

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

*Just Say Yes: Scientific researcher Ethan Herberman passes on a sleep deprivation study, to his regret.*

### **Tony Kahn:**

Hi, this is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH-FM in Boston. Our theme for today is science and technology. We're going to hear from Ethan Herberman. He did an earlier podcast for us about his dinner with Stephen Hawking. This time he talks about an unfortunate encounter he had on the frontiers of science, deciding whether he wanted to participate in a research study on sleep deprivation.

### **Ethan Herberman:**

If you live around universities, you see a lot of ads for human guinea pigs on café bulletin boards. Just being left-handed can score you a few bucks from a psychology department and once I figured out that if I was a left-handed dyslexic with a background of heavy cocaine use, I could earn \$750 in a week. Among all the studies, however, one stands out. The sleep study, [sound of phone being dialed, ringing] which pays thousands. Once, when I was between jobs, I looked into joining one.

[Telephone is answered: "Hello? Thank you for calling. So you're interested.... Voice trails off, but continues under following narration]

A nice young woman on the phone explained that for five weeks I would be living in a research hospital without phone or TV or anything to tell me the time of day. Meanwhile, experimenters would use bright lights to shift my circadian rhythms. She even hinted that, in the end, they could leave my circadian rhythms any way I wanted them. I pictured leaping out of bed at 6 a.m., a feat I had dreamed of all my life. Still, there were minuses: getting my blood drawn. Hourly. Then there was the rectal probe so doctors could monitor my body temperature. The real showstoppers, though were the vigils. On three separate occasions, attendants would keep me awake with games and chitchat for fifty hours in a row. Fifty hours! Wasn't there something in the Geneva Conventions about that? Never mind. I wanted no part of it. Good-bye, sleep study!

[Sound of telephone being hung up.]

Then, in mid- January, on the very same day I would have been starting at the hospital, I hurried out to my car and failed to notice a patch of black ice.

[Cartoon sound effect to indicate falling]

Down I went, snap went my ankle, on went the cast.

[Sounds of television in the background: *"And coming up in our next half hour, Princess Diana's biographer on her futile search for love in her ..."* sound trails off and continues under narration]

As a consequence of my choice to avoid five weeks of confinement I was now stuck in my third floor apartment for what the doctor predicted would be ... oh ... five weeks.

[Sound of TV: *"own it tomorrow on DVD..."* Sound fades again, continuing under narrative]

Because I had balked at the vigils, I now had a cast which itched me awake every night, and because I had tried to spare myself "the probe," I now had to bounce on my bottom [bouncing sounds], stair after stair, day after day, assuming I wanted my groceries and mail. Could I join the sleep study? Desperate, I grabbed the phone. [sound of phone being dialed] "Was it too late?" I pleaded with the nice young woman.

[Coming from phone receiver... "Well, Sir..." sound trails off and continues under narrative]

Politely, she explained that while they'd love to have me, they needed a common baseline for participants. If I did join now, they would have to break everyone's ankle. There were, of course, other studies, she reminded me. Stress studies, diet studies.

[Ethan on the phone in the background, "Yeah right."]

[Sound of phone being hung up.]

Of course [chuckles] I never looked into one. Suppose I did, then chose to decline? [sound of ascending xylophone keys] What would happen to me then? [sound of one xylophone note.]

### **Tony Kahn:**

That was Ethan Herberman with today's Morning Story. Another person out there having his own problems with twenty-first century science and technology we all know is the Ed Sullivan of podcasting, Adam Curry. Last I heard, he was still in search of broadband in the midst of one of the most modern cities on the planet. Well, we sympathize with Adam. We had our own twenty-first century moment, trying to get our own podcast on the air last Friday. In the thick of it all was Gary Mott. Gary, set the scene for us. It's Friday evening, after work. You're at the pizza parlor with your lovely family, your delightful little daughter [sound of child laughing and a "skoosh" sound]

### **Gary Mott:**

She's gotten very good at throwing pizza. [skoosh...skoosh]

**Tony Kahn:**

Everyone's having a ball, but you, 'cause you're on the phone to New Hampshire?

**Gary Mott:**

That's where Rick lives. Rick makes things happen.

**Tony Kahn:**

And he's not making them happen.

[Sound of child crying]

**Gary Mott:**

Well, Rick is home with his family. He can't access the WGBH servers. "No good," I said, "We podcast every Friday."

**Tony Kahn:**

That is a promise.

**Gary Mott:**

That is a guarantee.

**Tony Kahn:**

We at WGBH keep our promises.

[Sounds of birds and cicadas]

**Gary Mott:**

So I called Tom.

**Tony Kahn:**

Who's Tom?

**Gary Mott:**

Well, Tom is our IT contact.

**Tony Kahn:**

Oh. That Tom.

**Gary Mott:**

He's in Central Massachusetts.

**Tony Kahn:**

Kinda rural out there, isn't it?

**Gary Mott:**

Oh yeah. Verrrry rural. It's nighttime.

**Tony Kahn:**

Frogs out there? They can eat iPods.

**Gary Mott:**

Tom says, "Well, here's Dave's number."

**Tony Kahn:**

Who's Dave?

**Gary Mott:**

Dave is our IT specialist.

[Sound of fizzy drink being poured, music in background]

I call Dave.

**Tony Kahn:**

Where's Dave?

**Gary Mott:**

He's in a bar. In Boston. I say, "Dave. Talk to Rick." He says "No problem." [sound of drums] He hangs up the phone. [More drums and crowd noise.] He calls back.

**Tony Kahn:**

Uh-oh.

**Gary Mott:**

[Speaking for Rick] "Gary, my six button on my keypad doesn't work."

**Tony Kahn:**

Six button?

**Gary Mott:**

[Sound of child counting] His "six button."

**Tony Kahn:**

[Laughing heartily] He's in a bar and he has no six button. How sad.

**Gary Mott:**

So I said, "No problem; I'll call Rick and have him call you. So I do. Two minutes later the podcast is up there.

**Tony Kahn:**

And the pizza?

**Gary Mott:**

And the pizza tastes so much better. [Child scream-laughing....skoosh...skoosh]

**Tony Kahn:**

[Laughs]

**Gary Mott:**

I'm throwing pizza against the wall now, too.

**Tony Kahn:**

And it's not even cold.

**Gary Mott:**

And the weekend was saved.

**Tony Kahn:**

We keep our promises. And we're going to keep on keeping our promises, somehow or another, by podcasting every Friday with *Morning Stories*.

**Gary Mott:**

And be sure and check out our website, if you haven't already:

<[wgbh.org/morningstories](http://wgbh.org/morningstories)>. That's "morningstories" all one word. We've got all our stories available there for streaming and we've got a little orange xml button whereby you can get our podcast feed and plop it in your reader and take some of these stories along with you to the pizza parlor or -

**Tony Kahn:**

Hey, now here's -- there's an idea. Next to the xml button there should be a, a little orange "P" button. You push that and you actually get your podcast hand-delivered in a pizza box. We're going to push the twenty-first century so hard we're going to run smack dab into the nineteenth! That is a promise!

[Laughter]

**Gary Mott:**

Take care. We'll see you next week.

**Tony Kahn:**

Bye.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Bev Sykes