Episode 7 – Stoney’s Restaurant (conclusion to Episode 3 – Plan B)

Welcome. This is Jen Lee, the host of I Need Blue. I came face to face with danger. Now I spend my time giving back to survivors and the heroes that saved us.

Jen Lee

We share victim turned survivor stories. When you come face to face with danger, you learn not to take your safety for granted. Now more than ever, it is important to use facts from real life situations to reinforce the valuable need of our law enforcement. I Need Blue does feature graphic themes, including but not limited to violence, abuse, murder, and may not be suitable to all listeners.

Jen Lee

Did you listen to Episode 3, Plan B? Were you left wondering, did they catch the robbers and murderers? If you haven't listened to this unbelievable story, and before I give away the second half of it, check it out now. www.INeedBlue.net. Episode 3. This story changed several people's lives forever.

Jen Lee

Let's get started. Stoney was a restaurant owner. It was a normal after-hour cleanup when intruders entered. Multiple shots fired, sadly killing friends and employees. Stoney with a gunshot wound himself, stood up to see an unimaginable scene in front of him. You are about to hear when a foiled plan turns into frustration for thieves and a sad loss of life for innocent victims. It is my pleasure to introduce for a second time, Stoney. Thank you for being here today.

Stoney

Thanks for having me back.

Stoney

Knowing that the perpetrators had left, the first thing I did was run to the doors, pull them closed and lock them. I ran back having to witness the tragedy that just took place.

Stoney

The chef, the manager and the police officer all lying on the floor and a massive pool of blood surrounded. I peeked around the corner and saw the bartender was on the telephone with 911. Apparently she must have just made the call. She handed me the phone right away. I told them we had been involved in a robbery and there was a police officer involved and people were shot. We needed a helicopter and help as soon as possible.

Stoney

The 911 operator said, "there's a police officer involved?" and I said, " yes and he's been shot. He's in bad shape.We need help right away. "

Stoney

The bartender said to me the chef was choking. I went back out in front of the bar where everyone was laying.

Stoney

Somehow he had gotten on his back. I turned him over and turned his head to the side. At that point in time, unfortunately I was knee deep in blood.

Stoney

In what seemed like forever, I heard the ambulances arrive at the front door and the paramedics were the first on the scene. They came in and next thing I realized they were probably 30 police officers inside the restaurant lounge area. They began asking me questions, what did they look like? What were they dressed like? What were their height, weight, hair, just asking for all the particulars so they could try to set up a some type of dragnet.

Stoney

They were trying to find these guys before they gotten too far out of the area. At that point in time, the paramedics were taking the police officer out of the restaurant into the awaiting ambulances. One of the police officers walked over to me and said, "how are you?" I said, I"m okay." He said, "are you hurt?" And I said, "Well, I've been shot." He said, " you've been shot?" I said, "yes. In my arm." It was bleeding pretty well, I guess he couldn't see it from his view. The gunman stood over top of me when he shot me. He actually was trying to shoot me in the head. For some unknown reason, he missed and in it went through my elbow. At that time, I just acted like I was dead. Then, a few minutes later, he moved over to the others and shot them, executed them.

Stoney

When I was shot it like somebody put in a hot poker in your arm. I definitely felt that. I was in pain. I didn't know the severity of it. "We're going to have to get you down to the hospital." the officer said. So they took me down to the hospital which wasn't far from us. Maybe a 10 minute ride. And when I got there a couple of my friends, one was a homicide detective and one was a robbery detective, came into the hospital. They were good friends of mine and police officers that I'd known for many, many years. Of course, they were asking me all the questions, prevalent questions. And they were there for support. They had done x-rays and wrapped my arm up.

Stoney

I needed to go back to the restaurant, back into the lounge area. And of course the amount of blood on the floor was just unbelievable to witness. There must have been 50-60 police officers there. The lead detective on the case started asking me questions; the size, the weight, and if I've ever seen him before. They were relaying the information to other police officers. The police officers were out on the street canvassing in the area. They were setting up roadblocks and really trying to do due diligence and find these guys as quickly as possible. But to no avail!

Stoney

That was the start of the manhunt. My detective friend, a homicide detective, drove me home. When I got home my kids came out and asked me if I was okay. Kind of unwrapped my arm so they could see what happened and cleaned it. The bullet had gone in one side and out the other. I took a shower and they wanted me be back.

Stoney

There was a reporter that was renowned in the Washington DC area. He was there as well. They were very supportive of the police department. They were trying to get as much information out to the public on the news and local news stations as well. So he had asked me many questions of what took place etc. They tried to do whatever they could to get the information out to the public into the metropolitan area to capture these people as soon as possible.

Stoney

I went back to the restaurant. It's very interesting because your mind, you start thinking and remembering . They wanted to talk to me. No matter how big or small the needed the details. Especially if it was something new I remembered. We decided to close the restaurant until we could figure out what we were going to do; making arrangements for funerals, etc.

Stoney

Meanwhile, the police officer was in the hospital undergoing a number of surgeries. He was shot in the face and the bullet had gone down behind his ear. It blew his eardrum out and knock some teeth out, knoced the jaw out of the alignment. They had to open him up from about the middle of his head, back and try to get a fragment out. There was some kind of fragments that had gotten in his eye as well.

Stoney

It wasn't long after this had taken place, they called me to go to the police department and tried to do an artist's rendering drawing. One of the perpetrators, I only saw half of his face because it was blocked by the chef. The second perpetrator, I got a good view of him and was able to give a good artist rendering. They drew them and got them out to the public.

Stoney

There were reporters each day in front of my home. There was reporting every day. It was a big story, obviously a terrible tragedy took place. This was on the front page of The Washington Post. It was on every TV station, every radio station constantly.

Stoney

After the robbery that night, when they were running out and leaving the building, a shot went off. I guess they had shot the gun by mistake. There was a bowling alley across the street and it caught the attention of a gentleman. He looked and saw people running away from the business.

Stoney

They also had walkie talkies. They had run down a street in the neighborhood and called over to where the bowling alley was where the getaway driver was parked. A female was the get away driver. She went to go pick them up.

Stoney

Fortunately the gentleman had seen them running and saw the vehicle leave. He reported it to the police. They put a dragnet in the whole metropolitan area again, looking for that type of vehicle. Cars were being pulled over, searched in the metropolitan area. A couple friends of mine called me and asked me to call the police department and ask them not to pull them over again. It was like their fourth time they'd been pulled over and searched. The police were doing due diligence.

Stoney

Not long after, detectives at one of the local police stations, had picked up a young man in a neighboring county to question him about another robbery that took place. They simply asked him, "Do you know anythiny about what happened at Stoneys? And he said, "yes. I was there." The police officer, after he said that, couldn't believe it . He gave them that information with just a question they asked him.

Stoney

He gave up all the addresses of where the other people were. So the SWAT teams went to the various homes and arrested them. The one gentleman whom they arrested, had taken the police officers gun that night. He was sleeping on a couch and they found it under a pillow.

Stoney

There were five involved altogether. 2 came in with guns, 1 was a look out, 1 drove the getaway car with the other gentleman.

Jen Lee

What was the age range?

Stoney

Between 17 and 23 years old. They had not been drinking, there had been any drugs. We did find out later they had done three other armed robberies that night. They had gone into Virginia and robbed a video store. Took the gun and put it down the mouth of a 16 year old girl and robbed her. They followed a guy to an ATM where he had a withdrawal at a bank and then they robbed him. They robbed the restaurant around the corner from me. And they saw Stoney's and said let's get Stoney's they have a bank,. They decided to come in and rob Stoney's.

Stoney

They were mad and that was one of the things that we thought was kind of strange. They were really mad when they came in the door.

Jen Lee

Did they live in the area and had they ever been in your restaurant before?

Stoney

No, they had never been in there. One of them lived in a neighboring county. And the other four lived probably 10 miles away.

Stoney

At three o'clock in the morning, I got a really loud knock on my door at my home, which scared me to death. I walked down the steps and turned the light on. It was two detectives. I opened the door, and said, "what's going on, you scared me to death?" They said, "we got him!" I said, "oh my god!" My wife had run down the steps. It was very early in the morning, I turned on the news and they showed him in handcuffs being taken out put in to police cars headed to jail for holding.

Stoney

Part of the tragedy with this whole thing is my manager had a five year old, a three year old and a three month old child.

Stoney

We had no choice but to get back to business. My arm at that point had been put in a cast. 13 people quit. Business owners in the area we're getting phone calls, with people saying "your next." Everybody was scared and wanted to know what was going to be done.

Stoney

The others that were working there said they wouldn't work at the business any longer if there wasn't security. There were police officers in the restaurant about 90% of the time either having lunch or dinner, or to come by and say hello. They were major supporters of the business. When I couldn't find anybody to do security, I had to hire them which is extremely costly. We lost 50% of the business right away.

Stoney

I get a phone call and needed to examine a line up; myself, the bartender, and the waitress were there that night. They wanted me to identify the first guy. He was the one that I can only see half of the his face. Then when they brought out the second set of people the other gunman which had come in, I picked him out right away. I knew exactly who he was. He was the one I got a real good look at.

Stoney

We had to meet with the state's attorney's office and review what was going to take place in the future as far as court. I'm gonna say it was over a year before we started to court process.

Jen Lee

Were they in jail then during this whole time?

Stoney

They were all in jail and no bond. No bond.

Stoney

The first court case we went to, they were going for the death penalty. Evidence is what really backed up what happened. The witnesses obviously had a great impact too, but the evidence, the bullet and the gun they recovered and so forth. It was time for the jury to deliberate. They came back with a second degree murder charge in which we were actually devastated by. The reason being, and I found later, there was a lady on the jury who said that the robber reminded her of her son. There's no way that she could convict him. They ended up caving in and he got second degree murder, but he got a very lengthy sentence from the judge for all the other charges which were made. I think it was 230 years. He's still in jail.

Stoney

Then the next court case was the shooter. This case was very hard, because when you're in a courtroom, you're not far from these guys; within 10-12 feet. What a situation like this brings out in you is something you're probably not. The anger and the frustration in you. You just want to retaliate. He came out in a suit, and was sitting down at the table.

Stoney

We got through all the testimonies again and all the pictures of the autopsies. It was very traumatic. It's like you see on TV to a point, but worse. We go to finish the court proceedings, the jury goes out, and they come back with a guilty verdict. He's given the death sentence, which we were thrilled about.

Stoney

Of course, the TV cameras and everybody were there and want to know how you felt about this sentence.

Stoney

Like they say, if you want to do the crime you're going to have to pay and do the time.

Stoney

The next court procedures were for the female. She was the driver of the getaway car. We go through basically the same situation. She was the sister of the shooter. She had a young child as well about two or three year old.

Stoney

We went to court for the one who was testifying against them. He was turning state's evidence on all the people. He was saying, this one was there, and he did this. He actually ended up getting, I think a five year house arrest.

Stoney

The female when the verdict was reached for her, she got a life sentence. She is still in jail.

Stoney

The second guy that came in with the gun, he is still in jail.

Stoney

The shooter, who was the lookout guy at the front door, was actually killed in jail. He was stabbed to death.

Stoney

The other shooter that came into our business was also killed in jail. I think it was a old friend of his that also stabbed him to death in jail.

Stoney

So two of them are in jail. One of them is still out.

Jen Lee

These situations affect our families, they affect our communities. It's a sad tragedy that a lot of people don't realize until they're in it.

Jen Lee

People think of our officers and the different duties they take on don't ealize that when somebody dies, like the employees who also were your very good friends who passed away. Police officers were the ones who had to go knock on the door to the their home, and tell their families, he's not coming back. Imagine the courage they must have to have to be able to do that.

Stoney

People think they're not impacted by these things. But they are. And it's not easy for them to do these type of things. It wasn't easy for my friend to call my wife and tell her that I had been shot in a holdup, in a robbery. The officer knew my wife.

Stoney

The police officers that went to my managers home to wake his wife up to tell her that her husband had just been murdered. She had three young children at home. These officers were working almost 24 hours a day, trying to find these people to get them off the streets or to keep it from happening to somebody else.

Stoney

We found out later that these people were responsible for many robberies prior to this. They set up a gang, I think they called it the "gang of five." They were robbing people when they were going to the ATM machines, and they were robbing convience stores. It's just a unbelievable experience.

Stoney

There is always a beginning, middle and ending sory. The ripple effect of these things after they take place, is hard to comprehend. The impact on your friends, your family, your future. What it does to you personally, mentally, it's just a travesty.

Stoney

My guys still bring it up because it had an impact on them. Being involved with the police department for so many years, and been involved in crime solvers for 20+ years, people have to understand, they need to support their police departments. Without them, they're never going to be safe, you have to have law and order. You have to have people that care. You have to have people that are concerned about what's taken place to keep us all safe. They are underpaid, they're overworked. Today it's worse than ever.

Stoney

We're gonna have to be careful, because if people don't change, they're going to become a victim themselves one day, and then they're going to understand why they need these police officers. Our officers are just like us. They want the same thing we all want. They want to enjoy life. They want to take care of their families and they want to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They live like the rest of us and want to be safe. At this they're being victimized. It's unbelievable.

Stoney

Nobody wants to cop until they need a cop. And believe me, at some point in time, everybody needs a police officer. At one point in time, they're going to need a police officer.

Jen Lee

I absolutely agree with you. That's part of the reason for the podcast is to take real life stories, because until you're a victim turned survivor, like you and like me, you don't get it.

Jen Lee

Police officers are retiring. They're leaving every day especially in particular cities. I don't know what they thought was going to happen, but they're finally waking up and realizing, oh, wait a second, maybe we need our police officers. But how many people have to be hurt and how many people have to be a victim before they get it?

Jen Lee

It's very frustrating to people like you and me, who know how essential they are.

Jen Lee

Stoney you brought up some really great points. We are not given every day to live. It's a blessing.

Jen Lee

When we can help others I think we're truly reaching our purpose but also our potential as human beings. That is the reason police officers and teachers and firefighters pick the profession to go into because in their heart, they want to help and serve our communities to make us feel safe. They are part of our communities.

Jen Lee

How does it get any better than that?

Jen Lee

Stoney, I really appreciate you being here today and sharing your story and letting us know how everything ended. You've been amazing. Thank you.

Jen Lee

This is Jen Lee, the host of I Need Blue. I want to thank you for listening today. I want to thank Stoney for participating. I know there are people out there who can relate to his story. We hope you found some comfort and support in recognizing you are not alone. If you want to become part of the I Need Blue family please visit our website, www.ineedblue.net subscribe, you can send emails and I will get back to you as quickly as I can. Also I Need Blue is on podcast platforms such as Spotify. Thank you for listening and we will talk to you soon.

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