

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

It Came From Out Of Google: Julie Nardone's dependence on technology takes a potentially deadly turn.

Tony Kahn:

Hi Everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories*, from WGBH, in Boston. Today we're going to talk about new technologies. Take the answering machine, this was something that was intended to let us stay in touch with callers when we were out! What's happened? It's become our main way of staying out of touch with people, when we're in.

Or take the VHS; this was designed to tape your favorite TV shows at home. Remember the constantly blinking twelve? [laughs] Anyway, if it worked it was supposed to kill the movie industry. Instead, it became a playback machine for rented feature films that probably helped save the movie industry.

And then there's the microwave oven. This was originally designed to, to cook fresh meals fast – a turkey in twenty minutes! And to encourage a lot more home cooking. Instead it's become our main source of reheated, flash-frozen meals cooked by somebody else, probably in Topeka.

Now, along comes one of the most potent and rapidly growing technologies of all! The web search engine. This is intended to brighten our minds, enlighten our lives with all the information from all over the world that a person could want. But could it too be turning into something completely different?

Well, Julie Nardone explores that horrible possibility in today's Morning Story, a true account, she tells us, that we call: [echoing sci-fi effects] *It Came From Out Of Google*.

[Sounds of crickets]

Julie Nardone:

It was three a.m., time to deal with my peanut-sized bladder, again! And the darkness that engulfed me. [loud, distorted sounds of insects of the night] It was Jimmy's idea to go camping in central Massachusetts. "Getting back to nature, is just what the doctor ordered," he said. [eerie organ chords] Well, nature was calling and I stumbled towards the latrine. It seemed a lot farther than it did during the day.

[Loud, distorted insect sounds, bullfrogs, footsteps through the grass and the sound of a heartbeat, thump, thump...thump, thump] I had the distinct feeling something was watching me ... something ... primeval. [organ chords] As I scurried back, the coffee

pot, leaning against the dead campfire, glowed ... no! ... flashed! ... in the light of the full moon. Then two more flashes on the tent flaps. As I turned to look back, another flash on the tree stump next to the car! "Gotta be the moonlight, glinting off my ring," I explained to myself.

The next flash exploded right behind my ear! [loud explosion] Oh, my God! It was something in my eye! [organ chords continue, loudly] No! Not now! Not tonight! In less than seventy-two hours Jimmy and I were going to be checking into a room at a romantic B&B in New Hampshire for our tenth wedding anniversary. We had planned this for months! Time for something special – not for something in my eye!

I reached into the tent [sound of rustling in the tent] and moved my laptop into range of the campsite wi-fi. Thank God, I told Jimmy I wouldn't go camping without access to the web; [sound of typing on computer keys] and googled: "flashing light in eye." It wasn't pretty. The first page filled with symptoms of eye disease [background voice hauntingly whispers names of eye diseases such as "macular retinopathy"]. I could feel the dark blue links jarring me deeper and deeper into terror with each click.

Retinopathy? Macular Degeneration? Holy E.R.! This could be a major medical emergency. [a loud scream] I googled for eye surgeons in central Massachusetts, but nausea forced me to the ground. Nausea; heart beat; throbbing in my eye; louder, and louder, and louder!

"Jimmy! Jimmy, wake up!" Jimmy shot up in his sleeping bag. "What's the matter!?"

"Floaters, Jimmy floaters! Hundreds of floaters!"

"You're, you're seeing, what?"

"Bursts of white light in my left eye! Google said it could be a glaucoma! We need to pack up the car and find an E.R. stat!"

"Turn your head to the right."

"Jimmy! Stop fooling around! It could be a detached retina!"

"There's a firefly in your hair." [sound of electrical buzzing]

"Ahhhhhh! Get it out! Get it out! Get it out! [voice fades] Get it out!" [electrical buzzing]

An hour later, sleep came at last; and "sleep mode" for my laptop. Under my lids I could feel its screen flash off. I prayed I'd be dreaming of the four-poster bed in my future, at the B&B. But dawn was still a long way off. And I had a feeling my laptop might be dreaming too. [sounds of dial-up connection to internet] (voices saying: "dual king mattresses;" "geriatric adjustable hospital beds;" "medical supplies for the bed ridden;" "lymphodema pumps and incontinence supplies;" "drip collectors and disposable pants;"

[Julie screams]

Tony Kahn:

Medical supplies for the bed ridden; worst of all, disposable pants. [laughing] Horrible! God! Today's *Morning Story* or should I say: Nighttime Story, from the horrifying Julie Nardone: *It Came From Out Of Google*. I'm here in the studio, with all the lights on and Gary Mott. Gary, we subjected this story to rigorous research, didn't we? Before we...

Gary Mott:

Ohhh-ho-oh-yeah!

Tony Kahn:

...before we produced it.

Gary Mott:

Campsite wi-fi? What is that? [Tony laughs] Of course.

Tony Kahn:

You didn't believe me.

Gary Mott:

So I jumped on Google...

Tony Kahn:

Of course.

Gary Mott:

...googled wi-fi campgrounds...

Tony Kahn:

Right.

Gary Mott:

...got 350,000 returns and I said, "Wha ..? Times have changed since my camping days."

Tony Kahn:

I come from a family that, where I was the only "gear head" – a serious liability. I would try to recruit other people, like my mother, and I would give her gifts, new electronics for the time and she was so committed to not getting any of it. [laughs] And she...

Gary Mott:

Not even a clock radio? Not a...

Tony Kahn:

I did! I got her all those things. But it was the use to which she put them. I got her for

instance, an electric typewriter and she used that as a, a paperweight, [Gary laughs] you know, for all of her correspondence. My brother and I got her one of these, we got her a convection oven and it had like a glass door and just two controls. Off and loud, you know. [Tony and Gary laugh] It was like "off" and then the little knob that gave the, the, the, the temperature? The fact that it had to be plugged in was confusing to her so you know what she ended up using it as?

Gary Mott:

Hmm?

Tony Kahn:

An "in" and "out" file for her correspondence. [Gary laughs] She put, she put all [Tony laughs heartily while talking] of her correspondence in it, all the out ones was on the top rack and the in ones-- she said, "It's got a glass door. I can see what's going on in there." Anyway...

Gary Mott:

What do you think the moral of Julie's story is? I mean you can't escape technology, you can't ignore it.

Tony Kahn:

Nooo.

Gary Mott:

I mean, Google, yeah, it's everywhere.

Tony Mott:

It does make me wonder. People say that the, you know, the, the internet is going to be able to make this a much smaller and closer world, because we'll all know everything that can be known about each other. But what kind of information really does bring you closer to people? What kind of information is that? And how can we get that across?

I think podcasting, (to plug one of my favorite media) is doing that, because so much of podcasting is shared personal enthusiasms, so people get a chance to know what it's like to be another person. To, to be excited about what another person is excited about - we actually communicate experience that way. Right? Working with Julie was terrific though, because she is a most original and quirky individual, and...

Gary Mott:

She's an artist.

Tony Kahn:

She's an artist...

Gary Mott:

She's a writer she's a...

Tony Kahn:

Teeming with emotions.

Gary Mott:

We got a couple letters, Tony. Seahurst, New Jersey.

Tony Kahn:

Mm, hmm.

Gary Mott:

"Your podcasts are by far my favorite because of their variety and interest level to me. I can get most of my chores done with my iPod hanging around my neck for hands-free operation while listening to your podcast. I am a new subscriber so I have many older ones left to enjoy. It is difficult to cultivate a life of the mind in suburbia..."

Tony Kahn:

Oh, Janet [laughs]

Gary Mott:

well . . . "but you have expanded my horizons enough for me to publish a fledgling blog and to look into doing a podcast in the near future; getting stories from senior citizens and children."

Tony Kahn:

Ohh, well, it's nice to be an inspiration to somebody who wants to go and do their own podcast and we'd love to hear it, once, once it's up and ready. And also, Janet, another piece of information for you, as a new user to the iPod. It not only leaves your hands free, it leaves your feet free too. So if there's anything you want to be doing with your feet at the same time, you can go right ahead and you can still hear us. Churn butter. Make wine.

Gary Mott:

We also got some feedback about last week's podcast.

Tony Kahn:

Feet-back?

Gary Mott:

Some feet-back, yes. [Tony and Gary laugh] *Heal This Book* was the title of last week's podcast...

Tony Kahn:

Yeah.

Gary Mott:

...about a mystery that occurred in the San Francisco Public Library. We heard from a librarian no less, Judy from the reference department at a library in Lexington, Mass. She...

Tony Kahn:

That's just down the road apiece, from here.

Gary Mott:

...she liked the story and she wanted to share it with her fellow librarians, so thanks for that Judy.

Tony Kahn:

Well, and thanks for being a librarian, Judy. Anytime we worry about whether we're going to be able to make another podcast all we have to do is remember that our support: *It Came From Out Of Ipswitch*. [Gary laughs] And it continues to come, heaven knows why, but bless them, week after week. Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software, you can check them out at <ipswitch.com > I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H.

Gary Mott:

And we have a website as well <wgbh.org/morningstories > and send those stories along <morningstories@wgbh.org >

Tony Kahn:

See you on Friday. Bye.

[End of recording]

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