

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Holding On: A childhood injury left Morning Stories' Gary Mott paralyzed on one side. Over the years, Gary has taught his left hand to take over. His right hand has taught him how to let go.

Tony Kahn:

Hi, this is Tony Kahn, the producer and the director of Morning Stories, on WGBH, in Boston. For today's Morning Story, we thought we'd actually get back to home. Every once in a while, we tell some stories that come from the people that we know and that we even work with and, and that's the case today. Gary Mott, whom you may have heard from last week in our podcast, is my right hand man, and I, I think about a week and a half, or two weeks after we started this project for broadcast, Gary came up to me and he started talking to me about, uh, well, he started talking to me about his right hand. In fact, he told me a story, about his entire right side, and as far as I know, it was a story that he had never told anybody that he worked with before. So, here's Gary's story: "Holding On."

Gary Mott:

I think about my hands a lot, probably, too much.

[Slow jazz music begins]

Gary Mott:

It all goes back to a sunny afternoon in South Texas, when I was in the sixth grade. A leisurely ride in my neighbor's car and "boom," my childhood was over. I awoke five days later, paralyzed on my right side. My face, my leg, my arm, my hand. The accident had damaged my brain, on the left, leaving me like a stroke victim, with a sagging face, a weak leg and limited dexterity in my hand and arm on the right. I had to learn to change sides.

Back in the sixth grade, my buddies didn't seem to mind helping me zip up my Wranglers' in gym class. And I spent long hours teaching my left hand to shoot a basketball, write a sentence, pop open a soda. I really had no choice. After all, I had obligations, to my friends, to my high school band, to the guys in my college jazz group, the 1:00 AM Quartet. That guy playing the laid back bass in this cut from our demo reel,...

[Long pause, then slow jazz music resumes]

Gary Mott:

...yeah, that was me.

[Long pause, music still playing]

Gary Mott:

Now, twenty years on, part of my brain is still dead, and I've struggled daily with what that accident did to me. But, not in ways you might think. The big stuff, like taking care of the house and two old cars. Commuting to work, feeding, bathing and tucking my three kids into bed and then hopefully having enough time for a conversation with my wife. All that I've got down, no problem. It's the little things between morning coffee and "Goodnight, Moon," that scare me. The casual, social interactions, specifically, shaking hands.

My grip is firm but because of the limited dexterity thing, I often have trouble letting go. Nothing like going into a job interview, grasping the hand of an attractive woman, and then not being able to ease up or release my grip. Talk about bad first impressions. At that point, I usually have to yank my hand free with my arm and then pretend not to notice her quizzical look or my plummeting self confidence. Maybe I'm the only one obsessing. I don't know. I mean at the end of the day, what do we all want, anyway? A human connection, often beginning with a handshake, a smile, prolonged eye contact.

So, next time, if you get the chance, savor an extra moment of human touch. There's a real power there. Yeah,... take it from someone who can't let go.

[Music ends]

Tony Kahn:

That was Gary Mott from Morning Stories and the Morning Stories staff, and he's, he's here with me right now. Are you glad you told the story so publicly?

Gary Mott:

Yeah, oh, I, I definitely am, because ya know, it's been, many years, and I've been looking for a venue to tell this, this story and when you first get to know someone, oftentimes, it's just on a surface level, and I feel like my story, and what happened to me, is, it's several beers and several conversations down the line. I mean, you just, you just don't, leap in, when you get to know someone and say, "Oh, yeah, let me tell ya about this terrible thing that happened to me."

Tony Kahn:

I think you just gave us a great phrase for podcasting. Podcasting: intimacy without having to do three beers first.

Gary Mott:

[laughing]

It's true, ya know? It's absolutely true. It's, it's good therapy to spill your,

something that has been bottled up inside of you, for many years in some cases, and to put it on the page, and it really forces you to look and see and taste it, in maybe in a way that you hadn't before.

Tony Kahn:

The great thing about telling a story and having somebody listen is that both of you end up probably hearing things you never heard before. You know, the guy, the guy who tells the story, can tell it without having to defend himself. So he may get one step further down into it, to the real feelings, and the person listening is liable to realize, "Hey, that could've been me! And that's a whole experience that I've never had!" and all of a sudden, you DO have that experience. So, your stories are, WHOA, they're great! Anyway, Morning Stories is brought to you by WGBH-FM in Boston and we podcast every Friday, as soon as it's Friday, somewhere on earth. [chuckle] So for you, that could be Thursday, but make sure you check in every week and thanks for listening. Gar?

Gary Mott:

And we'd like to remind you to visit our website. It's <http://wgbh.org/morningstories>. (And morningstories is all one word.) There you'll find our entire archive of Morning Stories, that we've been broadcasting, here on WGBH, and they're all available for streaming and you also see one of those cute, little orange buttons on the, on the sidebar there, that you can get our podcast feed and get it in your readers and, you know, take some of these stories with ya!

Tony Kahn:

Bye.

Gary Mott:

Bye,bye. See you next week. You can let go now. [laughter]

[End of recording]

transcribed by:

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