

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

*One Foot in Front of the Other: Caleb Smith walked every street in Manhattan and tells us what he found. Also, a story from The World's David Leveille about a teenager in Moldova who copied every word of Harry Potter's latest adventure.*

### **Tony Kahn:**

Hi everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and the director of *Morning Stories*, from WGBH, in Boston. Today I'd like to talk about walking. Great physical exercise, of course, but it's also great mental exercise. In my own life I've solved some of my biggest problems simply by taking them and me for a walk; get away from the desk; get away from the house; get away from work and put a little oxygen in your blood; give a little breathing room to your brain.

And I suspect the walking is good not just for individuals but for, for whole cultures. Some of my favorite cities in the world are walking cities like – New York, London, Paris, New Delhi, maybe where you live. Places where people take to their feet on a regular basis and rub shoulders on the street.

Well, today's Morning Story is from a world-class walker: Caleb Smith. A while ago he decided that he wanted to walk every street in Manhattan. I found out about him from his website, after he had finished the walk and I asked him to come and pay us a call the next time he was in Boston (and sat down in the studio here with us) and in today's story, which we took from that interview, he's going to tell us where that journey through every street in Manhattan took him. We call it: *One Foot in Front of the Other*.

### **Caleb Smith:**

To walk every single street, in New York, that was the main point. [soft piano music plays under the narration] All these different transitions from one neighborhood to a next, here's a building that was built last year next to a building that's a hundred and fifty years old., and -- Thousands and thousands of people over the years who have walked up those steps. [pause]

There's a very old bowling green in the, in lower Manhattan and there's a fence around it that's two hundred and fifty years old. It used to have these crowns that, that represented the King on top, and after hearing the Declaration of Independence in July 1776, some zealous citizens [sound of hand saw] sawed off the crowns, off of the top of the fence. And you can go there today and feel the top of the fence, the saw marks are still there ... still there. [long pause]

I grew up in Albuquerque and I would take really long walks, spreading out slowly from the park that was, that was in my local neighborhood, trying to learn where I lived. I remember Mom pulling off the side of the road to find a fifty-foot strip of original blacktop from the old Route 66, you know, that the *Grapes of Wrath* trucks would've crossed.

My father would go to visit battlefields and and it really didn't matter if the battlefield had been turned into a Wal-Mart parking lot or something like that; he would just – his imagination would just take over and he'd get this far away look in his eyes and he'd say, you know, "You can just picture the Confederate Army coming over the hill over there," you know, or something like that.

I get that same far-off look in my eyes. It makes your life connected with all those people and with all those events in history that, that, that human drama. My grandfather's from Brooklyn and

worked in the city and when he was fourteen he was, he was robbed of a lot of money; he was a messenger boy. He was delivering over a thousand dollars and it was, it was written up in, in all the newspapers – what he did that morning, where he withdrew the money, where he was robbed. Almost all the buildings are, are gone. But there's, there's one building that's left; it's the police station on Elizabeth Street, where they took him. The sergeant walked in and said, "Oh," you know, "do you want to see the back?" And, there was the office and I'm sure it's where my grandfather sat. I'm sure that's where he was sitting that morning, talking to the detective. The, the cops thought he stole the money, they smacked him in, in the face and he had bruises on his face and, uh .... He was just a, a scared kid, you know. And ... [pause] He never made it past the eighth grade and, to, to be in that spot just for a few minutes. [Caleb, breathes in and out deeply and becomes emotional while putting himself in his grandfather's "shoes."] [pause] [piano music continues but with vocals, for remainder of story: I'm very glad I did it.

*Through the ocean haze  
The Empire State  
Is glistening rose,  
And the river is glimmering  
Softly wherever it goes.  
Never before, has it been more  
Beautiful, that's the thing.  
... Manhattan is a myth, rising in the mist,  
Make a wish and then it's gone*

[Long pause]

From all over the island, if you look up, you can see the Empire State Building and you can see if you look up on the Observation Deck, these little pops of light; the tourists are up there taking flashes. [pause] I , I love that! From all over the island I, wherever I was - it was like this little beacon I'd see up there and I'd see those flashes. So the, so the last street was 33rd, between Broadway and 5th; there was a group of my friends on the corner waiting for me and they cheered and Koreatown is right there and we, we stopped and had some toasts and then I went up alone to the top of the Empire State Building and took pictures, took flashes and sent out my own flashes down to Manhattan, so... and that's how it ended. Couldn't wait to get back down and walk around some more down there. One foot in front of the other, it clears your mind.

[Music continues and fades]

**Tony Kahn:**

That's today's Morning Story: *One Foot in Front of the Other* by Caleb Smith with – aw geez – just a wonderful musical assist from two of the “Lascivious Biddies” – the darlings of the podcast world -- independent band – Lee Ann Westover and Deidre Rodman. And I'm here in the studio with the one and only Gary Mott.

**Gary Mott:**

Boy, that piece just – it feels like New York.

**Tony Kahn:**

Mmm.

**Gary Mott:**

You know?

**Tony Kahn:**  
Mmm, hmm!

**Gary Mott:**  
And it's, it's almost a love story, you know, it makes you want to get up out of your chair and...

**Tony Kahn:**  
Yeah!

**Gary Mott:**  
...and go do it.

**Tony Kahn:**  
It's also about the love of family, the way he brings up his mother and his father and the influence that they had on the way he looks at the world and the way he connects again with his grandfather and with the sadness of his experience. It, it's like love is a force that reaches across all this time and all this distance and still keeps you together with somebody. That really moved me, I think, the most.

**Gary Mott:**  
I mean, New York, the center of the universe.

**Tony Kahn:**  
The great walking cities to me, are also very different from each other. In New York, you walk with everybody else but there's this powerful stream that drives you along. In London, there are these little pockets in the corners of the sidewalk that make it almost like theater where you can stop and you can watch and eavesdrop on a whole other culture. People from all over the world having their business out there on the street and other places. I'd love to hear from people, what it's like to walk, to walk in their cities and I bet you some of them are doing that right now while they're listening to this podcast. Speaking about New York, we got some email from New York, right?

**Gary Mott:**  
Yeah, sure. We got a great little note from Sima: "I just wanted to let you know that I subscribe to the *Morning Stories* podcast from New York City and I love it!"

**Tony Kahn:**  
We also heard from somebody who's just gotten into podcasting. And I love these letters because they kind of give me a picture for how everybody's getting into podcasting in his or her own way, right? This is from Karen who lives in, is it Los Angeles? I think so. "I just finished listening to Kito Robinson's story on my iPod."

**Gary Mott:**  
Mm, hmm.

**Tony Kahn:**  
"I'm in my mid-thirties and have discovered I enjoy the freedom new technology has given me. I also work full-time and am not able to listen to streaming audio at my workstation. About a year

ago my husband gave me an iPod and it's opened up my world to new things." [Tony] Well the iPod or the Mp3 player is definitely something that family members give to each other. Sometimes very young people give it to their grandparents and that's what gets 'em into podcasting. In this case, spouse gives it to his breathtakingly young wife, Karen.

**Gary Mott:**

We've got one from Taiwan...

**Tony Kahn:**

Taiwan.

**Gary Mott:**

Yeah, Joyce is a teacher in Taiwan. All her students like to listen to *Morning Stories* but listening without scripts is a little harder for them. I wonder if you can do audio scripting for your coming shows?

**Tony Kahn:**

You know, certainly if we can get a blog, that will be a, a way that we can get the scripts across. This – this isn't the first time we've heard from someone who's used *Morning Stories* as a, as a teaching tool. A while ago we heard from somebody who was using it to help people learn English as a second language because people's personal stories made it friendlier. It made it – English -- more personal, something that would let them finally express themselves. In fact, David Leveille, a colleague of ours here at 'GBH, he's one of the producers for the broadcast - *The World* - he tells us this, this story of, of someone in a foreign country who'd also made a very powerful connection with the, with the English in *Harry Potter*.

**David Leveille:**

That's right, Tony. She a, she's a teenager who lives in Moldova with her mother; her name is Sandra Lucien. She was fifteen years old at the time of the story and when I spoke to her she's sixteen and she has a passion for Harry Potter. She's been reading them steadily ever since the books came out. When the most recent one came out: *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, she was able to get a glance at a copy for a couple of days and read it quickly, a friend passed it along. But she decided that she wanted to add this book to her own personal...

**Tony Kahn:**

Is it, is it easy to get in, in Moldova a copy of *Harry Potter*?

**David Leveille:**

Hardly, apparently they cost the equivalent of \$50.00 or \$60.00 and that's a...

**Tony Kahn:**

Oh, my.

**David Leveille:**

... handsome sum for, certainly for a teenager even for families in Moldova which is one of the poorest countries in Europe, between Hungary and Romania.

**Tony Kahn:**

Mm, hmm.

**David Leveille:**

So, she came up with the idea of simply copying the book, copying it out by hand and it, this, this particular book is 607 pages long so it took her all of a good month.

**Tony Kahn:**

In longhand.

**David Leveille:**

In longhand, in English and her English is just taking shape, as well. She used different colored pens - one color to copy the dialog and one for the narration portion of the story. And she used some five or six notebooks; she kept asking her mother to bring her notebooks back from work.

**Tony Kahn:**

Wow!

**David Leveille:**

It was something she could now add to her bookshelf and something that she could share with her schoolmates, where she goes to school in Romania. And I'll just add that, you know, listeners of, that heard this very touching interview have been generously offering to send their extra copies and their, their own copies including the, the last in the series when it comes out, along to Sandra in Moldova.

**Tony Kahn:**

Never underestimate the power of a story, huh, Gar? And, and never underestimate the power of a helping hand. We certainly understand that every week when we turn to thank Ipswitch, a leader in file transfer software for their support for this podcast. You want to know more about them check out their website: I-P-S-W-I-T-C-H.

**Gary Mott:**

And of course we've got that email, that old fashioned email: <[morningstories@wgbh.org](mailto:morningstories@wgbh.org)> we would love to hear from you.

**Tony Kahn:**

We'll be back with another Morning Story next Friday. So, see you then. Bye, bye.

[Music with lyrics plays and fades:

*Do you think they had any idea?*

*The Dutch, when they stepped on her shore,*

*That a city would grow from a steeple*

*And from that one city a world*

*With ocean views, kills and news, the children play.*

*And the river is glimmering softly.*

*Manhattan is a myth, rising in the mist,*

*Make a wish and then it's gone.]*

[End of recording]

Transcribed by: Lynn Relyea <[lmrelyea@yahoo.com](mailto:lmrelyea@yahoo.com)>

Note from Liz:

I loved this story when I first heard it, and it was a joy to hear it again. Both Caleb Smith's part, and Tony's and Gary's part, really captured the magic of New York City for me.