsp grapeseed oil.
2) Season the ahi tuna steaks with salt and pepper on both sides and sear on each side for 20 seconds. Remove the rare tuna from the pan

to rest.

3) In a large mixing bowl, gently toss diced watermelon, sliced radishes, half the crumbled feta (reserve other half for garnish), half the scallions (reserve other half for garnish), salt-cured sliced cucumbers, and half of the gochujang-beer dressing (reserve other half for garnish).
4) Place a corn tostada crisp in the center of 4 dinner plates; carefully portion the watermelon-feta cheese salad mixture in the center.
5) Slice rare tuna steaks thinly and arrange sliced tuna around and on top of the watermelon-feta salad.
6) Drizzle the rest of the gochujang-beer dressing and garnish with reserved feta cheese, scallions, and cilantro sprigs.

AS SEEN ON TV

Carnitas Shepherds Pie

From "Seventh Inning Stress"

SERVES 8

YOU'LL NEED

FOR THE FILLING

1 tbsp blended oil
4 tbsp butter
¾ cup onion, diced
½ cup carrots, diced
½ cup celery, diced
1 tsp garlic, minced
2 lbs cooked pork carnitas, shredded (store bought)
3 tbsp tomato paste
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups beef broth
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 cup canned diced tomatoes

¾ cup canned corn, drained
¾ cup frozen peas
2 tsp fajita seasoning
2 tsp smoked paprika
2 tsp onion powder
Salt and pepper, to taste

FOR POTATO TOPPING

2 lbs potatoes, peeled and quartered
Water, enough to cover potatoes
6 tbsp butter
1 ¼ cups heavy cream
2 egg yolks
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp kosher salt

MAKE IT

FILLING

1) In a large pot over medium heat, add the oil and butter.

2) Add the onions, carrots and celery. Stir and sauté the vegetables for 2 minutes until onions are tender.
3) Add the garlic, cooked shredded pork carnitas and tomato paste.
4) Continue to stir and sauté the meat and veggie mixture for 1 minute until well incorporated together.
5) Add flour, stir well and turn heat down to low. Add beef broth, Worcestershire sauce, tomatoes, corn, peas, spices. Stir and turn heat back up to medium high and continue to stir until the mixture comes to a simmer. Add salt and pepper.

TOPPING

1) Boil potatoes in a large pot in the water over high heat until tender. About 15 to 20 minutes.
2) While the potatoes are cooking, heat the heavy cream and butter together in a separate pot over medium heat till butter is melted.
3) Drain potatoes and combine with cream and butter.
4) Using a hand mixer, whip the potatoes until smooth and then slowly add egg yolks and the Parmesan cheese and continue to whip for 30 seconds. Season with salt.

FINISH

1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2) Place filling into oven-safe dish.
3) Spread topping over top of the shepherd's pie filling evenly.
4) Use the back of a spoon to make peaks in the potato topping and place the shepherd's pie in the oven for 30 minutes or until potato topping is golden brown.





Wing “Nachos”

From “Seventh Inning Stress”

SERVES 4

YOU’LL NEED

FOR THE CHORIZO CHILI

- 1 lb ground chorizo sausage
- ½ lb ground beef
- 1 onion, medium diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 ½ cups canned crushed tomatoes

- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 dash cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tbsp paprika (smoked or regular)
- 1 tsp mustard powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

FOR THE WINGS

- 20 raw chicken wings
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tsp fajita seasoning

FOR THE PICKLED ONIONS

- 1 red onion, thin julienned
- 1 cup rice wine vinegar
- ¼ cup water
- 2 tbsp sugar

FOR PLATING

- ½ cup canned black beans, drained
- ½ cup canned pinto beans, drained
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped
- ¾ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- ¾ cup queso cheese sauce (store bought)
- 1 bunch fresh scallions, chopped

AS SEEN ON TV



MAKE IT

CHORIZO CHILI

- 1) In a large pot or roasting pan over medium heat, add ground chorizo sausage and ground beef.
- 2) Stir the meat as it cooks, breaking it up.
- 3) After meat is almost fully cooked, strain off excess fat and add the onion, garlic, jalapeno and continue to cook for 6 minutes.
- 4) Add chicken broth, crushed tomatoes, diced tomatoes and stir well.
- 5) Add all the spices and stir well.
- 6) Bring to a slow simmer, turn to low heat and allow to slowly simmer for 15 minutes.
- 7) Seasoning with salt and pepper, to taste.

WINGS

- 1) While the chili is simmering, Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- 2) Place the raw wings in a mixing bowl and toss with the salt, pepper, brown sugar, and fajita seasoning.
- 3) Place the seasoned wings on a sheet pan and roast in the oven for 20 to 25 minutes or until internal temperature of the wings is 165 degrees F and wings are crispy. Remove from the oven and set aside.

PICKLED ONIONS

- 1) In a sauce pot over medium high heat, add the rice wine vinegar, water, and sugar and bring to a simmer.
- 2) Remove the pickling liquid from the heat and add the raw julienned red onions and allow the onions to pickle in the liquid for 1 hour. Remove the pickled onions from the liquid and discard the liquid.

PLATING

- 1) In a mixing bowl, toss the black beans, pinto beans, and chopped cilantro together and season with salt and pepper, to taste.
- 2) In a small sauce pot, heat the queso cheese sauce till warm.
- 3) Place the cooked seasoned wings onto an oven safe platter.
- 4) Top the cooked wings with the chorizo chili, the bean mixture, then shredded Monterey jack cheese.
- 5) Place in the oven at 350 degrees F for 5 minutes until the cheese is melted.
- 6) Remove the dressed wings from the oven and drizzle the warm queso cheese sauce over the top and garnish the chicken wing nachos with the pickled onions and scallions.

AS SEEN ON TV

Peanut Butter S'Mores Bake

From *"The Lumberjack Special"*

SERVES 4

YOU'LL NEED

¼ cup butter
½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 cup peanut butter
1 cup powdered sugar
2 cups Rice Krispies cereal
1 tbsp cocoa powder
¾ cup graham cracker crumbs
1 bag jumbo marshmallows
½ cup chocolate syrup

MAKE IT

1) Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2) In a medium sauce pot over low heat, melt and stir the butter and the chocolate chips together and set aside.
3) In a large mixing bowl, combine melted butter and chocolate, peanut butter, powdered sugar, Rice Krispies and cocoa powder together.
4) Place the peanut into a cast iron skillet (or casserole dish).
5) Sprinkle the graham cracker crumbs evenly over top of the peanut butter and chocolate mixture.

6) Arrange the marshmallows on top of the graham cracker crumbs, completely covering all the peanut butter & chocolate mixture in the skillet (or casserole dish).
7) Place the S'mores Bake in the preheated 350-degree F oven and bake for 20 minutes until marshmallows are toasted and slightly melted.





The RI Mag Gift Guide

A Little Something
For Everyone
On Your List

GIFT GUIDE

For The Music Lover



VICTROLA REVOLUTION GO

Well, well, well, we've really come full circle, haven't we? From the Walkman to iPod to endless streaming from your phone to... this. Of all the wild and crazy flexes one could bring to a party, we can't think of a bigger or better

one than this. This fully portable, rechargeable, Bluetooth-enabled record player from Victrola is just the thing for physical media enthusiasts, people who demand a warmer, more personal sound from their music, and for the truly

old-fashioned types who consider the album to be the ultimate measure of an artist. Good enough to be your home stereo. Versatile enough to take anywhere. We say: flex away!

\$199, [Victrola.com](https://www.victrola.com)

GIFT GUIDE

For The Home Chef

DREO AIR FRYER PRO MAX

Add a satisfying crunch to wings, pickles, veggies, and frozen foods of all kinds with the Dreo Pro Max Air Fryer. Dreo's heat wrap technology ensures 360-degree cooking with no surface of your food left un-crispified—all while leaving the inside tender and piping hot. The 6.8 qt cooking container is big enough to air fry a whole chicken, so it's surely big enough to crisp up whatever appetizers you had in mind, making this must-have equipment for any party or big game.

\$100, [Amazon](#)



IRVINE PRODUCTS

From aprons and coffee mugs to books and casual wear, get everything you need for the Team Irvine member in your life right [HERE](#). Got a hungry fitness enthusiast in you need to shop for? Check out what's new at FitCrunch [HERE](#) (we HIGHLY recommend the new Apple Pie flavor.) Shop with us and you won't just be sharing impeccably good taste; a portion of the proceeds from all Irvine products benefits the Robert Irvine Foundation to support veterans and first responders.



GIFT GUIDE

For The Fitness-Minded



ROMAN FOCUS

Two capsules deliver about as much caffeine as you'd get from a cup of coffee, but with a 76% of your daily vitamin B6, and a whopping 4,167% of your daily vitamin B-12, plus Niacin, L-Theanine, and ginseng root extract. It's a perfect balance for energy you can feel without jitters, delivering on its name. And let's face it, we could all use a little more focus.

Subscriptions available [HERE](#)

THEMAGIC5 SWIM GOGGLES

As seen on this season of Shark Tank, THEMAGIC5 makes the world's first and only custom-fitted swimming goggles—worn by Olympic swimmers and world #1 triathlete Jan Frodeno. Through facial scanning, robotics, and 3D printing technology, each pair of THEMAGIC5 goggles is specifically designed and made to match the contours of the user's face. After downloading the THEMAGIC5 mobile app, a quick and easy facial scan is completed via smartphone to capture the thousands of unique data points that are used to model the nose bridge, gasket, and other custom components of the goggles. Along with improved peripheral vision, anti-fog lenses, and UV protection, this means a more comfortable goggle that does not leak water, distract, or leave red pressure marks around the eyes!

\$65, [THEMAGIC5](#)



For The Halfling



MIDDLE-EARTH ULTIMATE COLLECTOR'S EDITION 4K BOX SET

All six of Peter Jackson's Middle-Earth films (Three in the *Hobbit* series: *An Unexpected Journey*, *The Desolation of Smaug*, *The Battle of the Five Armies*; and three in *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*) are at long last collected in a single box featuring 4K and standard Blu-ray versions of both the original theatrical releases and their extended version counterparts. That means this box set is massive: 31 discs in all, including a special feature disc with Stephen Colbert's live chats with the cast

that followed the 20th anniversary Alamo Drafthouse screening of each of *The Lord of the Rings* films. These interviews alone would make a worthy addition to any collector's library, but the box set also includes seven post cards featuring art work inspired by the film, as well as a glossy booklet that gives insight into the costume design concepts used in the making of each trilogy. Some collectors have lamented that the appendices—making-of diaries and other special features which were present in the extended edition DVD release of LOTR—are

not included here, but it's hard to imagine that any hardcore LOTR collector wouldn't already be in possession of those discs. Besides, the box itself in this new release is a work of art worthy of display. Utilizing a "puzzle box" design with strategically-placed magnets to lock it into place, the set can be presented as one long mural displaying artwork from all six films, as a fully-enclosed box, or showing all six films facing out. It is, in a word, precious.

\$204, [Amazon](#)

For The Movie Buff

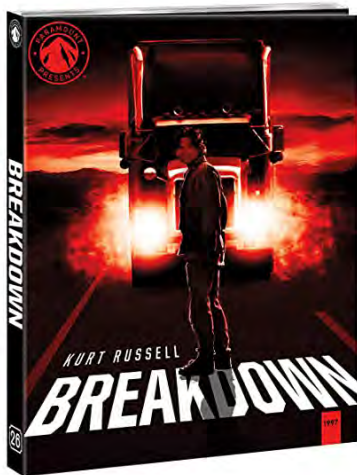


ZACK SNYDER'S JUSTICE LEAGUE

Did this thing really need to be four hours? Well, it's basically two movies in one—likely owing to the fact that Snyder could guess he probably wasn't going to get another bite at the DCEU apple. So the answer is an obvious, and resounding: YES. ZSJL is the rare epic that leaves you wanting more—especially after that wonderful tease of an epilogue that gives us the briefest of glimpses into the “Knightmare” scenario and

where JL 2 and 3 would have gone. Right now we can only dream of what might have been. But in the meantime we can enjoy this monster of a movie in true 4K, and never have to worry that our bandwidth will hold up over the course of a four-hour feast. Erase the theatrical version from your memory. This is the only *Justice League* movie.

\$30, [Amazon](#)



BREAKDOWN

This movie is cinematic equivalent of a great, three-minute pop song: a devilishly simple premise that gets right into who the characters are and what the whole thing is about right from the jump. Regular people thrust into an extraordinary situation often makes for a great setup, but this one holds up because it pays off without wasting any time along the way. A top-of-their-game Kurt Russell and Kathleen Quinlan

deliver vulnerable, believable performances, playing a married couple unexpectedly stumbling into a fight for their lives, working off a script from Shane Salerno, who has gone on to pen the sequels to *Avatar*. *Breakdown* stands as a testament to the fact that he always had it; there's not an ounce of fat on this—and it looks absolutely terrific on Blu-ray.

\$24, [Amazon](#)



SCREAM 4K

The ultimate deconstruction of the horror genre gets a gorgeous remaster just in time for the release of *Scream 5* in early 2022. The movie that changed the way you saw that silly drugstore “ghostface” mask and Jiffy pop is always worth a rewatch, but even moreso in ultra high-def. A quick refresher: After a series of mysterious deaths befalls their small town, an offbeat group of friends led by Sidney Prescott (Neve Campbell)

become the target of a masked killer. As the body count rises, Sidney and her friends turn to the “rules” of horror films to help navigate the real-life terror. Did you know David Arquette met Courtney Cox while filming this? And that they're divorced now? I mean, we don't usually follow that kind of thing, but, I dunno, it's a little bit interesting.

\$20, [Amazon](#)

GIFT GUIDE

For The Movie Buff

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE GIFT SET



The movie you know by heart even if it's been many years since you've seen it gets a terrific new gift set this year: The slip-case "book" contains two Blu-rays of the film—one in black-and-white, one in color—along with 10 glossy recipes cards so you can throw a holiday party just like Ma Bailey used to. Includes instructions for how to make "Pastry Snails," "Vanilla Moonbeam Pies," "Clarence's Angel Food Cake," and a delightful bourbon-brandy-vermouth cocktail called "Mama and Papa Dollar". For faithful It's a Wonderful Life fans, this is what you wished for when you threw that rock.

\$20, [Best Buy](#)

FRIDAY THE 13TH 8-FILM COLLECTION

The first eight films in the delightfully whimsical adventures of teenage camper Jason Vorhees are now collected here in a single slim Blu-ray case, including the uncut version of the original classic. Completists will wonder where Jason's subsequent adventures are – like the time he teamed up for a romp with his best bud and sometimes frenemy Freddy Kreuger, that one where he went to hell, and the one where he got rebooted by Michael Bay. The answer to that question, of course, is, "What the hell are you talking about? No one likes those movies. In fact, no one likes you." Seems a bit excessive, but what can you do? Oh, I'll tell you what you can do: Watch all eight of these in a row in crystal clear high-def! By the time Jason takes Manhattan—presumably as a Broadway singer—you'll wonder what you've done with your life. Don't wonder, friend. You enjoyed it. And you owe an explanation to no one.

\$45, [Best Buy](#)



GIFT GUIDE

For “The Child” In All Of Us



THE CHILD LIFESIZE FIGURE

There have been plenty of collectible figurine and statue companies to crop up in the past 20 years, but Sideshow remains the industry’s gold standard. Look no further than their life-size Grogu, perhaps better known as Baby Yoda from the Disney+ streaming series, *The Mandalorian*. “The Child” Life-Size Figure measures 16.5” tall, standing on a simple ship deck base that lets this adorable alien steal all of the focus—along with the Mandalorian’s ship parts. Inspired by its

unique onscreen appearance, this mixed media statue features a tan fabric coat swaddling The Child as it gazes up with charming wide eyes, hiding the silver shift knob from the Razor Crest in its right hand. The MSRP may seem hefty at a glance, but with Sideshow’s incredible artistic and quality standards, you can rest assured it’s worth every penny.

\$375, [Sideshow.com](https://www.sideshow.com)

Editors Picks



NOZOMI PROJECT JEWELRY

For the third year running, we're proud to featur Nozomi Project Jewelry in our annual gift guide. To recap: The 2011 Tohoku earthquake that rocked the Fukushima nuclear power plant and surrounding areas killed 16,000 people and caused nearly a quarter trillion dollars in damage. Amidst all the destruction: small mountains of shattered pottery, which the Nozomi Project uses to turn into beautiful jewelry. (We originally wrote about the project [HERE](#).) These unique pieces don't just make perfect gifts, but fund recovery efforts and help employ people directly affected by the disaster.

Shop at [Nozomi Project](#)

MYCHARGE

Of all the portable battery options out there—and there are plenty—the MyCharge takes the crown. Not only does the battery charge quicker than competitors, it charges your devices faster, too. The sleek design features an AC power plug built into the back of the battery (which no doubt lets it power up in a flash), along with built-in Lighting and USB-C cables that tuck away neatly into the side of the unit. In short: a portable charging revolution, and a necessity for anyone who does a lot of work from their phone or travels with multiple devices.

\$100, [MyCharge](#)



For The Gamer

ROTOR RIOT MFi CONTROLLER

For the hardcore gamer, mobile games are always a bit of a drag. No matter how good the concept or execution, most mobile games leave one wondering how much better the experience might have been on a game console or PC using a proper controller. And while there have been other mobile controllers before, setup is often clunky and compatibility from game to game a lingering question. But Rotor Riot's RR1852 controller for iPhone needs no setup, separate app, or... anything really. It draws power from your iPhone's lightning port and works with just about everything. We tested on a host of games with awesome results—including the latest mobile version of Madden, a great game with an historically crummy mobile experience. The results were outstanding, with the RR1852 practically turning it into a full-fledged console experience. The best news of all is that it's priced cheaper than a console controller and works with a device you already own.

\$49, [Amazon](#)



CALL OF DUTY: VANGUARD



Fight on every front of WWII as a member of elite special forces teams attacking high-value targets at critical moments to turn the tide of the war in the Allies' favor. A short but sweet campaign—which looks breathtaking in 4K on next-gen systems—gives way to a highly-polished and competitive multiplayer mode with 20 maps at launch, zombies, and the chaotic Warzone mode. The best in class shooter remains at the top of its game, even 18 (!) installments into the franchise.

\$59, [Best Buy](#)

INTERVIEW: Eric Rogers



Photo by Courtney Lindberg

The veteran screenwriter of 20+ years (*Futarama*, *Skylanders Academy* and more) talks about perseverance, what he's learned working with legends, how he gets unstuck, and the unique (or perhaps notorious) cuisine of his hometown.

Interview by Matt Tuthill

ERIC ROGERS



Rogers wrote for Matt Groening's *Futurama*; his Season 6 episode, "The Silence of the Clamps" was nominated for a WGA award.

ROBERT IRVINE MAGAZINE: You grew up near Cincinnati. What inspired your move to Hollywood?

ERIC ROGERS: I was inspired by the indie films of the nineties—Tarantino and Paul Thomas Anderson and all that stuff. The great writer-directors. I never really wanted to direct, but those films were hugely inspirational to pushing me into wanting to be a screenwriter.

RI: You had been a PA and script coordinator on a few shows like *NYPD Blue*, but then you were out of work and planned on leaving LA before you got a call from FOX asking you to work

on a new Matt Groening animated project, which turned out to be *Futurama*. If that call didn't come, where would you be today?

ER: Well, there was a lot of talk about going back home to Ohio. I grew up in Southwestern Ohio, near Cincinnati, and I was thinking of pursuing a master's degree in either creative writing or literature, and then becoming an academic.

I went back home to my sister's college graduation in May of '97 and I was pretty much feeling like I was going to cash out. We're sitting there, post-graduation at this place called Bob Evans, having lunch, and I'm just telling my parents that I'm not having a lot of luck finding

jobs and maybe it just makes sense for me to say, "Hey, good try," and come back home. And my mom was just all for it. She was like, "Yeah, come home. My baby will come home." And my dad, who, I never got a lot from him in life, we had an estranged relationship, let's put it that way... he wasn't the most advice-type father figure, but the one thing he said that really stuck to me and gave me the backbone to keep going was he said, "If you quit now, you'll never go back. That'll be it."

I knew in my gut he was right. So I went back to LA and took a training course to teach English to special needs kids, and was just about ready to graduate from that.

ERIC ROGERS

It was just a six-week deal, and that's when the person from FOX called me up and said, "Hey, do you want to do this?" And I apologize to those special needs kids that I was on track to help out. I selfishly chose myself.

RI: Everyone loves a story like that. But there is survivorship bias in telling people to stick it out right?

Almost like a Lottery winner telling people to keep buying tickets. You see it a lot on Restaurant: Impossible; people are hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and because we have stigmatized quitting—I think for good reasons—they buy into the sunk cost fallacy. They hang onto bad businesses, bad marriages, whatever. What is the line of demarcation for you? At what point would you tell someone who keeps trying and failing, "Hey, there's no shame in trying something else."?

ER: In the writer community on Twitter I see people talking about that very thing all the time. "I'm doing my thing and I'm going to keep grinding and one of these days I'll break through, and it's just going to take that one script." And that's all true. It does just take one script to get someone's attention, get optioned, get sold, get made. All those steps put you

on that path, but they're all minor miracles. Maybe not so minor sometimes. They're miracles that happen along your career. They're big moments. But I never want to tell anyone, "This is when you should pack it in." I'd hate to be that person.

"If it's not working, walk away. The worst creativity happens when somebody's just like, 'I gotta push through.' You've gotta be kinder to yourself."

RI: Take the writing out of it, what do you learn from observing a guy like Matt Groening, who you worked for on *Futurama*? What made you sit back and say, "I understand why this guy has had the life and career he has had"?

ER: The biggest thing with Matt was when he wanted to stick to his guns about something not working, you weren't going to change his mind. And Matt was pretty pliable in the *Futurama* writers' room, he was pretty pliable with

most of everything that we wanted to try. There were very few instances of him really putting his foot down, but when he did, you sat up and you took notice because you're like, "Okay, Matt doesn't say no to things a lot. Why is he saying no to this so vehemently?" And I actually had a personal experience with

that. Not me personally like it was me versus Matt, but it was an episode I wrote of *Futurama* that had a musical number at the end.

And Matt, he was pulled in a lot of directions and in and out of the room in those days, he came in for the animatic of that one, and here we go, show's going along great, here's this musical number thing, which was just like this Beach Boys send up. And I remember at the end, the air got sucked out of the

room because Matt was like, "We are not doing that musical number for this show." And everybody was like, "What?" And he explained it in a perfectly intellectual and reasonable way, but it was just so funny to be so far down the road with that episode and then him go, "Nope."

And it's one of those things, and I've learned this lesson the hard way too, that if you think something works and it makes you laugh or gives you joy in this creative process, just because one

ERIC ROGERS

person who might be above you or up here says, “Nah, that’s not working. I’m going to take it out,” you should stick to your guns. You should fight for what you want. There were a few instances that on *Skylanders Academy* (which Rogers created and served as showrunner for) where I look back now and I really regret that I did not dig in harder on some of these things that I wanted. And I acquiesced because I was a first-time showrunner on that one, and a lot of first time showrunners are just trying to keep their jobs. You’re trying to create a show and not get fired at the same time. So you learn to get some backbone along the way.

RI: Take the flip side of that now. What have you observed in that town—which is so notorious for tyrants and other folks who just lack self-awareness or empathy—some behavior that you observed that said, “Oh, wow, I will never be like that”?

ER: When somebody, a creative, is trying to get a response on a thing that they’ve written or they’ve directed or whatever, and they send it out and the people they’ve sent it to that have shown initial interest don’t reply. Instead of just saying, “I don’t like the thing you did,” or, “It’s not for me,” they don’t reply. The whole ghosting thing, it drives me absolutely insane. I think it’s the most disrespectful move someone can pull. And it all comes from a place of people being afraid to have negative conflict, and have a negative

interaction.

And what I would love for any person in power going forward to understand is we’re all adults, and it’s so much better for you to tell us no so we can move on and take our thing to the next place and take our talents to the next place and see what’s going to happen there, as opposed to just leaving us hanging and going, “Oh, maybe they just haven’t read it yet.”

I always take that very seriously when somebody asks me to read their script and put some effort into it. I don’t want to disrespect you, and you going, “Hey, I’m really looking for some feedback,” or, “I want to know if I’m on the right path here.” And I do this with any writer, I try with any writer that reaches out to me, I try to honor the bravery and the guts it takes to reach out to somebody and go, “Hey, can you check this thing out for me?”

And if you don’t like it, it’s okay. It’s all right if it’s not for you. Not everything I do, everybody’s going to like. And I understand that, but I think that our social media society that we’re in, too, there’s been this creation of just nastiness as far as people, how they react to creative things and things that are put out into the universe. And I wish that would go away. There’s a way to say, “I don’t like the thing you did,” without the readers’ comments section just being an attack on your person or whatever.

RI: You approach this very methodically every day, I’m sure.

What are your work habits like? And what’s something people need to understand about a creative pursuit like that, how consistent you need to be?

ER: I think that you figure out what’s the most productive time for you. For me, my go time part of the day is always late afternoon. So I have figured out over the years, especially because the last couple years it’s been all at home writing. I haven’t been in a room since 2019, and that’s a bit of a different beast. When you’re in a room, you’re in a room and you got to be on no matter what your process is like. But when I’m at home and in my space, I understand that mornings are just a wash for me. That mornings are, I’ll answer emails and I’ll exercise, and I will get all the clutter that’s not associated with my job and writing out of the way before lunchtime.

And then after lunch is when the slow rev up of, okay, what is the thing I have to achieve today? So lately it’s been, okay, I need to address notes that were given to me on an outline. And then I need to take this premise and I need to turn that into an outline. And I need to have a four o’clock catch-up call with my reps. And so it’s just knowing, what part of the day, what time of the day is when you’re going to get the most achieved. And then sticking to that methodically, because that’s how you get the pages done. That’s how you get the scripts done. If you’re all over the map with your routine, I don’t want to speak for other people, but

ERIC ROGERS



Rogers served as creator and showrunner on Netflix's *Skylanders Academy*. He has two new animated projects in the pipeline, but is bound by NDA's not to talk about them just yet...

I feel like that's just kind of chaos. And maybe that works for some, but I feel like you need to stick to a time like it's any other job.

And I have a nine year old here, so I usually try to call it a day between five and six. I'm done at six so I can spend some time with him and take him to soccer practice or Taekwondo or whatever. And I think that's an important part of it too, is to make sure you are carving out time for your life so you can actually go out and experience things, so that can influence your writing and make you a better writer and make you a better storyteller. It shouldn't be, "I got to

write all day every day." I don't feel like that's a good use of your time at all.

And I advise youngsters on Twitter, or not youngsters, but new writers on Twitter as well. When you finish a thing, you don't have to immediately jump into the next thing that's burning a hole in your brain. Give yourself some time to chill and go do things that are fun for you. That regeneration process is going to help you so much. So I understand you want this career, you're going to fight tooth and nail to make it happen. But rushing to get script after script after script made, or done, written, it's not the

best use of your time. And I think it just makes you a worse storyteller. That's just my two cents.

RI: Now let's say you sit down at 1 o'clock to write and it's just not coming. You're stuck. People write into Robert all the time saying, "I feel stuck with my fitness goals," or in their business, whatever it is. So how do you get unstuck?

ER: I walk away. Honestly, I walk away from it or I turn my attention to something that's... Let's say if I'm writing a script and I'm on a scene that just isn't working for me, I give myself a certain amount

ERIC ROGERS

of time to try to work through it and think it through. But if it's not happening, it's time to walk away. Go watch something that you love and inspires you, or watch something new.

I think people would be shocked how often either the things that you love already, or something new will provide that fire that you've been missing, for the thing that you're stuck on. I also think just getting the hell out of your house and getting some fresh air and going for a walk or a run or drive, getting away from your work space and allowing yourself the opportunity to not be beating your head against the wall to try to make a thing happen.

I feel like that's when the worst creativity happens is when somebody's just, "I got to push through, I got to push through." It's like, well, okay, but just don't beat yourself up and be kinder to yourself, really.

Allow yourself to understand that not every day is home run day, and it'll get done when it gets done. Now when you're on a deadline, that's certainly tougher to do. But I think I find that even on a deadline, if I'm stuck on something, as long as I force myself to walk away, usually something good comes out of that.

RI: Being from the Cincinnati area, do you eat spaghetti with chili on it? I don't know what they call it...

ER: Ah, love it. Love it. Don't get

it often. It's fast food, but it's so weird, man. You grow up eating it and then you try to describe to people who have never had it. Like, "No, no, you put the chili on the spaghetti," and people are just like, "What are you doing?" To me, having some perspective and being away from home all this time now, I've been living in LA now longer than I was in Ohio. It's such a weird thing like, I'm going to make dinner out of just random stuff and throw it together. And then suddenly you have these two franchises in Cincinnati, Gold Star and Skyline that are crushing it. But it feels like it just was born out of, "Man, I got chili and I got some spaghetti. And whoa. Like peanut butter and chocolate, let's see if this goes together," and boom.

RI: Do you make it?

ER: Oh, no. I tried to make it once here on my own, man, and I destroyed it. Because there's a chocolate element to it, believe it or not. And yeah, the only time I tried to make it myself, it just turned into chocolate soup on spaghetti, man. So I save eating that for the pros who know what they're doing.

RI: There's chocolate involved?

ER: There is.

RI: This sounds like a nightmare.

ER: It's so bizarre. It's not a lot, but like you see the recipe and you're like, "Are we sure about

this?" And people are like, "Yeah, it's just a tiny bit, but you got to be careful with it." Like, what? Okay, man. And you can't taste it in it in a Skyline or a Gold Star. You cannot. It's a little sweet, but you can't taste chocolate. So... it's bizarre, man.

RI: What's next for you?

ER: So the thing I'm working on right now, which I cannot wait to tell people about, is for Amazon. And the only thing I can tease is that it's an IP that everybody knows.

And I have been very fortunate to have been brought along to play in this universe and create some new characters that hopefully push this universe into a new direction.

And it's for kids, for the six to eleven set, but I'm definitely trying to infuse my weird Futurama-born style of comedy into this. I think that's one of the reasons why they hired me. They wanted it to feel kind of edgy enough for kids, but it's been a lot of fun so far and all signs point to yes for this thing to come out in 2023. So we're moving along.

Then I did a show for Hasbro, another IP-driven property, a project that is in the can and we've got 52 episodes done and it's all finished, and I don't know when they're going to release it.

Follow Eric Rogers on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). He also creates EDM as a hobby. Check out his Mix Cloud [HERE](#).

INTERVIEW

GARFIELD WILSON



With his acting career ripping along at a torrid pace, Garfield Wilson sat down with us to chat about what he learned working with legends and why you must never let go of your passions.

Interview by Paul Roberts

GARFIELD WILSON

Congratulations on *Schmigadoon!* What a hilarious concept and great execution. Did you know as soon as you saw the script that you wanted to jump in? Do you have any funny stories from the set?

Thanks so much! Honestly, there were so many auditions I was self-taping/ submitting at that time that I barely had time to think about one project to the next. I don't have any funny stories per se, but I will tell you that it was one of the most surreal experiences of my career to work with that all-star cast, producing team and director Barry Sonnenfeld.

Tell us about your character in *Astronauts* and what it was like to work with Jonathan Frakes.

My character's name is Niles Taylor, who is a widower, workaholic, father of two amazing kids and the lead engineer for the AI (Matilda) created and owned by the company he works for; HELIOS. I had such a great time playing that character. It's the one character I've played that's the closest to my real life as a father. Working with Jonathan Frakes was amazing. I've been a fan of his from his days on *Star Trek* and



Garfield Wilson has starred in *Snowpiercer*, *The Man in the High Castle*, and *Schmigadoon!*. He recently wrapped work on 2022's *Peter Pan & Wendy*, and is currently filming *Ivy & Bean*.

have loved his work as a director. So to work closely with him on this series was pretty special.

You're extremely fit. What is your workout like these days?

I like to get in a workout 4 times a week, that basically incorporates some cardio, dynamic stretching and resistance training.

Can you share a sample workout? Or short circuit? Or favorite exercise and why you love it?

I kind of gravitate to the old school weight training exercises, and mix it in with core stability exercises. I'll do a shoulder press or deadlift and then go straight into a bicep curl with dumbbells. You get more done in less time.

GARFIELD WILSON

The story of your daughter's transition and subsequent advocacy is truly remarkable. She's lucky to have such great parents and I know you're lucky to have her. To other parents of children with gender dysphoria, what advice can you give? Especially for parents who worry about transitioning too soon?

The best advice I can give is to always lead with love and understanding. Also seek out help/

guidance from professional health experts who specialize in Gender-Variance (doctors, therapists and psychologists). I would also recommend building trusted allies with your friends and family members who support your family and groups within the LGBTQ community nearest you for those who have a shared experience.

How did you know you were acting at the appropriate time

and was your initial instinct to watch and wait a while longer?

We were always (and continue to be) very involved, present and close with our children. So we were aware of Tru's gender-variance at an early age and did extensive research about transgender children to find out more and most importantly how best to support our child. Honestly speaking I think that the "watch and wait" or "it's too soon" doesn't



GARFIELD WILSON

necessarily serve your child. I'm not promoting that every child should go to full transition, what I'm saying is that if you as a parent see that your child is suffering emotionally you should do everything in your power to let your child know that you love them unconditionally and together as a family you will do whatever it takes to help them discover their truth wherever that lands.

You've worked alongside so many Hollywood legends. Do you have an interesting or instructive anecdote you can share from your career?

I've worked with some incredible Hollywood legends over the past few years. I distinctly remember my time opposite Elijah Wood (Come to Daddy) and Marcia Gaye Harden (Love You to Death). Primarily because our scenes together were intimate/one on one conversations. Such an amazing experience with both of them, with very different characters being played. We didn't have many conversations behind the scenes but what I do remember is they both created an incredibly comfortable environment for us to play out the scenes and to create without fear. That was such a massive gift for me at that time, and it has held true for all the big stars I've worked with since. The ones who have had a long and distinguished careers quite frankly

have those careers because they are extremely passionate about their art, and understand that everyone has an important role to play in the process.

You've had a lot of success in a field where even the prospect of breaking in is so daunting, with astronomical odds working against you. What advice do you have for readers who feel stuck

“Find something that you truly love... then do everything in your power to be the absolute best you can be doing that thing that you love.”

in their careers? We get a lot of e-mails from people asking Robert for just this kind of advice.

Almost all the origin stories I've read about or heard in interviews have been success stories via insurmountable odds, and some sort of miracle of good fortune (good fortune being that they have created their own “good luck”).

My success has come from hard work, passion, talent, absolute love

of this art and most importantly the belief that this is what I'm supposed to in my life. All of that being said I had some significant failures in my life, both professionally and personally--of which I'm very grateful, because those life lessons proved to be invaluable. But I have always held onto the belief that I was destined to be doing exactly what I am doing even through my darkest times.

So my advice to your readers is to find something that you truly love, and that stirs your passion. And then do everything in your power to be the absolute best you can be doing that thing that you love.

What's a dream pet project of yours that you'd love to get off the ground. Say you get a magic green light to do any movie or show and you get to place it anywhere. What is it and where does it go?

Wow, that's such a hard question to answer. I would love to get to a place in my career so that I can create a production company like some of the actors I most admire (Michael B. Jordan, Denzel Washington, Brad Pitt, Regina King) so that I can acquire some amazing stories and bring them to the small and big screen. There are so many incredible stories to be told, like the life of James Baldwin. That prospect really excites me!

GARFIELD WILSON

What motivates you on a daily basis? Can you recommend your favorite motivational books/podcasts/social media accounts or other media that inspires you?

The ever changing evolution of my children and the gift of being their father in this life motivates me on a daily basis. I'm also incredibly blessed to have an amazing woman in my life, whom I'm going to marry. In terms of books, I'm splitting my time between "A Promised Land" - Barack Obama and "A Return to Love" - Marianne Williamson. In the last week I've been devouring episodes of the Podcast "Smartless" with Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes and Will Arnett, which is Frickin Amazing!

Favorite healthy meal?

Chicken, rice, and veggies: beans or asparagus.

Favorite cheat meal?

Cheeseburger and fries—and not fast food, I'm talking gourmet!

What projects do you have coming up that you want to tell the readers about?

I signed on to the Netflix movie series Ivy & Bean based on the novel series of the same name written by Annie Barrows. We wrapped up the first 3 movies at the end of September, 2021. It's such a wonderful movie series about these two 7yr old girls who are complete opposites but become best friends. It's all about the adventures they have and chaos the more often than not happen when they're together.

I play David who is Bean's Dad, we have an incredible cast and our wonderful Director Elissa Down. I can't wait for it to be released in 2022. I also just wrapped a big budget feature film at the end of June 2021 that I worked on for 4 months. I can't say anything about

it right now but stay tuned! That feature will be released sometime in 2022 and I am extremely excited to tell the world about that film and the role I played. Epic!

Follow Garfield Wilson on [Instagram](#)



INTERVIEW

JENN LYON



The star of TNT's *CLAWS* opens up about how she overcame an eating disorder, became a champion of body positivity, and what she learned about disconnecting and finding “gold” within oneself.

Interview by Matt Tuthill

JENN LYON

ROBERT IRVINE MAGAZINE: You've been open about dealing with an eating disorder. How did yours manifest?

JENN LYON: My eating disorder manifested as anorexia and then morphed into bulimia. I did seek out therapy and group therapy and then eventually went to a treatment center called The Renfrew Center here in NYC as I needed a more intense level of daily professional and medical intervention to get healthy again.

RI: You're a proponent of "feeling good in your own skin". What does that mean for you?

JL: What it means to feel good in my own skin has changed and continues to morph as I age. I have felt uncomfortable in my own skin for as long as I can remember. I was a fat kid and remember the terror that shorts and summer would strike into my heart because I would have to show my body and my thighs rubbed together and gave me the worst rash. Even the word "pool party" would send me into a tailspin. To be clear, I don't feel good in or love the skin I'm in every day now, but I'm much farther along in dismantling all the bull-



shit ideas about beauty and diets that get installed in all of us. I'm 5 years into my recovery from ED now and it feels like I'm only just in the last couple of years able to appreciate and make my body a safe space for me where I will be met with compassion instead of criticism.

RI: Compare your life before treatment to what it's like today. How is it different day to day?

JL: What a day feels like now versus when I didn't love my body is that I don't wake up scared then get on a scale and allow it to tell me what kind of day it will be. When I was truly in the depths of

JENN LYON

my anorexia, I had a very limited amount of “safe foods” that I could eat and I would never deviate from that. I thought about food constantly. I over exercised. I was always light headed and had to keep glucose tabs with me so I didn’t pass out on trains. I ate the actual pages of cookbooks. The best way to be obsessed with food is not to eat any. That’s why diets are so backwards and guarantee your failure. I had no idea how to

listen to my body. All I knew was how to punish it. It was leading a secret life. Bulimia was the same but worse for me. I never spoke up. I rarely said no. Instead I would push all my feelings down and then binge and purge. It got so dark that I didn’t think I would ever be able to stop. I still have the urge to restrict or to binge but now I can take that as information that something else is going on and I don’t have to believe

those thoughts. I have space between the thought and the action. That pause is everything.

RI: The body positivity movement is inarguably a net good for society. When we’re bombarded with idealized images of the human form it can’t help but seep into our psyches and make us think we’re inadequate if we don’t look a certain way. With that significant caveat out of the



way, I've seen a strange kind of backlash against plus-size models/artists/celebrities who do lose weight. I'm thinking now of people being disappointed with Adele or Lizzo for losing weight as if they were selling out. Do you have any thoughts on that? Maybe it's hard for people who are very invested in body positivity to "lose" an icon of their movement? Or simply find it too difficult to tell the difference between chasing an aesthetic and merely pursuing better health?

JL: I think the body positivity movement has been wonderful in terms of the inclusion and acceptance of all kinds of bodies and their differing abilities but the forced positivity and celebration always rang a little false to me. Also that space gets co-opted by corporations and white women and starts to leave out the black/brown/queer/differently abled people who started it. I think only serving the "positivity" leaves out a whole spectrum of other feelings. What am I supposed to do on the days I don't love my body? Can't we have negative feelings and still take care of something? I think every parent is vigorously nodding. What about the individual journey and being honest along the way? What about thinking about our bodies less as objects to be praised and more as the way we move through

the world? I believe a foundation of self love is created through internal work and if we create this false sense of security based on external factors, won't we still be adhering or rebelling based on a beauty standard? How am I supposed to flip a switch into accepting myself if I'm dealing with mental illness or trauma? When people get riled up about celebrities gaining or losing weight, it

"What happens when we aren't constantly stimulated? That's vulnerable, funny, painful, and beautiful. And that's where the gold is."

feels like an over-identification, a misdirected aggression. Like, your team lost in sports or something. Why not drink a fresh glass of "mind your business, you don't know their life." It's refreshing!

RI: You've worked with so many legends in your acting career. Tell us a great story about working with one of them.

JL: I have gotten to work with so many great artists and the way

they make people feel and change the temperature around them is what I remember most. Getting to be in rooms with everyone from Tom Stoppard to Tim Olyphant to Helen Mirren to Niecy Nash to Rosie Perez, the way they navigate an experience or create a warm space for everyone is inspiring. When I was working with Danny Trejo, he made us laugh so hard every day. First of all, he would

come to work in a white tank top and shorts and then change into a costume that was EXACTLY the same thing. Then we would be getting ready to roll and George and I would be like, "Where is Danny?" And without fail, we would hear some faint singing and follow it, and he would be crooning a song to some person he just met. He has the meanest mug but is the sweetest man you will ever meet.

RI: You've had a lot of success in a very difficult field. What's your best advice for people who feel stuck?

JL: My best advice for when you feel stuck is to develop a mediation practice. It is life changing, costs nothing, and will help you learn to observe your thoughts and the stories you are telling yourself which may be why you are stuck. We get so caught in the same narrative loops and getting out of them truly takes

JENN LYON

more than just thinking your way out. I highly recommend Tara Brach's books and guided meditations and reflections. They have changed my life and my ability to respond to it.

RI: What's a dream project of yours that you've always wanted to get off the ground?

JL: I've been wanting to make a movie or series about the world's greatest fixer (think Harvey Keitel in "Pulp Fiction" or Olivia Pope in "Scandal") but she is an Amelia Bedelia type character who is absolutely hapless and has the worst ideas but it's exactly her savant like ability to escape unscathed from her own shenanigans that make her suited for the job. So much physical comedy. So many outlandish saves.

RI: What motivates you on a daily basis? Can you share your favorite books, podcasts, or social media accounts?

JL: Helping people and laughing always motivates me. I recommend finding a volunteering opportunity near you whether it's

a food pantry or a park cleanup or reading to seniors or walking dogs or giving blood. It will actively help the world around you and help you by widening your view of what's possible. We get so constricted and small and as a news junkie, I have to turn it off and go get involved with something that has nothing to do with screens. As for media, here are so many great accounts and creators:

I get inspired by:

[@humansofny](#)

[@bisabutler](#)

[@sassy_latte](#)

[@lovelandfoundation](#)

[@thedodo](#)

[@notesfromyourtherapist](#)

[@tanksgoodnews](#)

[@rejectedjokes](#)

There are so many good ones, but what I advise most of all is logging off and looking out of your own eyeballs for long stretches. What happens when we aren't constantly stimulated and guaranteed something? That's vulnerable, funny, painful, and beautiful. And that's where the gold is.

Follow Jenn Lyon on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



Lyon (far left) stars in TNT's *Claws*, a dark comedy set in a Florida nail salon. The fourth and final season premieres on Dec. 19. Watch the trailer [HERE](#).

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THE CLEAR CHOICE

When it comes to drinking, clearer is cleaner. It's not just an old wives' tale.

BY JAY JOHNSON

Question: I've often heard that clear alcoholic drinks are better for you, but it never made sense to me and I figured it was just an old wives' tale. Then I saw Robert say something along the same lines on Twitter. So is there truth to it? What's the deal? I'd love to know before holiday party season begins. Thanks!

- Angel H., via e-mail

**Answer by Jay Johnson,
Personal Trainer & Nutrition
Coach**

We all know that drinking goes hand-in-hand with the holidays like Robert Irvine and big biceps, and the fun only ramps up all the way into the new year. This time of year can wreak havoc on health and fitness goals of all kinds, but what if you could tackle this tumultuous time with the ability to drink within reason AND still hit your goals? The solution is easier to strategize than you think, and very maintainable in the long term! The goal here is not to tell you to stay away from liquid-based



activities during the holidays altogether, but to help you make smarter decisions at that office holiday party or Thanksgiving dinner. Once we break it down for you, the answer is as clear as a healthy holiday drink that will still have you breaking it down with a lampshade on your head (maybe not a smart decision) and taking in the fewest

calories possible!

The first step in making healthier drink choices is to know what the actual ingredients are in that drink, and a good gauge of this is the consistency of the drink. If you are pouring that eggnog into a glass for a nice night with the family, notice that it's about as thick as a milkshake. Why? The whipped

ASK US ANYTHING



It can be hard to say no to specail seasonal offerings. Our expert offers some healthy sways so you can still enjoy the seasonal flavors without totally derailing your fitness goals.

eggs sound healthy enough, but when combined with cream, whole milk and sugar you're hitting calorie numbers that say you should just had that milkshake in the first place. The good news is that you can still have eggnog! Try this: trade the above-mentioned ingredients out for the eggs, skim or almond milk, stevia or brown sugar and try adding (wait for it) a scoop of vanilla protein. You still have calories in this case but only rearranged in the healthiest way

for your insulin sensitivity, portion control because of the healthy fats and of course your muscles love those eggs and protein powder! Knowing what your favorite drinks contain is the first step in knowing why they are bad for you to start with, but the next step is knowing which forms of alcohol still can be fun without packing on the pounds.

When you step into a holiday party with your friends or family and you're welcomed with "What

can I get you to drink?", what's your go-to? If it's wine or beer that you are asking for then health-wise, you're really asking for it in the worst way. These typical choices are where the carbs lie and after a few weeks of holiday fun those choices are lying on your belly just in time for your new year's resolution! Going for a mixed drink is almost always a better option, BUT what you choose to be that drink is the make-or-break factor for your goals. When choosing

ASK US ANYTHING

a healthier drink, the rule is the same as when choosing a soda or any other drink; the clearer it is the healthier it is. There are a couple of reasons for this, but depending on the actual spirit in the drink, you are potentially signing up for a more severe hangover the next day. Darker spirits such as rum, bourbon, or Scotch contain what are called congeners with the most common one being methanol. These methanol-infused fun juices break down inside of your body as formaldehyde and formic acid which can cause a more severe hangover with symptoms such as nausea, headaches, and higher levels of dehydration.

Alongside the chemical breakdown disadvantages of these darker spirit options stand the mixers, which also tend to be darker to compliment that woody and warm smoothness of a whisky or spiced rum.

These darker mixers can often contain more fructose (bad sugar) or phosphoric acid which can lead to kidney issues in the long term. Not only is the sugar in these mixed drinks bad for you, but it makes the drink easier to drink and therefore often enhances that urge to say, “eh...I’ll do one more.” and we all know how that story ends. A healthier alternative to drinking on the dark side? The choice is clear; no really. Vodka, white rum, gin, or silver tequila all sport a crisp and clean look with likely less hangover symptoms the next day and a great opportunity to mix with mixers that actually hydrate you.

A flavored seltzer water or unflavored water with a squeeze of your favorite low calorie flavor additive is a great way to spice up your healthy drink while maintaining a lower calorie total that won’t leave you wanting more sugar to follow. This is a great way to be better prepared for the temptation of the many holiday events that lie ahead, but you also have to portion yourself properly. We may be able to change our drink choices in an instant, but in most cases we chose our friends long ago (and couldn’t choose our families at all)! So, portion control and choosing not to overindulge is key to maintaining the overall benefit of these drink choices.

You’ve got your new go-to drinks chosen and feeling like tackling your health goals even through the holidays, but now it’s time to resist temptation and maybe even trick your body into moderation with your new secret weapon: water. Just as with eating, the body will become full after taking in bite after bite or in this case sip after sip.

With that said, you want to meet every drink that you enjoy with a glass of water. This can be done as a sip of your drink and then a sip of water, but the most efficient way to do this in a standing cocktail party situation is to have your first drink and then meet it with a glass of water. You’ll stay hydrated and your kidneys will thank you, as well.

Also, if you pair every drink with a glass of water you will absolutely drink less alcohol by the end of that night. It would be an up-

hill battle for even the mightiest holiday party warrior to tackle 5 drinks AND 5 full glasses of water in one night. Even in the event that this challenge is met, you’d better believe that they will be plenty hydrated enough to be on the fast track to recovery rather than hugging complete strangers...or the toilet. Portion control will always be a major player in determining the outcome of your fitness goals, but simple tricks or secret weapons like water make this much more manageable.

By now we’ve successfully dissected your favorite holiday drinks into individual unhealthy ingredients and replaced them with healthier ones, brought you from the darker drink side to see the light drinks more clearly and we even have an awesome portion control trick that can benefit you not just with drinking but with properly hydrating overall.

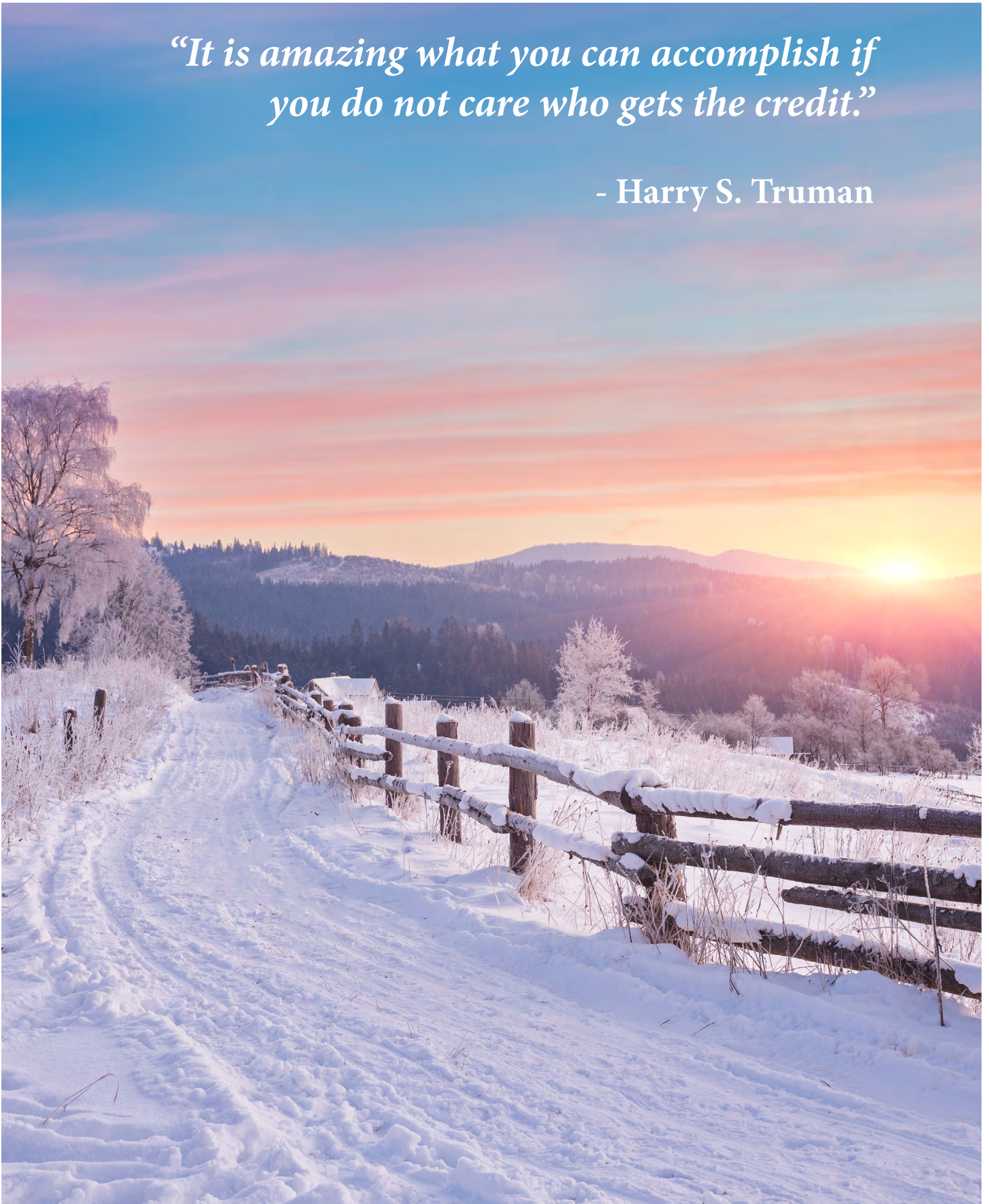
The cooler months can oftentimes cool off that motivational fire to get after your goals, but don’t let it! The journey of health and fitness should never be a “stop doing this altogether” solution but rather “do a bit less of this and rearrange your choices for success” path to achieving your goals. So this holiday season strive to drink more water and remember: when you’re drinking clear there’s nothing to fear, but when you’re drinking brown it could put you down.

Jay Johnson is a trainer and nutrition coach based in Charlotte, NC. Follow him on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and visit his website, [JayJohnsonMLP.com](#)

WORDS TO LIVE BY

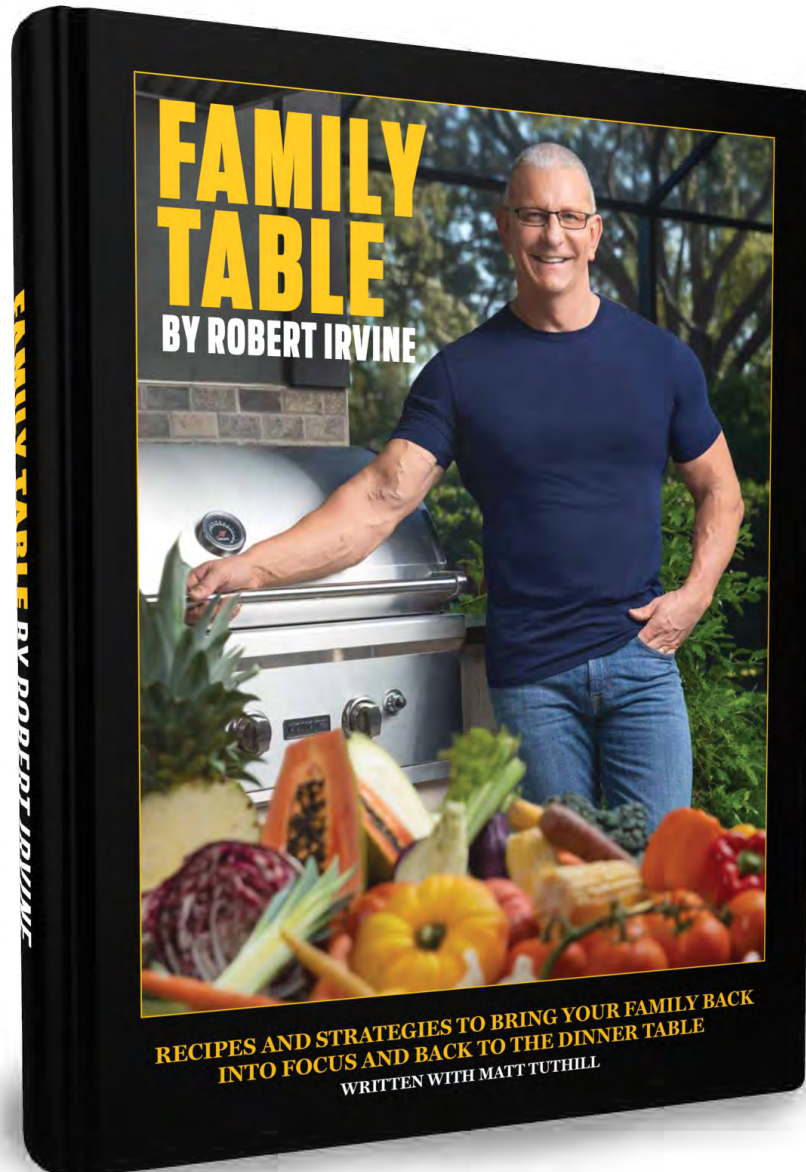
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- Harry S. Truman



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