

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

*Buried Treasure: Morning Stories producer and director Tony Kahn takes us back to an unforgettable day in his own past so glorious - and so ghastly - he wouldn't change a thing.*

### **Tony Kahn:**

Hi everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of Morning Stories, from WGBH, in Boston. Summer on Cape Cod is definitely over but my memories of my summers on Cape Cod are just beginning to stir again. I think it's the memory of my earliest summer in Cape Cod when I was eleven that gets stronger and stronger for me. That summer ended with an incident that was so ghastly and so glorious that, well, I can't get it out of my mind.

[Seagulls squawking]

It was 1955 and I was spending the summer with my family in Barnstable on Cape Cod. Hundreds of years before, pirates had sailed the area [ocean waves slapping at the shoreline] and my older brother Jim and my cousin Henry told me that under the sign of *The Jolly Roger*, Captain Cook himself had buried treasure nearby; maybe on the very spot where we were staying.

[Foghorn warning to ships]

All through that summer I'd stare at the backyard and I'd dream of finding the buried treasure right there. But the older kids had no interest in my fantasies; all they wanted was to play with each other and keep me, the punk, as far away as possible. Then somehow, two days before we left I persuaded Jim and Henry to dig a few holes with me in the backyard.

Just before nightfall, [sounds of digging and rustling paper] Henry uncovered a broken pearl and the three of us stared at each other under the full moon with a wild surmise, realizing we might be on to something very big! The next day we started early. We dug, we broke for lunch, we dug again. And then, late that afternoon I noticed a stump at the edge of the yard [ominous organ chord] there was something strange about it like the, the dirt around it was smooth as if the stump didn't have any roots. My heart started to pound. I went to the stump. I set my hands against it; I pushed and the stump moved. In the ground beneath it was a hole, in the hole was a box and in the box the buried treasure of - Captain Cook.

There in my hands at last lay the glowing gems of my wildest dreams. [music intensifies and stops] I spent the rest of that day in an indescribable state of excitement; imagining myself on the front page of *Life Magazine*: "Little Kid Discovers Buried Treasure." Finally I was going to be somebody, not just the little punk that no one noticed.

I was washing the dirt from those jewels in the sink when my little cousin Olga, Henry's

younger sister came in and broke the news. "Tony," she said, "It's a hoax." [sounds of seagulls] For the past two weeks my older brother and my cousin had plotted every move. They had bought the coins at a souvenir store in Barnstable; the jewels had come from the five-and-dime. Even the idea of digging under the stump had apparently come from them; they'd led me in that direction and then put the notion in my head. I stood there at the sink watching the dirt from my treasure spiral down the drain.

[Slow, piano music underlays next two paragraphs]

It's been almost fifty years since my older brother and cousin sprung that trap; my older brother (and a kinder man you couldn't meet) is still apologizing for it; [with a chuckle in his voice] I spoke to him last night. But if I had to do it all over again, I told him, I wouldn't change a thing. Jim and Henry may have known that the treasure I held in my hands was fake but I didn't. For that one glorious moment while I held that pile of junk up to the sun I felt like I was the richest person in the world. For the first time in my life my imagination had been set completely free – to turn trash into treasure and to show me how beautiful life can be when it's lit by the light of your dreams.

Captain Cook was a pirate. He stole things of beauty and he buried them in the ground, but thanks to Jim and Henry that day, I'd reached into the ground and from the cheapest trinkets they could find, I'd made a moment of glory which I'll never forget and nobody got hurt. And that's the sweetest piracy of all.

[Ocean waves and piano music intensifies]

**Tony Kahn:**

That was today's Morning Story: *Buried Treasure*. I'm here with Gary Mott, an older brother...

**Gary Mott:**

Yup.

**Tony Kahn:**

... so I'm wondering in that story...

**Gary Mott:**

Yup.

**Tony Kahn:**

...do you identify more with the, the little victim that I was or the little victimizer that my older brother was?

**Gary Mott:**

My brother and I shared a room and however hard we tried, you know, masking tape, a sheet down the middle of the room, you know, we just couldn't find our own space.

Understandably and inevitably...

Tony Kahn:  
Uh, oh.

**Gary Mott:**  
... we...

**Tony Kahn:**  
This is beginning to sound really bad. [laughing] You're already making excuses for yourself.

**Gary Mott:**  
I gave him a jab to the abdomen one time and he fell back on the bed, he turned beet-red and I thought I'd killed him. I ran into the bathroom, started crying, praying, coming to the realization that I had just killed my little brother; and we love each other very much today. [softly laughs]

**Tony Kahn:**  
He just, he stopped breathing because you hit him in the stomach in the old solar plexus  
...

**Gary Mott:**  
I knocked, I knocked the wind out of him.

**Tony Kahn:**  
My wife, Harriet Reisen had that done to her and it had never happened before and she thought she was going to die. So one thing an older brother can definitely do for a younger brother is to say, "Look! I'm gonna hit you in the stomach but you're gonna survive. Okay?" Are you sorry, Gary? [starts laughing]

**Gary Mott:**  
Incredibly sorry. [Tony laughs heartily]

**Gary Mott:**  
And, you know. . .

**Tony Kahn:**  
This is why that story is such a touchstone: that it kind of taught me that, you know, the art of living is in how you look at things, as long as you can survive them. [laughs] If it's a speeding truck, get out of the way. But otherwise, you know, it's how you look at it.

**Gary Mott:**  
I've met your brother. He's, he's a wonderful man.

**Tony Kahn:**

Yeah? Did he hit you in the stomach?

**Gary Mott:**

Uh, he did not.

**Tony Kahn:**

Did you hit him in the stomach? [ laughs heartily]

**Gary Mott:**

No, but, but he apologized to me for hitting you.

**Tony Kahn:**

We've been hearing from a lot of people: one from a lady named Andrea in Pennsylvania. She says: "Wow! What an incredible Morning Story!" (She was referring to the story called: *Dancing Through History*.) She said, "I'm a faithful Morning Story listener via podcast and *Dancing Through History* really captivated me." (That was the story of the young Cambodian boy, Vyrik Eng) and like many people she's curious; she wanted to know, "How are things with Vyrik and his family?" Gar, can you tell us?

**Gary Mott:**

Vyrik and his family have recently been in some family counseling and out of that came some positive things. Vyrik was able to say things to his mother that he really had never been able to say before.

**Tony Kahn:**

Sounds like you're able to – in that setting at least – tell each other some more stories about what their own lives are like and [takes a deep breath] we certainly believe that the more people can do that and hear each other's stories, the greater the chance their going to realize that their, their problems are common ones and maybe from that can come some, some common solutions.

We got another email from a fellow, with the, I don't know if it's the "given" name: "Bazooka Joe" but that's the name he uses, he says, "Good morning! I've been enjoying *Morning Stories* since, oohhh, February. The warmth and intimacy of the people you bring on the show is something I look forward to each week. And being bombarded by "shrill shock jocks" and newscasters full of "doom and gloom," *Morning Stories* is a breath of fresh air.

*Morning Stories* has been an inspiration for my own podcast: "Small World." That's <[www.smallworldpodcast.com](http://www.smallworldpodcast.com)> The tag line is I that I talk with people from all walks of life from all over the planet." He's like a citizen journalist who's turning the telephone into, once again, an instrument of communication and not telemarketing. So [Tony laughs] good for you Bazooka Joe! And definitely check out his podcast.

**Gary Mott:**

We also got a letter from Todd who gives us some thinly veiled praise: [Tony laughs heartily]

**Tony Kahn:**

Thank you, Todd, for that!

**Gary Mott:**

[Laughs softly and starts reading letter] "Hi Tony. I've been a podcast listener for a while and a big fan of *Morning Stories*. I'm not sure if this is accurate but it seems to me there is a trend in *Morning Stories* to add more sounds, music and effects to the podcasts. But I feel these effects detract from my listening experience in general and I would greatly prefer additional verbal description over a sound effect. Todd"

**Tony Kahn:**

Well, Todd...[loud synthesized music]... we'll give it some thought and we'll get back to you on it. I am reminded of some of the wisest words that I ever heard from a public speaker who said: "'Scuse me ladies and gentlemen but if I had had more time to prepare, then I could be brief.'" [laughs]

So Todd, we'll think it through but I mean stories definitely come first and we don't want anything to, to interfere with that.

[Music continues]

**Gary Mott:**

[reads another letter] "Hi Tony and Crew. I am a new listener. Thanks to your podcasts I can listen to *Morning Stories* as I ride my bike, to work through Sydney City every morning. For a living I make television commercials, short films and animation for television. I was listening to the story by Portland Helmich..."

**Tony Kahn:**

Oh, that's the one about her meeting her friend...

**Gary Mott:**

Yup!

**Tony Kahn:**

... the first time, the first day ...

**Gary Mott:**

[All the Time in the World](#). "...and got such a buzz at the story and started to imagine it done as a watercolor animation. What is a watercolor animation? I don't know." [Tony

laughs] "I've never done one but that's the best way to describe what I am seeing. I'm wondering if you might be able to put me in contact with Portland Helmich so I can exchange some emails about the possibility of making this happen. I think the story's absolutely beautiful."

**Tony Kahn:**

His name is Douglas and actually we did put him in touch with Portland who was delighted to hear from him and of course we will demand our 10% take of everything...

**Gary Mott:**

Of course.

**Tony Kahn:**

... that you make, Douglas which I'm, I'm assuming in the spirit of new start-up operations, may be nothing – nothing but the satisfaction and in fact we can understand it because we are lucky enough to actually have some financial support from a truly generous company: Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software, our sponsors pretty much since this podcast began. Their website: <[www.ipswitch.com](http://www.ipswitch.com)>. They are promiscuously generous if you ask me, right Gar?

**Gary Mott:**

They now have contacted *The World*, which produces a tech-podcast.

**Tony Kahn:**

Hmm, mm.

**Gary Mott:**

Hosted by Clark Boyd.

**Tony Kahn:**

Hmm, mm.

**Gary Mott:**

And they are also sponsoring Clark's tech...

**Tony Kahn:**

Their, their podcasts, now.

**Gary Mott:**

...podcast now. And we have a website too. <[wgbh.org/morningstories](http://wgbh.org/morningstories)> And you know, we love this email that we've been gettin'. How 'bout some more? <[morningstories@wgbh.org](mailto:morningstories@wgbh.org)>

**Tony Kahn:**

And even if you don't write we'll still have the pot on you, ready with a nice fresh cup 'o coffee next Friday, so join us for another *Morning Stories* then. Okay? See you.

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Lynn Relyea

Note from Liz:

This story reminded me of my own relationship with my younger sister, Rebecca. We were constantly battling for attention for the place of prima donna in our girlhood days, never then having the “sibling friends” relationships some people seem to have had as children. We lost touch with each other for several decades after I got married and left home (she was just 13 years old then). Not too long ago, prompted by my discovery of living members of our father’s side of the family, and my sharing photographs from that discovery, she and I got in touch again, chiefly via email, and have engaged in several “spates” of interchanges. I’ve discovered that Rebecca herself is a treasure – so intelligent, and with a sense of humor I envy (oops! There go those “green eyes” again!). I find myself missing her more now that I’ve discovered what a wonderful person she really is.