[Snap Judgment intro]

**Glynn:** Doomscrolling through theearly pandemic lockdown. You remember this? I'm watching, as you recall, as lots of people start doing lots of ridiculous things, crazy things, dangerous things, and clicking through the rabbit hole. I start to learn about a group of amateur racers who are using this brief pandemic window when the roads are almost empty to beat the coast-to-coast land speed record. It's a race. An unofficial, secretive, highly illegal road race, starting from the Red Ball Garage in New York City to the Portofino Hotel & Marina in Redondo Beach, California. And you only know if you know. And the race is on. Every other day, the internet reports records shattered, obliterated, as folks see their opportunity for racing immortality.

A team does it in 28 hours. Then someone gets 27 hours. 27.5 hours, 26 hours, and finally, finally some guy, solo, claims to make the trip driving a rented Mustang GT in 25 hours 55 minutes from sea to shining sea. Average speeds fire in excess of 110 miles an hour. And then he reportedly drives the car to Avis or whatever, tosses over the keys, "Yeah, I got the insurance. Thanks."

And hearing about this, watching it play out on YouTube, Twitter, it brings me out of the pandemic into a happier time. I'm thinking, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, why does this sound familiar? How do I know who's in this race?” And it hits me. All of this, all of it is from an old film, *The Cannonball Run*, starring Burt Reynolds, Farrah Fawcett, Jackie Chan. Especially though, Burt Reynolds. It all comes rushing back. My brothers and I used to love this movie. I wanted to live this movie, on the road. The mad capers, Burt Reynolds, all of it, all of it.

So, today, we've decided we're going to put the pedal to the metal for a journey of our own. Snap Judgment proudly presents The Cannonball Run. My name is Glynn Washington. And it is not the destination. It's the journey. You are listening to Snap Judgment.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** We begin where all good buddy movies begin, the cast of characters. Yes, there might be some language. Yes, there might be some laughs. I'm going to introduce you to three guys. Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

**Speaker 1:** This is a story of three guys. Steve.

**Steve:** Na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na.

**Speaker 1:** Matt.

**Matt:** Look at these nerds.

**Speaker 1:** And Mike.

**Mike:** Okay. Sorry, I got distracted by that. I started thinking about, I could get a Batmobile.

**Speaker 1:** And these three guys were all united by one passion.

**Mike:** Most prominently their love of Burt Reynolds.

**Steve:** I grew up liking Burt Reynolds. I'm a fan of Burt Reynolds.

**Matt:** And then we were just best friends after that.

**Steve:** You like Burt Reynolds, and you talk about Burt Reynolds, and you enjoy his films and you're like, "Oh, I wish I could meet Burt Reynolds." And you're taking the love of something from your childhood, and we just manifested it into something more real.

**Presenter:** What can I say? Burt Reynolds.

[cheers and applause]

**Matt:** I think he's like the perfect American success story.

**Presenter:** And along came a guy who did something nobody else had done. And that was your pardon expression, expose himself in a lot of areas.

**Matt:** He is that uncommon celebrity who men and women both love.

**Presenter:** You sometimes feel that actors are overpaid.

**Burt:** I know they're overpaid, but don't tell anybody.

[laughter]

**Steve:** He's funny, and he's got a great personality, and he feels like the kind of guy you could hang out with. He feels like somebody who would be really cool to have a beer with.

**Speaker 1:** He was almost like America's best friend. They all wanted to hang out with Burt. And those movies were a hangout.

[intriguing music]

**Matt:** It was, let's get in the car and jump bridges and drive too fast and pick up ladies.

**Movie Clip:** You've got a great profile.

**Burt:** Yeah, I do, don't I? Especially from the side.

**Steve:** The Burt Reynolds mentality speaks to like, it’s how I like to live life fun, driving fast and the wind in your hair and the fire from your feet.

**Movie Clip:** Of course, we can make it. We ain't never not made it yet, have we?

**Steve:** You know, some people dream about being wizards and casting spells. I dream about driving across the desert at 180 miles an hour.

**Movie Clip:** Drinking wine, drinking wine. This is the bandit as a snowman out there. I hear you, son.

**Steve:** Tome watching *Smokey and the Bandit* or *The Cannonball Run* is like mac and cheese and chicken nuggets. As you get older, it's like comfort food.

**Movie Clip:** This is *Smokey and the Bandit*, the story about a lazy weekend in Alabama.

**Mike:** I don't think everybody saw *Smokey and the Bandit*, and it gave them this feeling. It was a deeper meaning for us than just going to a movie and coming out and forgetting it. A much deeper feeling.

**Matt:** It was like escaping from parents' divorce, escaping from family problems, escaping from not doing that great in school, escaping from everything.

**Movie clip:** That ain't never been done, not no rig.

That's because you and I ain't never done it in no rig. You got to stop thinking so negative, son.

**Mike:** I don't think we're going to meet somebody who's obsessed with something like *Smokey and the Bandit* that had a pristine childhood. I really don't think that. I think there has to be this damage or this longing or this flaw that makes you connect with it, like, "Oh, there's something comforting here. Like, there's something safe about this.” And then when you meet somebody else who has that, you go, “Oh, we have this in common."

**Steve:** I don't want to say I felt safe watching a *Smokey in the Bandit* movie. That sounds crazy. But I think that fans have this image of him that reassures us that we're okay, we're going to be all right.

**Movie Clip:** You are a silver tongue devil. Big 10-4, good buddy.

**Steve:** So anytime I saw Burt Reynolds movie or bought a Burt Reynolds piece of memorabilia or a toy, it was being true to who I was as a kid.

I just want to give you an idea of the scope, the magnitude of our fan ship obsession. We're not joking around.

**Mike:** The day I went over to check out the Burt Reynolds stuff, they had it all on display. All of the tables in Steve's house were filled with stuff. The floor was covered in Burt Reynolds articles and photos they had purchased. All the magazines were laid out. They had a cardboard cut-out of Burt Reynolds.

Handsome to devil.

**Matt:** Burt Reynolds was an actor, but he's more like Evel Knievel. Like, his face was on everything.

**Mike:** At that time, they had about 500 pieces, they had belt buckles, cups, dozens of shot glasses with the Burt Reynolds dinner theater on them. The records, which we've all got multiple copies of.

**Steve:** This is Burt Reynolds album, *Ask Me What I Am.* Like, there's music. It's not really singing. It's more sing talking.

**Mike:** Burt Reynolds puzzle, Burt Reynolds paper doll.

**Steve:** And then the wax figure showed up on eBay.

**Matt:** We were pretty freaking serious about getting it, because that would have been the *Moby-Dick* white whale item to add to the collection. That was like no one else was going to have a full-size wax, Burt Reynolds. Of course, we had no idea where were going to put it, but we were going to get it.

**Steve:** We had these meetings like, “Well, how much can we afford? Could we do $500 a piece?” That's $1,500. How much is a wax figure?

[phone ringing]

**Mike:** I'm back to my regular life, and I'm sitting at home one day, and the phone rings, and it was Matt, and he goes, “We have a job for you.” He said, “The wax museum in Buena Park is going out of business, and everything in there is being auctioned off, and we need you there to buy the wax Burt Reynolds.” There wasn't a, "Oh, that's crazy. This is going to be insane." It was like, "Oh, yeah, I'm there. I got it."

The auction was that Saturday. I had $700 in my pocket, and I drove down to the auction. I remember it was a rainy day, found parking, walked in, and I was nervous as hell because I didn't really know how auctions worked. I had a number. It was on a little ping pong paddle. I knew I was going to raise it up when Burt went up for sale. But I was terrified. I didn't want to scratch my face, because I was afraid I was going to buy something that I didn't want. And let me just also state for the record that if I could have afforded it, I would have bought everything in there.

The first thing I noticed was that it wasn't a Burt Reynolds character that I was familiar with, because he was wearing a cowboy hat, a Western shirt, polyester pants and a sport coat. But it was the perfect likeness of Burt Reynolds in his prime. Perfect., I mean, strikingly similar to a human being. The skin, the eyes, the facial hair, the gaze, it was eerie. So, it was like, "Wow, there's the guy. That's him."

So, I'm at the auction. The auction starts. But as it's drawing nearer and nearer, I'm getting more and more nervous, and I'm starting to shake. I can feel my heart rate going up and my breathing was getting funky. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to have this Burt Reynolds--" And I was driving a two seat like Acura at the time and I'm like, "Is this even going to fit in my car?" [chuckles] I was like, "Oh, now it's going to happen." They say--

**Auction Presenter:** -Up next, wax Burt Reynolds.

**Mike:** And the guy started talking and hands started going up. And within a quarter of a second, I was blown out of the water, like it was done. There was no me holding up my hand and being in this exciting bidding war. It was just done immediately. And someone won the Burt Reynolds, and I walked out of there with my head hung low. I got in my car and I called Matt and I said, "I'm sorry, I didn't get it." And he goes, "Ah, that's all right."

**Matt:** I just didn't think we were going to have that big a problem getting it. Thought it was realistic, like the number we'd put forth.

**Steve:** When we found out we didn't get the wax statue, it was like a kick in the groin. This makes a bunch of trinkets and puzzles and board games and posters and turns it into something real, something that actually means something. We didn't get it and it was like, "Oh, man, this really sucks."

**Mike:** Got in my car, I started driving home and I realized, "Oh, God, I left my $300 back at the auction house." I got off the freeway, and I turned around and went back. I get in line to get my deposit back, and the woman in front of me says, "I'm paying for Burt Reynolds." So, I gave it a couple of seconds of thought and then I was like, I'm going to say something and I went, "I was bidding against you on Burt Reynolds." And she said, "Are you a big fan?" I went, "I'm a tremendous fan, but my friends are psychotic fans. They buy anything and everything that has to do with Burt Reynolds." And she goes, "Well, nice to meet you. Better luck next time,” or whatever. And I'm like, "There's a next time?" She walks away. I get my money back. I turn around, and she's standing there, and she hands me her phone and she said, someone wants to say hi.

I take the phone, and it's Burt Reynolds. And honestly, I remember almost nothing from that conversation. All I was thinking about was, I wish he would hang up, so I can call Matt and tell him I just talked to Burt Reynolds. When I said, “What are you going to do with that wax statue?” He told me, “It's going to Florida State University where I played football, and it's going to stand in theater department.” And I blurted out before he even finished theater department. "My friends and I will drive it there for free. There for free." It just came out of my mouth. It was like some divine power just put these words in me, and I blurted it out. I do think Burt was taken by surprise, because there was silence after that. And then he goes, "Give your information to Kate, and we'll be in touch."

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** When Snap returns, what could better than getting on the phone with a childhood hero? Stay tuned.

Welcome back to Snap Judgment, The Cannonball Run episode. When last we left, Mike wasn't able to win the wax statue of Burt Reynolds for his pals, Steve and Matt, but he may just have set them all up for the delivery of a lifetime. Snap Judgment.

**Mike:** Kate gave me her business card, and I protected that with my life. I was terrified that I was going to lose it, because the only way I had to get in contact with her and Burt Reynolds was with that phone number on that business card. And it was a flimsy little piece of paper, and I was so afraid of losing it. I had to call Matt and Steve and go, "Hey, I just offered that we will drive the wax Burt across the country for Burt Reynolds. Can you guys do that?"

**Matt:** There's absolutely zero way I would have not done it. This is going to be epic. [laughs]

**Steve:** I like to think Burt heard this pitch and was like, "That's hilarious. Sure, why not? Why not for a fan?"

**Mike:** So, I called Kate, “Did a loosey goosey pitch with her about how we're going to drive the wax Burt across the country and we're going to film it all for a documentary?” But in truth, the documentary was just an excuse, so, we seemed more professional. Because it seemed a little too weird that three adult men were going to deliver something for you for free. A little bordering on being groupies seemed a little creepy. So, the documentary seemed like, "Oh, I have a professional reason for doing this." But the truth is, if they would have said no cameras, we would have been like, "No problem. No problem, we're all in and we'll pay for our own tickets. Don't worry about us."

Then Monday rolls around, they weren't in touch. Tuesday rolls around, nobody was in touch. My anxiety was 24/7, all-time high. I wanted this so bad. It was physical pain, “I wanted this. This has to happen.” It felt to me like were doing something that every living being on the planet would have killed to do, and no one knew that this opportunity existed, and tomorrow morning, they're going to run ads in the newspaper saying, "Does anyone want to drive a wax Burt Reynolds across country for Burt Reynolds?" And 10,000 people are going to flood Burt Reynolds inbox with, "I'll do it, and I'll do it better than those three idiots." And we were just going to get pushed out the back door.

I clung to my phone staring at the signal and at the battery level day and night. I slept with my phone. I was not going to miss that call. Wednesday, still hadn't heard. That's when the depression set in. That's when we realized, "Oh, this might not be happening," because according to the rules of the auction house, you had to have it out of there by Saturday or you forfeit your item back to the auction. Thursday, all morning, nothing. And then I get a call from Kate.

[phone ringing]

**Mike:** Hello. And Kate said, "You need to call Burt's lawyer right now." So, I call Burt's lawyer, and he answers the phone and he goes, "We got a contract. I'm going to fax it to you." There was a lot of stuff in there about how we will keep the wax Burt in a box locked at all times in a temperature-controlled environment. It will never leave the box.

**Matt:** When they finally did say yes, it was kind of like, "Holy shit. They said yes? How dumb are they?"

**Mike:** We're off to sign the contracts.

**Steve:** Yeah, we're going to sign the contracts, send them over to Burt's big time showbiz lawyers.

**Matt:** And then we're legally bound to not screw this up. All we saw was his name on it, and we were like, "We're signing a contract with Burt Reynolds." And that when it was really real and you were like, "This is ridiculous. Like, how did we get this?"

**Mike:** We definitely did not know what we were doing. We borrowed cameras. I drove to San Diego. I rented a van down there. I borrowed a box for a Tom-Tom drum from my sister to keep Burt's head in. And we packed it full of *Star Trek* t-shirts. Got this minivan in my garage. Bright and early Saturday morning, Matt and Steve show up and start decorating the van. They brought paint, they put delivering Burt on one side, eastbound and down on the other side.

**Steve:** What are you doing?

**Matt:** Writing delivering Burt. Working title.

**Steve:** We gear up the van. Being fans of these movies from the 1970s with cars and trucks, we thought maybe it'd be like convoy. Maybe there might be a bus of hippies that want to join us on this journey.

**Mike:** Going on this trip, we all genuinely assumed that we are going to have this bond with Burt Reynolds. Here's the guy that made this emotional thing that brought us a sense that we were searching for comfort, safety, freedom, whatever it was, and then we get to do this other thing for that guy.

**Matt:** We're doing an errand for our boyhood idol. How fucking cool is that? It was like being knighted, and we had a quest and we were going to fulfill it no matter what.

**Female Speaker:** Okay, you guys are coming in to pick up Burt Reynolds, right?

**Mike and Steve:** Yeah.

**Steve:** I feel like I'm going to the lights.

[distant talk]

**Mike:** We get to the wax museum. We had all the paperwork from Kate.

**Male Speaker:** Go right that way.

**Steve:** Right this way to get Burt Reynolds?

**Matt:** This way to Burt Reynolds?

**Steve:** [laughs]

**Mike:** We round the corner in the wax museum, and there it was, standing against the wall, Burt Reynolds made of wax. But there it was. Steve said it was more nerves than he had on his wedding day, and I really don't believe that he was kidding.

**Matt:** Really good likeness-- [crosstalk]

**Mike:** I told you it was good, man.

**Matt:** Looks way better, and you're right, the person that did. It looks so different than what you're expecting, but also the same. So, it still had this open shirt that was very 1970s Burt and a cowboy hat, of course, and mustache. But as we found out, the hands were interchangeable and they were Prince Charming's hands.

**Steve:** Oh, my God, I wonder if Burt knows he doesn't have his own hands. Now you guys get me to Florida safe and sound.

**Mike:** The head came off. We got that off. Matt was holding it, coddling it, rocking it back and forth and talking baby talk to it, much to the surprise and possible disgust of the employee that was there to assist us.

**Matt:** You're a big boy. You're a big boy.

**Mike:** Okay, so now we got to carry it out, I guess, huh? All right, I guess I'll start disassembling, Burt.

**Matt:** All right.

**Steve:** [chuckles]

**Mike:** Sorry, I can't help. The body was like a mannequin body, but specially made for the wax museum, because the way it was designed was that the heads would fit right onto any body.

**Steve:** We pick up this Burt Reynolds wax statue, and we're being very careful.

**Matt:** Careful here. Let's get Burt in the car.

**Mike:** You know, we got to put on his hat at some point.

**Matt:** Ifeel bad about that.

**Mike:** Yeah, I feel bad too.

**Steve:** We put it in the minivan, and we close the doors.

**Matt:** Loaded up in trucking. He's bound and down, baby.

**Steve:** It's the feeling you get when they finally let you take your kid home from the hospital. And you close the door and now this is your kid. That's the time where it's like, "Holy crap, I have a baby." I can't believe they let us do this. We pulled it off. Are we actually going to drive to Florida? Should we just drive to our house and just keep it? What is the cut off for grand theft? I think it's $1,000. So, it's definitely it's grand theft at this point.

We're going to drive across country now about 2,600 miles coast-to-coast to Florida. We're going to drop Burt off to his new home, Florida State University.

**Mike:** We pull out of the parking lot and headed off on the open road to Tombstone, because that just seemed like a good idea. And I like *Tombstone*, at least the movie. On the six or seven hours it took to get there, we listened to Burt Reynolds autobiography read by Steve.

**Steve:** Before we start this race. Last night you said you had a line on a doctor.

**Matt:** It felt like we should be doing everything sort of Burt centric. And we wanted to revel in this Burt Reynolds odyssey that we were on and keep that sort of spirit alive that we were manifesting--

**Steve:** *Cannonball. Cannonball. It's not what you do. It's how you do it.* [3 of them singing]

**Steve:** We go to Tombstone, because it's got the same mentality of a Burt Reynolds movie. You know, it's fun. It's got beer drinking and whiskey and cowboy hats and mustaches. So, we drive to Tombstone.

**Mike:** Never drive down the street. Oh, watch out for this lady. I didn't even know if anyone's going to be there. It was bright and early in the morning when we got there. And when we walked into the hot sun and looked at the back of our minivan, right then and there is when we had to do some scrambling and figure out how this is going to.

No, no, don't take the chance.

**Matt:** No, I'm not going to put him down. I was going to put this down.

**Mike:** Yeah, the wax--

**Matt:** And we couldn't leave the head in the car, because it would probably melt.

**Mike:** We grabbed the Burt Reynolds head and a camera and just started walking down the clunkity clunk wooden sidewalks. So, Matt said, "Let's pop in here and just have a drink." As in the morning, we all did a shot. And then a few minutes later, we started talking to some people and someone said, "What do you got in there?" "We've got Burt Reynolds' head." And we started telling the story.

The head is out of the box, at the same time, a resident of Tombstone is walking down the sidewalk and sees Burt Reynolds' head and comes in and loses his mind and says, “You've got meet my friend. He worships Burt Reynolds. He thinks he's Burt Reynolds. He has the exact same mustache. He dresses like Burt Reynolds.” And we said to this guy, "So, where is he? Well, let's go meet him." And he goes, "Ah, that's a problem because he's out in the middle of the desert on a cattle call with 400 head of cattle. He's a cowboy." And we're like, "Okay."

**Male Speaker 2:** Yeah. He's just a huge Burt Reynolds junkie, man. We were sitting at the bar one night and we got into talking about how he liked Burt Reynolds and how he used to have the fire bird and the big golden eagle on the hood.

**Matt:** We were then following somebody pretty deep into the desert like it was in the middle of freaking nowhere. And then off road to a cattle pen. Look at that dog. That dog is fricking rad.

**Steve:** We get to this cattle range. We're surrounded by people who actually have guns on them, real guns, just like cowboys.

**Mike:** And eventually, we come upon like a stereotypical, right out of a movie, one of those wooden fences in the middle of nowhere. And there's a woman there and there's a cow dog, and there's a fire going. And that was the cowboy's wife.

[laughter]

**Matt:** We know we just waited. It was like this weird moment of this dude on a horse driving cattle, wearing a duster and a cowboy hat comes into focus.

**Mike:** And we said, "You want to see him?" He's like, Yeah.” We crack open the back of the minivan. It was a very, very windy day. There you go. That's pretty close, man.

**Male Speaker 3:** Awesome. That is cool as beans right there.

**Mike:** We put the head on the wax Burt, and the hat blew off, and the cowboy, he just caught the hat in midair. Oh, good catch.

**Male Speaker 3:** I got it.

**Matt:** You and Burt both have a same hat.

**Steve:** We started to get this feel through Arizona and New Mexico, like, “Okay, people like what we're doing. Coincidences keep piling up. Now we're heading into Texas, and Texas takes on a whole another sense of we're going to be surrounded by people that dig what we're up to.”

**Mike:** To me, that was kind of magical, that we happened to stumble upon these people that derailed what they were doing, so they could talk to us about Burt Reynolds.

**Male Speaker 4:** You know, he's just a great guy. I don't know about real life, but in the movies, he is. What's he like in real life?

**Mike:** So, you were talking to Burt right now. What would you say to him?

**Male Speaker 4:** I'm sure he would probably have to lead the conversation, man, knowing him. I'd just be sitting down, smoking a cigar, having coffee with him, having a good time. He seems like the kind of guy who'd like to do that, man. Sit down, have some tacos, have a couple of beers. Seems like a good guy.

**Male speaker 5:** Yeah, he's one of the last of the bad boys. The bad boys you got these days, and now you've got guys like George Clooney. They might rob banks, but they just don't have that scruff, that aura about them, like, "Hey, who cares?"

**Female Speaker:** I like just the way he looks, the way he acts, the way he talks, the way he just everything about him. There's nothing not to like about him.

**Mike:** Every person we approached had something to say about Burt Reynolds. And I think if were lugging a 6ft William Shatner across the country, it would not have been the same.

**Steve:** Meeting the fans is a much better experience than actually having met Burt. You're meeting real people. And not that Burt Reynolds isn't a real person, but he's still a movie star.

**Interviewer:** There is this mystery about you when you see somebody on the big screen and you want that mystery to stay on. You don't want them to ever be mortal, you don't want them to be sick, you don't want them to have any problems. They're just somebody that you go and see it.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** After the break, the crew was on the path, ready for anything. But what Burt Reynolds twists of fate await as they venture down south. Snappas, stay tuned.

[somber music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment, The Cannonball Run episode. My name is Glynn Washington. And before the break, Mike, Matt and Steve are realizing their love for Burt Reynolds is shared far and wide throughout the desert. But they're about to learn that this kind of devotion hits a little bit differently in the Lone Star state. Snap Judgment.

**Mike:** We're on this highway in Texas, and Matt says it's 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Talked about getting some food, decided the next place we see we're going to stop. We see a McDonald's sign up ahead and we exit. And across the street from the McDonald's happens to be a barbecue place called country kitchen cooking. We walk into this country kitchen cooking place.

The hostess goes, "Where are you guys from?" "We're from California. We're driving up a wax Burt Reynolds across the country." And she goes, "You know, Burt stayed in the motel next door." We were like, “What?” She goes, "Oh, yeah, Burt Reynolds stayed here next door. It was all the talk of the town. In fact, if you drive down this street about 30 miles, I think he made a movie down there." So, we sit down and for $8 have the best barbecue we've ever had in our lives.

What do you think, Matt?

**Matt:** It's the best barbecue I've ever had. It is definitely the world's best barbecue.

**Steve:** It’s good.

**Mike:** We talk about going 60 miles out of our way to visit this town that we were not familiar with, didn't know existed. We're driving there. As we're pulling into Hallettsville, Texas, both Matt and Steve lose their minds. Oh, my God, this is where he filmed *The Best Little Whorehouse* *in Texas*. And it's a little town square with a courthouse that's surrounded by businesses. It's very small, not many people around. I imagine the population was very tiny. We get out and we decide we're going to set bird up on the courthouse steps.

As we're setting him up on the courthouse steps, we get approached by a guy who looks, frankly, kind of like a cop. I was like, “Oh, God, here comes authority figure dude. He's going to get pissed, or maybe this is disrespectful, like the Alamo, that we're setting up wax Burt on the courthouse steps.” But he's just, "What are you doing?" "Oh, we're driving a wax Burt across the country, and we're just letting him see the sights and we're taking him on a road trip."

**Cop:** I moved here in May.

**Mike:** And he goes, “Yeah, I remember when Burt was here.” And he goes, “I own the radio station, and there was a lot of controversy here because it's a primarily catholic town,” and having a movie called *Best Little Whorehouse* *in Texas* filmed here.

**Cop:** And filming a *Whorehouse* movie in a predominantly catholic town created a little bit of controversy. And so, we covered it, and it helped establish the radio station quite a bit. And then we had a flood shortly thereafter.

**Matt:** They fully believed that, because a movie with the name *Whorehouse* was shot in Halletsville, Texas, that God punished them by flooding the town a couple of years later. So, the guy showed us the high watermark on the wall. They were fully convinced that that was their penance for having let Burt Reynolds shoot *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*.

**Mike:** But we're talking to him. And one by one, women started coming out offices. Okay, are you ready, ladies?

**Female speaker:** Burt? Oh, gosh.

**Mike:** Here, I'll take it.

**Female Speaker:** Is it the young Burt or the old Burt?

**Mike:** It's the young Burt.

**Female Speaker 2:** It's the young Burt.

**Female Speaker 1:** Oh, my God.

**Female Speaker 3:** He looks good.

**Female Speaker:** Oh.

**Female Speaker 4:** Wow. He's hot.

**Female Speaker 5:** Look at his eyes.

**Mike:** And every one of them had a vivid memory for when Burt Reynolds was in town, and they were all 17 and 18 years old.

I know you've got something to say.

**Female Speaker 7:** From the city of Halletsville.

**Female Speaker 8:** Well, I can't say what I'm thinking.

**Mike:** You can say whatever you want. You can say whatever you want.

**Female Speaker 7:** No. No. We love you, Burt. [laughs]

**Steve:** What did you guys think when his new [unintelligible 00:33:24]?

**Mike:** We talked to one of the women and we're like, "Did you try to get to him?" She goes, "Oh, yeah, I tried to find his hotel room. I couldn't find him. We were all trying to get to him." It really made me feel warm and made me smile hearing these women talk about when they were young and Burt Reynolds came rolling into town and how they felt up about it.

[distant female talking]

**Officer:** God damn, it's a Texas county, what the hell is he doing in Arkansas? Let's just see what he's got under the hood.

**Matt:** I don't want anyone else to drive, because I don't trust anyone else to drive. So, that was like, “If they try to pull me off car duty, then I'm going to really be ticked.”

**Officer:** Hi, how are you doing?

**Matt:** We're doing well.

**Officer:** Good. I'm a Texas highway patrol driver. The reason you're being stopped is for your speed. If you would, just [unintelligible [00:34:22] for me with your driver's license please?

**Matt:** Sure.

**Officer:** Yeah. Burt Reynolds in here, what?

**Matt:** Yes, we do.

**Mike:** Yeah.we got a wax Burt.

**Matt:** Can I get out?

**Officer:** Sure.

**Steve:** The great state of Texas decided to pull Matt Luethe over twice for speeding within a 24 hours period.

**Matt:** I just remember that after the second ticket, I was like, "Oh, this could end not well." And that guy didn't want to talk about Burt Reynolds.

You know I think we should have just gone for it and tried to outrun him. That's what Burt would have done.

**Mike:** Matt informed us that we're over the Mississippi, and we're heading into New Orleans. I had never been to New Orleans before, and I was excited even though I didn't take into account that it was six months after Katrina and they had been devastated, which became immediately apparent as we got within city limits. And there were just hundreds and hundreds of destroyed cars and buildings, including their stadium, which was just ripped to hell. It wasn't an, oh, my God, look at that moment. It was a, my heart felt sick.

**Matt:** I don't think were expecting there to still be so much damage from Katrina and so much fallout, like, how bad it actually was. Thousands of cars piled up underneath the interstate, because there was just no other place to put them. And the abandoned buildings that were still there marked with a certain mark on the door. That's where I feel like we read the room a little bit.

**Mike:** We went to the French Quarter. It was grim and it was sad. There was nobody out on the streets. It was empty, man. But there was no people. With the exception of one three-piece group of street musicians, a girl playing one of those washtub things that you hit with the spoons, guy with a guitar and a guy with a fiddle. I said, "I'm going to go talk to those guys." And Matt goes, "I don't think you should. Let's just get in the van and get out of here."

I walk up to these guys and I said, "You don't by chance know *Eastbound & Down*?" And they just launched into it, the Lone Street band in all of the French Quarter in a devastated, torn apart, extremely sad New Orleans, the only people willing to go out and play music with a hat on the ground. They happen to know *Eastbound & Down*. Can you imagine walking up to a street band in a random city at a random time and going, "Hey, do you happen to know this one song from this one movie?" [chuckles] It almost seems like it was set up. Standing on a dreary day in the French Quarter in a ghost town, New Orleans, and watching these guys sell it, that was special. That was pretty special.

**Steve:** Coming into Florida, we have this feeling of separation. It's almost like being in hospice, and grandma's going to fade away and we're going to have to say goodbye. There's nothing you can do about it. It's out of your hands. But there might be something glorious at the end. Burt Reynolds, which would be grandma's ascension, right?

**Matt:** We had heard somewhere along the grapevine that Burt was going to be in contact with us, that he was going to maybe call. No, he hasn't called us. We haven't heard from the lawyers. We haven't heard from--

**Steve:** We have mixed emotions. Two really big mixed emotions, Is Burt going to be there? It feels like more and more, he's not. And then the other thing is, are we going to be able to let go? Do we have to let go?

**Mike:** There was a point in the trip where it felt like it was ours now. And by the time we got to Florida, we really did have a serious discussion about keeping him. We really thought about like, "I don't think we can give it back. I think we need to come up with a plan to keep him," because it felt by that point, we hadn't heard from Burt or his lawyer or Kate, and we felt like we were out there alone and they didn't care.

**Matt:** Now we've become emotionally attached to it. He's our friend and we didn't want to let him go.

**Steve:** It's just like having a really drunk friend that's comatose all the time.

**Matt:** Yeah, but they're still your friend.

**Steve:** Yeah, he's still our friend. We don't want to party without him.

**Mike:** We had a weird bond with wax Burt, and it felt like we shouldn't give him back.

**Steve:** I don't know if I can let it go. Why do we want to give this to the people who don't know the wax statue like I do? All I did was sit in a van with this wax figure for a week, and talk to people about him, and carried him into hotel rooms, and carried him into restaurants and honky tonks and bars. Oh, man, I wish it was like *The Velveteen Rabbit*. You know that story, where the boy loved the Velveteen rabbit so much that it became real. Can you imagine if we had loved this wax statue hard enough that it became real, that would be a magical thing. I would read that book. I'd see that movie. I would live that life.

**Matt:** That, to me, was one of the scariest parts of the trip, because we all considered that like, maybe this is a thing now where we keep it. We drove wax Burt across the country. We should keep him. He's ours.

**Mike:** We get to Tallahassee. That's our final destination. We had a lay of the land. We stayed in a motel that was very close to the university. We were supposed to be up at 06:00 and meet them at the university at 07:00. I think we woke up about 10:00. We pack, and for the last time, Matt comes walking out of the hotel with Burt Reynolds head in a box. Steve comes down the stairs with the body. We're trying to stay upbeat. We're clearly and genuinely sad.

All right, last time, Steve. Last time you have to lift Burt in and out of a hotel.

**Steve:** I don't mind.

**Mike:** Steve puts the body in the back of the minivan for the last time.

**Steve:** He become like a piece of us. He's one of the group.

**Mike:** I don't think he will admit it, or maybe he will, but he definitely started crying. Like, got tears welled up in his eyes. We made fun of him, and then we started getting teary eyed.

We have Burt. I think in our hearts, we actually thought freaking Burt Reynolds was going to fly in for this, and he's going to be there.

**Steve:** Weshow up. I still think Burt is going to come. I still think there's a chance we can keep the statue. There was a moment where Matt was like, "You're an idiot if you think Burt Reynolds is showing up now." Like, "Dude, stop giving up hope." “There's a chance.” He's like, "Don't be stupid."

**Matt:** Yeah. Jesus Christ, he's not going to be here. No, he's not going to be here.

**Mike:** What if he is?

**Matt:** There's the careful who you idolize part of celebrity. They may not be there at the end of that trip when you drop off their wax statue. This isn't as meaningful to them as it is to you.

**Mike:** It's crazy. I'm an actor and I play these parts. The greatest disappointment in life sometimes is when you meet an actor and he doesn't measure up to all these things that you want him to be, because it's almost impossible to be all those things.

We're here.

**Matt:** We got here. Florida's favorite son has come home.

**Mike:** We get there. We meet the contact at the university, who clearly, clearly had been tasked with this and had no emotional investment and didn't even care. Here's your wax Burt.

**Kate:** Oh, he's so much smaller.

**Mike:** Traveled all that way. I know it's invaluable. So, be very careful with him. It was a very tense moment. There was an underlying mood of just pure, unbridled, dark sadness.

**Kate:** Okay, well, what can I help you with?

**Matt:** We have emotional problems.

**Kate:** [laughs]Yeah, with me too. Okay.

**Matt:** So, they take us in this ice-cold metal door into this cold hallway. We get in a cold elevator. The door was cold, the building was cold, and they finally bring us to a room that was probably a dark room at some point. She just opens it up and goes, "That's where he goes." And so, we took wax Burt, our friend that we drove across the country with, and we put him in that room, and she closed the door and it was just this loud clump-clump. That sound of the door closing and locking with wax Burt on the other side and us leaving was not a good feeling.

**Matt:** A2108, dark room, the final resting place of the movie land, Burt Reynolds wax statue.

**Mike:** Really?

**Matt:** As far as our journey goes.

**Mike:** As far as our journey goes.

**Steve:** There's no Burt Reynolds. There's no call from Burt Reynolds. I thought maybe he would call, like, "Hey, guys, I couldn't be there, but I wanted to tell you, great job. Can't believe you did it. What an epic adventure. You did exactly what I would have done. You went Eastbound and Down, and you delivered me to the promised land." I don't need to get emotional about it, but it was shitty to have this adventure and then just have it be like, "You're over. Okay. See you, guys."

**Mike:** And then something happened. We get home. I don't want to think about it. I don't want to talk about it. I'm exhausted. I feel like I'm beaten up. I just want to get back into my normal life. And then my phone rang, and it was Kate, Burt's girlfriend, the person who bought the wax Burt. I guess I thought she was going to congratulate us or something. And all she said to me was, "You really fucked up." I went, "What are you talking about?" Then I got defensive, because maybe I was a little bit filled with resentment that Burt never called, that she never called, that nobody checked on us, that nobody seemed to care. That might be why I went on the defense. And I went, "Kate, I go, I have video proof that that thing got there safe. I have video proof of it being locked in a closet the last time we touched it." She goes, "No, that's not where you screwed up." She goes, "You got the wrong Burt. We wanted the deliverance Burt." We got the wrong Burt. We got the wrong Burt. Fuck. This is giving me a-- I can't talk about this ever again after this.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** A big, huge thank you to Mike Carano, Matt Leuthe and Steve Millunzi for sharing their experiences with the Snap. Mike originally told this story in conversation with Christine Blackburn on the Storyworthy podcast. And you can find that link and listen to more great conversations from our friends at Storyworthy on our website, *snapjudgment.org.*

And now, now I know everybody's wondering what went wrong? How did that trio end up with the wrong statue of Burt Reynolds? So, we got Steve to shed a little insight on the mix up.

**Steve:** Burt Reynolds had two wax statues that were dedicated to him when he was one of the biggest movie stars in the world. The Florida Wax Museum had the deliverance Burt Reynolds wax statue. Buena Park had The Cowboy Bandit Burt Reynolds wax statue. He either forgot that he had two or just assumed that the one he wanted was the Deliverance Burt and got confused as to where it was.

**Glynn:** But our guys, they aren't giving up the chase, Snappas. Steve is hot on the trail, but could use your help.

**Steve:** There was an alumnist at Florida State who we heard took the statue to basically like a rumpus room, and would have alumni come and have drinks and play pool and have it there as a conversational piece. And my understanding is that guy passed away. I guess what I would need to do is contact his family and be like, "Was there a will? What did y'all do with that statue?"

**Glynn:** So, if you, dear Snappa, have any information of the whereabouts of the movie land wax museum, gentlemen, cowboy Burt Reynolds statue, please let us know. We'll pass on the update to Snap Nation, because inquiring minds want to know.

The original score for that story was by Dirk Schwarzhoff. It was produced by Bo Walsh.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Where else? Nowhere else. The Snap Judgment storytelling universe listen to the dark forces, the deep state, the smoking man, the Illuminati, they don't want you to know that if you missed even a moment of the Snap Judgment storytelling podcast, it's available right now. You can fight back against a new world order with the Snap. Wherever you get your podcast, get the Snap podcast.

Snap is brought to you of a team that throws the man off their trail by assiduously following traffic regulations and posted speed limits, except for the uber producer, Mr. Mark Ristich. He thinks that putting aluminum foil on your back bumper scrambles the surveillance systems. There's Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Anna Sussman, Renzo Gorrio, John Fecile, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, Bo Walsh, Marisa Dodge, David Exumé and Regina Bediako

And this is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you could get a van with a few of your buddies, go on a long road trip solving mysteries. And whenever y'all have to split up to search for clues, you could always get stuck with the dog, [barking] and you would still, still not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

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