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[Intro]

Joe-Hi there. Welcome to a special short episode of Thinking Sideways. I'm Joe, joined as always by...

Steve-Steve.

J-And...

D-Devin. And, um, as some of you know, we've had an intern for a little while, and we are really confident in his abilities as a podcaster at this point...

J-Yeah, maybe. We'll find out.

D-...so we've decided to invite him to this, like, very short roundtable and hopefully it'll work out and we'll see where it goes from here. So, do you want to introduce yourself?

Justin [from Generation Why podcast]-I'm Justin. How're you doing tonight, Steve, Devin, Joe?

J-Yeah, doing quite well.

D-Pretty good.

J-Yeah.

D-You know, so...

S-That was weird. It's like he hasn't met us before or something.

D-It is kind of weird (D and J laughing).

S-Well, whatever.

D-Yeah. No, he's met us before. He's our intern.

J-Yeah. So welcome, Justin.

D-Yeah, so welcome to this roundtable. Joe, it's your episode, so...

J-Ok, well yeah, let's talk about this.

D-Yeah.

J-This is one that's been bouncing around the internet for a while.

S-Courtesy of Unsolved Mysteries.

J-Yeah, yeah. Unsolved Mysteries the TV show did do an episode on this one. It's the crew of the Casie Nicole. What happened to them? So, our story begins April 11, 1990, or maybe April 10<sup>th</sup> or maybe April 12<sup>th</sup> because I've seen all three dates in different accounts, and I decided to go with April 11<sup>th</sup> because the date makes the most sense when you add up the days of the whole account.

D-Ok.

S-You're, you're using math again.

J-Yeah, I know. I know. Count to four, I can do that. Yeah (Devin laughing). So four men boarded the Casie Nicole, which was a 34-foot fishing boat. The four were Nathan Neesmith, his brother Billy Jo Neesmith, his nephew Keith Wilkes, and Franklin Brantley, aka Frank, who the Neesmiths had known for a long time. All of them lived in Darien, Georgia.

D-Ok.

S-How old were these guys?

J-Uh, let's see. Nathan 32, Billy Joe 23, Keith 18, and Frank 23.

S-So they, most of them had been on the sea for a number of years at least.

J-Yeah.

S-Ostensibly.

J-Yeah, except for Keith. I don't think Keith had spent a whole lot of time, you know, uh, yeah. But what they were doing is they were going to go out for a seven day fishing trip, and I assume this was professional, and not just for pleasure. Although, at the same time, on a 34-foot boat, I'm not sure how many fish you can hold on something like that. Five days later, April 16, 1990, Nathan Neesmith was found floating in a large wooden box about 20 miles east of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. The others were missing. The Coast Guard kicked off a massive air and sea search with help from local private boat owners and commercial fishermen. The Casie Nicole was found that night, April 16<sup>th</sup>, about 45 miles off the coast. But all they found of the other three men was a life vest and a sleeping bag about five miles from where Nathan was rescued. Two days later the search was called off, and Billy Jo, Keith, and Frank have never been seen since. All right, so Justin, you did just about all the research on this one (Devin laughing), and of course, this is your maiden podcast voyage here, so I, we've been thinking that maybe you should present this mystery.

D-You, you cool with that? You ready?

Justin-Yeah, yeah.

D-Awesome.

Justin-So, going back to the beginning, the Casie Nicole left Darien...

J-Uh huh.

Justin-...at zero dark thirty on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Almost 24 hours later, something went wrong with this boat. According to news reports at the time, it could have capsized. Some internet sources say it was taking on water. Between the news and the internet, I'm not sure which one we can trust here. Flip a coin, it doesn't really matter. But it's a 34-foot boat, so capsizing? Eh...

J-Seems a bit unlikely, doesn't it?

D-Yeah.

S-That's a problem.

Justin-Yeah.

J-Although it might, it seems like it maybe did. I don't know how the hell that happened.

Justin-Well, if it took on water it could have capsized (laughing).

J-I suppose.

Justin-So, maybe both.

D-Eh.

Justin-They were about 65 miles off shore, and Nathan said that he'd got up around three-thirty, four am in the morning, started the engine and started driving to somewhere to go fishing.

D-And they, that's a thing, right? Like when you go fishing out, it's a, you just go out early, right?

J-Yeah, I think so.

D-It's not unusual that somebody would be awake at that time?

J-Nah, I don't think so.

S-No, that's kind of standard.

D-Ok. Just want to make sure.

Justin-They're like surfers.

D-It's not suspicious that he was awake at that time? Ok.

Justin-He noticed the boat was heavy with maneuvering, and it wasn't going over the waves, it was kind of plowing through them, because it was just not maneuvering as well.

D-That's not great.

J-Not when you're 65 miles out.

D-No.

J-Yeah.

Justin-He woke up his brother, Billy Jo, and told him to wake up the others. So Billy Jo went to the bow of the boat where Franklin and Keith were sleeping and noticed that there was a foot of water in the cabin in between the bunks.

J-That's not good news.

D-Really not good.

S-Well, that would explain why it was plowing through the waves instead of going over them.

D-Uh huh. It's not so buoyant anymore.

J-I think it's time at this point to turn on the bilge pumps.

D-Yeah (laughing).

Justin-So, they turn those on, and it, they don't appear to be working.

J-Oops.

D-(Gasps).

Justin-So they, recently the boat had been pulled out of the water for maintenance, some repairs. Maybe those repairs were done by a family member...

J-Yeah (laughing).

Justin-...who's not charging, I don't know.

D-Uh huh.

J-Somebody forgot to reconnect the bilge pumps, maybe? Oopsie.

D-Hmm.

S-Always plug it back in (laughing).

J-Yeah.

Justin-So they go into panic mode. They start calling out maydays because, well...

J-Well, yeah (laughing).

D-On the radio, or just, like, yelling?

Justin-Well...(Joe laughing). Well, I don't think the radio's underwater yet (laughing).

D-Ok, so on the radio. Got it, yeah.

Justin-This isn't Jaws, where, you know, they bust the radio (Devin laughing). The brothers, Nathan, Keith and Frank, they're doing a bucket line trying to get that water out. Billy is not getting any response on the radio. Maybe the radio wasn't working, maybe they're too far out and there's just nobody around.

J-Well, it's four in the morning, so maybe nobody was awake.

D-Yeah.

Justin-It's possible. And the engine quits, possibly because it's taken on water and is flooded.

J-Uh huh.

Justin-So now they're losing the battle, and they go to plan B, which is their life raft. And the life raft sucks (laughing).

J-Yeah, that's what I hear (Steve laughing).

S-I was going to say, the life raft is there to save your life, but this doesn't seem to be the case.

D-Well, we've talked about this on this show before. My extensive experience on cruise ships...

J-Yeah.

D-You know, a life raft is like your very last chance, right? I mean, you don't want to do that. And then this one, it sounds like, was, um...

J-Subpar.

D-Yeah. Maybe not in the best condition.

Justin-And it only sat two, not four.

D-Uh huh.

Justin-So...

J-Yeah.

Justin-That's, you know, that's like Titanic with...

J-Yeah.

Steve-Leonardo...

Justin-Leonardo in the water (laughing).

J-It's like, you know, when you go to the sporting goods store, and they say, they advertise a two-man raft, and it's big enough for one man?

D-Uh huh.

J-And a four-man is big enough for two?

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. I'm sure they bought this in good faith thinking, "Hey, it says four-man raft."

D-Uh huh.

J-But they're all...

D-Or it's like tents, right?

J-Yeah. Exactly.

D-You get a tent that, like, sleeps six people and you're like, "I can fit three in here, maybe."

J-Exactly. Yep, divide by two.

D-Uh huh.

Justin-They go to the raft, and two of them are in the boat, the other two are kind of hanging on, sitting on the rim (laughing). Uh yeah, but they all got their vests on.

D-That's good.

Justin-So the sun's coming up now cause they've been battling this whole deal and...

J-In darkness, yeah.

Justin-Yeah. And so now they think, "Well, things are getting better, you know. We're going to get discovered because the sun's out." But their raft is leaking (Devin laughing).

J-Oopsie.

Justin-Luckily a hatch cover is drifting by, so they grab it and tie it to the raft, trying to give it extra floatation. Now that the sun is out, they could see the Casie Nicole, and it hasn't completely sunk, you know. And that's kind of like, what was the other boat thing you guys did? Where it was like the unsinkable boat...

J-Oh yeah, the Joyita.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, yeah.

Justin-Yeah. You know, it's like that.

D-Joe's favorite.

J-Yeah, yeah.

Justin-It doesn't sink all the way. It's just sort of submerged.

J-Uh huh.

Justin-And looking creepy.

J-Well, and particularly if it did capsize, and we, you know, there's an air pocket in there.

Justin-Yeah.

J-If it capsized.

D-That'll help keep it afloat a little bit.

J-Absolutely.

D-I mean, part of it.

J-Yeah.

D-Obviously you don't want to be on the deck when it capsizes, but maybe you can climb back on.

J-Uh huh.

D-Cause it'll still float.

J-Yeah.

Justin-They see the capsized, half-sunken boat off in the distance. Now, open water, can you tell how far away it is?

J-Uh, yeah, I don't know. It's, uh, in accounts of this, it seems to me, it seems like some say close by, some say three, four miles away.

Justin-Can you see it if it's three or four miles away?

J-I don't know.

D-I don't think so.

J-I think so.

D-I don't know.

S-I think you have an idea that it's there. You can see something, but you may not have it exactly.

J-Yeah.

D-That, also, it seems like a long way to drift.

J-It really does, doesn't it?

D-Unless the current is really strong.

J-Well, unless, or if there's a lot of wind.

D-Yeah. I guess maybe if, like, the tide is going in or out pretty heavily.

J-Yeah. Well, I think tide affects both objects equally, but if there's a lot of wind, then obviously the life raft, as a higher profile, is going to be affected a lot more by the wind.

D-Do you, have you seen, have any of you seen pictures of the life raft? Do you know what kind of life raft it was?

J-No. I've seen pictures on the web, but I'm not sure if they're not just screencaps from the Unsolved Mysteries episode.

D-Uh huh.

J-I don't know...

D-When they...

S-I actually think they are.

J-I think they are too, yeah.

D-Yeah. Ok. Cause you know there are those life rafts that they have on, like, bigger ships that are contained in those capsules, which you might have on a smaller ship as well, that have the covering on top of them. They look like big pyramids, right?

J-Uh huh, yeah.

D-Versus the ones that are just like little dinghies.

J-Uh huh.

S-I don't think that on this fishing boat in 1990 that's what they were springing for if they were just out of repairs.

D-Well, I don't think that they're, like, that much more expensive. You're making a face that makes me

think they are. Ok, I take it back (laughing).

J-Yeah.

D-Ok. So, ok, you're right. Yeah.

J-Or somebody's right, I don't know.

D-Somebody.

Justin-Well, here's what Nathan said. "It looks like it was maybe three or four miles from us. I said I don't know what kind of chance we got, but at least maybe one of us can make it to the boat and get some kind of help. Well that's what I struck out to do." Not really sure what kind of sense that makes, but...

J-Not, it doesn't seem to, really (Devin laughing).

S-Wait, I have a question here, wait. So he swam?

Justin, Joe and Devin-Yeah.

S-Did they not have oars in their life raft?

D-No, you don't.

J-I don't think so.

D-That's why I'm saying it was this, like, inflatable thing. These little life rafts, they come in this, like, little pod. They're not that big. They're, you know, maybe, like, two feet, three feet wide. And you just pull a thing and they just inflate out. They don't have oars and stuff in them. They have, like, emergency rations and, like, a little water, and a, like, light. But that's, I mean, that's what I imagine was one this ship had was something inflatable.

J-Yeah.

D-Likely out of a pod, not something that's like an old, like, from Titanic, right? With the wooden oars and everything.

S-A wooden gunboat? (Laughing).

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah. No, I don't think it's like that. They don't have oars usually on things like that, because if you have oars, it's, like, a lot of extra room.

S-I guess the reason that I'm wondering this is that if, if something popped up next to the life raft, and they're tying it to the boat to get extra floatation, it seems like there would be other flotsam that they could have grabbed and used to paddle.

J-I don't know.

D-That was a big word.

S-It was. Flotsam. What about jetsam?

D-Yeah (laughing).

J-Yeah. I like jetsam.

D-I mean it's, yeah. I, maybe, but maybe not. I mean, if they were actually three or four miles away from the wreckage, there wouldn't have been probably.

J-I just don't get it, you know? I mean I really don't get it. Some of these, some parts of this story don't make a lot of sense to me.

D-Yeah.

S-I'm in the same boat as Joe, no pun intended.

J-Yeah.

D-Ha ha ha, pun intended.

S-That's why I'm asking this question.

D-Pun, pun intended.

Justin-I think it's because they're on a rubber life raft, and not a wooden one.

D-Hm, uh huh.

J-Yeah.

Justin-So once this thing deflates...

D-They're done.

Justin-...or takes on water, they're in the water.

J-They're kind of screwed.

Justin-So why not go to something that's somewhat floating as opposed to sinking.

D-Uh huh.

J-Absolutely, yeah. And yeah, if you can climb up on the hull of this boat, you know, then that's a better place to be than immersed in the ocean, right?

D-And, and you kind of think the ship might, I guess probably there's some thought process that the ship might be salvageable, parts of it at least. You know?

J-Yeah.

Justin-But to your guys' point, they don't know how far away this thing is.

D-Yeah.

Justin-They can't tell. I mean, it's like when you're walking down the strip in Vegas. That casino looks really close, and then by the time you get there, you're dead.

J-Uh huh, exactly.

D-Uh huh, yeah.

J-That happens with me all the time (all laughing).

Justin-So Nathan sets out and claims that he spent many hours, like seven, swimming to...

D-No he didn't!

J-That's a long time.

D-I'm sorry. I mean, I believe he claimed that he did, but I don't believe...

S-It probably felt like it.

D-I mean, it was probably, like, thirty minutes.

J-He probably, he probably took some breaks. I think he was wearing a PFD and when you...

D-A PFD?

J-Yeah. Life vest.

D-Really? Ok yeah.

J-Yeah. And have you ever...

S-A personal floatation device.

J-Have you ever tried swimming in a PFD?

D-Yeah. It's impossible.

J-It creates a huge amount of drag.

D-You have to do a backstroke.

J-Yeah, that's one way to do it.

D-They teach you a special stroke, actually, how to do.

J-Oh do they really?

D-Yeah, it's like this.

J-Yeah. Oh, ok. I need, heh, she's doing things with her hands (S and D laughing).

D-No, it is. It's like that. You lay on your back, and then you kind of like, because you don't exert very much energy.

J-Uh huh.

D-And you, like, kind of kick with your feet and then, like, I don't know. I don't even know how to describe this motion.

S-It's a hula dance.

D-It's kind of a hula dance with your arms.

J-Uh huh.

D-It exerts, like, almost no energy, and since you're laying on your back, your head's above the water, and you get to go...I'm belaboring a point, I'm sorry.

J-So yeah, you're probably right. That's what he did all day.

D-But he probably didn't do that. He probably was trying, like, to swim a breaststroke or something.

J-Probably. And I'm sure he took lots of breaks.

D-Yeah.

J-Right? He...

D-Seven hours seems excessive though, doesn't it?

J-It really does.

Justin-We can check his time clock (Devin laughing).

J-Yeah.

Justin-He says that it took him seven hours, but when you're doing something crazy like that it might take longer.

J-Something stressful like that.

D-Or less.

Justin-He said when he arrived it was just before dark, so it depends on when he set out. That could have been seven or more hours.

D-Yeah, you're right. I guess that's true,

J-Yeah, it could have been.

D-But again, this is from him, right? Well, no, I mean, why would he lie about that? You're right.

J-Well, there's, you know...I, who knows?

Justin-So he spends the night. He makes it and he spends the night on the Casie.

J-So he climbs up onto the hull and just spends, drapes himself over it and spends the night clinging to the hull?

Justin-Yeah.

J-Yeah. Sounds like a comfortable sleep.

Justin-Leonardo style.

J-Yeah (laughing).

Justin-That's when things get a little strange, though. He's hanging on and he sees a freighter.

J-This is the next morning?

Justin-Yeah, yeah.

J-Oh.

Justin-So he hangs on all night, and the next morning he sees a freighter coming by, and it stops three or four times and circles around. And that kind of looks like it might be picking up people, in my mind, so, you know.

J-Uh huh.

S-In the vicinity of where he expects the life raft to be.

Justin-Exactly. That's where he swam from.

J-That's kind of where his buds are.

Justin-But, you know, did the currents take them away? I mean...

J-Did the sharks eat them already?

Justin-Yeah. This is his own best judgment.

D-Ok.

Justin-He says, "It looked like it made four stops, maybe five. And each time it would stop and circle, and it was in the direction where my mates were, so I figured it had stopped to pick them up." This went on for three hours and then the freighter sailed off.

D-That seems excessive.

J-A long time.

Justin-You've been on a cruise ship, right?

D-Yeah.

Justin-How long does it take to dock that stupid thing?

D-Fifteen minutes.

Justin-Eh...

D-No, no, no, I was on a cruise ship for a long time. It's like fifteen minutes (Justin laughing). It's, uh, ships...

Justin-Now think if that cruise ship had to circle before...

D-You know, the thing is, is ships are much faster than people think they are.

J-They can be.

D-I mean, they can be, you're right. And I guess if you've got something delicate in the water, you're going to be careful around it, right?

J-Hm.

D-If you've got these people who are kind of floating, you're probably not going to circle them as fast as you possibly can (laughing).

S-Full steam ahead! (Joe laughing).

D-Yeah, probably not going to do that cause you might suck them into your engines, like dolphins.

J-Well, you know...

D-You know? (Laughing).

J-Well maybe what they actually were doing is they weren't rescuing them. Maybe what they were actually, they're just sadistic and they were actually...

D-This is theories. This is theories.

J-Oh, ok.

D-I'm sorry.

J-They were just trying to suck them into their screws, one by one.

D-Yeah, let's not do that. No, we got to wait for theories.

J-Ok.

D-Right?

Justin-So, a large box floated by Nathan, and it popped up to the surface, and he thought it was the, a bait box. We're thinking it's a bait box, and...

D-It's like a wooden box, right?

Justin-Yeah.

J-Yeah.

Justin-So, uh, other people say it's an engine cover.

J-Yeah, nobody knows.

D-Yeah.

Justin-Yeah. He climbed onto it, and this was his new home. This is his life now (D and S laughing).

J-Yeah. For the next few days.

Justin-So, a few days. A few days without food and water and no sunscreen. He's hurting.

J-Uh huh.

D-So I have a question, actually. So he climbed off of this hull, which was still floating, it wasn't sinking still, right?

J-Yeah.

D-It was in it's, kind of, final resting state, right?

J-Yeah. It wasn't going anywhere.

D-So he must have assumed that the box would give him a better chance of getting to land? Is that the sense that people have?

J-I guess.

Justin-I'm thinking the Jaws end scene, when they can kind of kick and swim with the little floatation thing.

D-Ok.

Justin-As opposed to just sitting on...

D-Even though he had a floatation device on him? He needed more?

Justin-Uh...

S-One word, sharks.

D-What's a small bait box going to do more than a floatation device?

S-It's a wooden box that you're sitting inside of.

D-Ok, ok. I can conceptualize that, sure.

J-That's what, you know, it sounds really uncomfortable to be in this box, and it was a sizable box. I mean, three or four feet long at least, right? But it's got to be more comfortable than clinging to an overturned boat. It's got to be a more comfortable ride.

D-Yeah. Ok.

J-Although you still, it's regrettable that he didn't happen to have like a, you know, see like a line from the boat that he could have tied the box off to so that he wouldn't be separated from the boat.

D-Uh huh.

J-That would have been nice.

D-Uh huh.

Justin-Yeah, I just assumed that it was something that he could kind of paddle in...

D and J-Yeah.

Justin-...and move.

J-More maneuverable than the, yeah.

D-Than the hull of a sunken ship.

S-Or easily sit in and take a nap.

J-Yeah.

D-Uh huh. Ok, all right. I'm on board.

Justin-So his ordeal continued until Monday the 16<sup>th</sup>, until 9 am. And he was spotted by a passing boat. He was in really bad shape. Dehydrated, sunburned, and I'm sure, you know, if he had taken on any sea water, that makes you a little crazy.

J-Yeah.

D-Probably some hypothermia in there too, right?

J-Oh yeah.

Justin-Yeah. This is sea water.

D-Uh huh.

Justin-So he went to the hospital and he stayed there for several days. He reported hearing voices while drifting at sea that kept him alive, because...

J-They were encouraging him.

Justin-Yeah.

D-Yeah. That's nice of them.

Justin-Exactly. I mean, what else are you going to do?

J-Yeah.

S-Hallucinating! (Devin laughing).

Justin-As for Billy Jo, Keith, and Frank, they, he assumed they were picked up by the freighter, but they disappeared. And he hadn't heard from them.

J-They were never seen again.

Justin-Yeah, not reported that they were rescued.

J-So, that's kind of strange that these guys were picked up by a freighter, but then never seen again.

D-Yeah. That's weird.

J-Yeah, that's a little weird. Yeah.

D-I don't like it.

J-Yeah.

D-There's nothing else.

J-But, it turns out that there's more to the story. Justin, thanks for your presentation. You did awesome.

Justin-No problem.

J-Well, actually...

D-You're a pretty good intern.

S-Three and a half gold stars.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-Out of twenty.

J-Yeah, exactly (S and J laughing). Yeah.

Justin-Two star Yelp review (Devin laughing).

J-Yeah. So Nathan is back on dry land, and here's where things get a little hinky. Months after the accident, Nathan's sister, Anita, got a phone call from a person speaking Spanish. She couldn't understand anything that he said other than her name and her phone number. Everything else was unintelligible. Here's a quote from her, "All this person would keep saying was repeating our phone number and saying our name, and that's all. And you know, we just kept saying 'Hello, hello' and it just cut off." Unquote. That's from Unsolved Mysteries. And around...

S-Which is entirely reliable.

J-Oh, of course.

S-As we've learned.

D-Yeah, Steve's favorite thing, mostly. Yeah.

J-Yeah. At roughly around the same time, the owner of the Casie Nicole, whose name was Doug Tyson, got a similar call. And this is something I was trying to find out, by the way. I was just curious if they had actually towed the Casie Nicole to shore and salvaged it, and I did a little side research...

S-I never got that, I never saw anything that said that they did.

J-But, they must have. You don't just leave stuff like that laying out in the ocean where it could be a navigation hazard.

S-Well, the Coast Guard would go out and scuttle it.

J-They could maybe have scuttled it, I wasn't really sure. So I...

Justin-That's a low priority for them.

J-Probably. Yeah. I actually called the local Coast Guard station and asked them, and they, uh...

S-Of course you did.

D-Didn't respond?

J-Well, yeah. I talked to this ensign and he said, "Well, I can't really tell you. What I'll do is pass it up the chain of command."

D-And it never happened.

J-And it never called back.

D-Yeah.

J-And then I called back a couple weeks later and I talked to a petty officer who told me all their logs from that far back would have been sent to the National Archives...

D-This sounds familiar!

S-This sounds really familiar!

D-Really familiar!

J-Yeah, it really does (laughing).

S-What the hell?!

J-Yeah. And of course, that was 21, or excuse me, not 21, 26 years ago, so nobody around there would remember it, so you know, I'm out of luck. I called a reporter at the local paper, and she didn't know about it either, so.

D-Did you Google Street View?

J-Yeah, yeah, Street View for the middle of the ocean? Yeah, I did.

S-It's blue.

J-Yeah.

D-Oh.

S-Ish.

J-Yeah, yeah. Ok, back to the owner of the Casie Nicole. So he got a similar phone call from a man speaking Spanish, and again, the only thing that Tyson could understand was his own name and his phone number being spoken to him. It wasn't until about six weeks later that they put two and two together. Doug Tyson was visiting the Neesmiths, and Anita mentioned that she'd gotten this strange phone call from a guy in Spanish, speaking Spanish. And that's when Doug and his wife remembered

his strange phone call.

D-Magically remembered.

J-Uh huh.

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. Well, the calls went on. Doug Tyson got two more similar calls and Anita got three more, in 1990 and 1991. So on March 6, 1991 Anita received a call in which a man spoke one sentence in English. Quote, "I am bringing them home." Unquote. And that was, he did have accented language, by the way. Spanish accent.

D-Hm.

J-That was the last phone call.

D-Where'd you find that?

J-I found it at, uh...

D-Websleuths?

J-Uh, Websleuths, several different places, actually. And there was actually a bit of difference, as always, between them. I did find them, on one, I can't remember the name of the website, but it was a forum. And it was hilarious, what one of these guys said, which is after hearing about the phone calls, he says, "Well, why didn't they learn Spanish?"

S-Are you effing kidding me?

J-Yeah. "Why didn't they..." Yeah, yeah. You get a phone call or two from somebody speaking Spanish, well, I've got to go enroll at the local community college and start learning Spanish.

D-Ugh, that's awful.

S-Because I'm going to totally remember what I heard in a language I don't know.

D-Uh huh.

J-Well, no. You should learn Spanish because the guy might call back.

D-He might.

J-Yeah.

D-Duh.

J-Yeah.

S-Ugh.

Justin-There's Rosetta Stone.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, there's Rosetta Stone. I think the better thing to do is put, just get a tape recorder and tape record, and if the guy calls, tape record the calls and then go find somebody who speaks Spanish.

D-Yeah.

J-That would make more sense.

D-That makes way more sense.

J-Yeah, yeah, yeah. And learn how to say, in Spanish, "tell me more." And then, that's it. That's all you need to know.

Justin-So what do you guys think of these phone calls? Do you think these were valid or a con artist or...

J-Or pranks.

Justin-Or pranks.

D-Or even existed.

Justin-Yeah, what do you guys think?

J-I, you know, actually I believe that the calls happened. But personally, it's possible that they didn't happen, but I mean, prank calls happen. Wrong numbers happen. It could have all been a misunderstanding. I mean, it could have had nothing to do with the disappearance of the crew of the Casie Nicole.

Justin-It seemed they were all a little connected, though. Since they called...

J-Yeah.

D-And it is, I mean we talk about this a lot, right? With the, like, that's a lot of coincidences.

J-It is, yeah, it would be a coincidence, that's true.

D-So, I mean, I don't know. I guess I don't put a lot of stock into them. Especially since the only real way that we know about them is online forums.

J-Uh huh, yeah.

D-Um...

S-That is a big issue.

J-Yeah.

D-It's a big issue for me.

J-Well...

D-But I do, I think they're interesting. That's probably the most intriguing part of the whole mystery.

J-Well, it does appear though, from the Unsolved Mysteries thing, that uh, that the family did, or at least they say they received these calls.

S-Let me, let me try and run with it this way, then. Somebody calls who English is not their first language.

J-Uh huh.

S-So, let's say they get the number out of the phone book for unrelated reasons.

J-Uh huh.

S-So they're able to repeat the phone number that they have just dialed, in English, and because they're reading it, they can say the name in a very, but it's obviously accented.

J-Uh huh.

S-They could be saying, "Is this, you know, the, what is the time and the date? What is the time and the date?" Cause you know, there used to be that phone number that you call and it would say, "The time and date is..." I mean, it could be something as simple as...

D-But why would they be saying that?

S-But...I'm making a very blatantly stupid point about the fact that they could have been asking something very generic and innocuous, but only had bits that these people who didn't understand a relatively thick accent were only able to make out, very small bits of information they were able to decipher.

D-But again, it's a huge coincidence. I mean, it's a huge coincidence, right, that the people whose family disappeared in this boating accident happened to be the phone number that this person who didn't really speak English called.

S-Ok, what town, Joe, what town did this thing launch from?

J-Darien, Georgia.

S-Darien, Georgia. Ok.

D-That's not, like, exactly a large town.

S-But it's entirely possible that a dozen other people got several phone calls of very similar natures, but didn't report it because they're like, "Somebody called and I couldn't understand them and I hung up on them."

J-Yeah, it could have been. It's possible that it could have been somebody calling up and saying, "Hey, would you like your gutters cleaned?"

D-It's certainly possible, but I also do think that it is, it's hard to just write off as "it was the wrong number."

S-I'm not in disagreement, but I'm not willing to give it that much stock just knowing that.

D-That's fair, yeah.

J-It's really hard to say because if they were calling them, they were calling them to either extort money from them, say we want money for the return of your loved ones. But in that case, why would they stop calling? Because...

D-Because they died.

J-Well, because they died, or because they must have realized at some point that there was a language barrier there.

D-Hm.

J-You know? So I need to find myself somebody who can speak English to present our extortion demands. And they never really got around to doing that, so maybe they got bored with the whole project and they decided to just, you know, kill them.

D-I also don't have the sense that that family had a whole lot of money.

J-No.

D-You know? It's not like you could be like, well, they're millionaires.

J-Actually, I tracked down Nathan on Facebook and on the interwebs, and he is living, uh, you know, he is not living high on the hog. Let's just say that.

S-Well, here's my other question, though. Regardless of their status in financial, ok, if six weeks later he says, "Hey, so it's weird. I got this phone call." "Oh, that's weird, I got the same phone call."

J-"We'd better learn Spanish."

S-Or, "Hey, let's call the phone company and see if they can tell me where the phone call came from?"

J-Uh huh.

S-Did that ever happen?

J-No.

S-Ok.

Justin-If you're missing a family member and you're thinking this is connected, you might follow it up.

J-Yeah.

Justin-But on the same token, why didn't they call back? Well, does the Nigerian email scammer keep, you know, responding to you? No.

J-Uh huh.

Justin-So if it was a con, if the phone call was real and it was a conman, then maybe they just abandoned the con.

J-Yeah, it could have been.

D-Yeah.

S-I'm starting to like our intern more.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah. Our intern is pretty smart.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah. It's like he has experience at this or whatever.

J-Well, ok, there's the whole mystery in a nutshell.

D-Yeah.

J-Does anybody have any theories...

S-Of course!

J-Ok.

D-"Of course!" (Laughing).

S-Duh.

J-We all have theories, I know.

S-I, we all have pet theories...

D-Steve is really ready to talk about his, apparently.

J-It sounds like Steve wants to go first.

S-I do.

J-So why don't you go ahead, yeah.

S-I really, really like my theory.

D-Ok, talk about it then.

J-Ok, let's hear it.

S-All right. I don't believe these guys were possibly doing, well, the theory is, this is the one I really like, is that they weren't doing what they said they were doing, which was fishing.

J-Uh huh?

S-Instead they were running drugs.

J-Doing a lot of...oh, ok.

S-If you're out in the middle of the ocean, and you've left a port, and then you go back home, nobody checks your boat. You're...

J-You don't have to go through customs, right?

S-It's like, "Oh, we didn't catch anything because we didn't have any bait. Whoopsie, sorry, We've been out here for seven days, but our hold happens to be filled with cocaine."

J-Yeah.

D-It's that episode of Futurama where they're out in international waters and Bender goes, "Guess what you guys are accessories to?"

S-Yeah, right (S and J laughing).

D-Uh huh.

S-Exactly, so it's very possible that these guys were running some kind of drug scam.

D-Ok.

S-And when the whole thing went to tears, their connection drove up and said, "Oh hey, you're sinking. Uh, yeah, turns out cocaine sinks too, so I gotta go," and takes off.

D-Oh, it wasn't, like, it wasn't any kind of thing that was nefarious.

S-No, I'm not saying...

D-It was just that, like, this whole accident actually happened?

S-This happens, but of course their friends show, their quote, unquote, “drug friends.”

J-Uh huh.

S-Cause it's always your drug friends.

D-Just, so the drug friends take the other three guys?

S-Um, so I don't know...

D-They must, right?

S-I mean, it could be that the drug deal went south. So let's say, you know, the 18-year-old kid freaks out.

D-Uh huh.

S-And shots are fired or knives are thrown, cause that's what happens at sea, knives are thrown.

J-Oh yeah, and swords. Cutlasses.

S-And so somebody, you know, so this happens. Cutlasses are drawn and somebody's quartered, and it...don't look at me like this! This stuff happens on the ocean according to Moby Dick.

J-But of course (Steve laughing).

S-My point is, is that either a drug deal went south, is this theory, or they started at what was, the story of we're taking on water, the boat is having problems, it's real, was actually happening, but the boat that could have saved them went, “Uh, yeah, no dude. Later.”

Justin-I don't, I don't, I totally believe that people run drugs on boats, but...

J-Oh yeah.

Justin-...if this was in the Gulf of Mexico or Baja California, I'm down with that.

J-Uh huh.

Justin-But over on the Atlantic side? That's a long way down to Miami.

D-Have you been...I was going to say, have you been to Miami?

Justin-Yeah.

J-Yeah, no...

D-Yeah, it's like that.

J-It's, but that's a good point though, because the drugs are coming from, like, Columbia to points north.

D-Uh huh.

Justin-Yeah, that's my only problem with it.

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-Georgia's not *that* far north.

J-Yeah, no, but it's just...

D-I mean, it's far enough north that it would be not suspicious. I mean, like, the ports in Miami, like, even little fishing boats, they're searched. The customs are, because it is Miami, right? Because there are so many drugs coming through there, they are way more vigilant than if somebody in, like, backwaters Georgia goes out on a fishing trip and then comes back. They're not, they're definitely not going to search that, right?

Justin-It's just a long way down the coast, I guess.

D-It's pretty far, you're right.

Justin-That's my only issue.

D-Ok, fine.

J-Yeah. You know, I could sort of see a scenario where, like, there's a, like, a small freighter that's headed from, say, Columbia to New York, you know. And they just rendezvous with this crew of people, you know, out in the middle of the ocean on their way, and transfer a cargo.

Justin-Well, now if you flip the direction, that they're going north, I can buy the drug running. But if they were going south to Miami, I don't really buy it because then they're going to get searched in Miami.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah. But that's kind of what I was thinking. But, you know, this is popular on the web but, this particular theory is, but you know, there's of course no evidence. And the other thing about it is if the drug deal went south, then you would think there'd be some, there would have been some bullet holes in the Casie Nicole.

D-Hm. You would think that. So ok...

J-You would think they would've killed Nathan too.

D-So what if, what if the Casie Nicole had nothing to do with the drugs. It was the freighter that picked them up, and then realized "Oops, we picked some people up and they saw some drugs, and we've been, like, smuggling drugs, so we have to kill them now."

J-Of course they saw the drugs, because they have them right out on deck.

D-Right.

J-They've got bags and bags of cocaine, right there on deck (laughing).

D-Right. So what if that?

S-That's where I store my bales of weed.

J-Yeah.

D-Yeah, right?

Justin-So that, that explains the disappearance of all these people, is that they were murdered.

D-Uh huh, but it also explains the sighting of the freighter. Right?

J-Yeah.

Justin-Exactly.

D-Right?

J-Yeah. I mean, yeah. The problem with this one, of course, is why?

D-Right, why?

J-Yeah, why would you...

D-Like, why would you even pick people up if you're just going to kill them?

J-Unless you like the idea of rescuing them and watching the expressions on their faces as you tell them they're about to be horribly murdered.

D-Yeah. That seems silly, yeah. For you.

J-Yeah. Ok, yeah, and speaking of horrible people, I was thinking about, I have a theory that Billy Jo, Keith, and Frank were rescued by a freighter.

D-Uh huh.

J-But the crew of the freighter took them off somewhere and sold them into slavery.

D-Oh, they didn't kill them cause they saw the drugs, they were slavers?

J-Yeah. They just thought, well they weren't necessarily slavers, but maybe they were from a part of the world, there's parts of the world where slavery is still a thing.

D-There's a lot of parts of the world where white slavery, particularly, is a thing.

J-Yeah. And so they might have just thought, hey.

D-Yeah. And how old, and how old were they?

J-They were young, 18 and 23.

D-Yeah.

J-Yeah, they were young. Yeah, so yeah.

S-Strong backs.

J-Yeah, definitely.

S-I mean, that's, that's, that's a key to manual labor.

D-That's so funny, actually, when you say, like, slavery, you think strong backs. I think, like, sexual slavery.

Justin-That's all I think about too.

D-Yeah.

S-Wait, what? (Joe laughing).

Justin-Sex slaves, and therefore males are pretty useless.

D-Especially...well, I don't know if that's...

J-That's not necessarily true.

D-That's not true at all. That's, like, not even close to true. Males, young, attractive male sex slaves, and I've seen pictures of them, they're not, like, the worst looking guys.

J-Not bad looking, yeah.

D-There are parts of the world where that's, like, high demand. So ok, yeah, I'm on board with the slavery thing.

J-So yeah, there probably were...

S-Are you pro?

D-I'm not pro-slavery.

S-Oh, ok (Joe laughing).

J-You better make that clear.

D-I'm pro-the theory.

S-Ok.

J-Yeah. This is, the only problem with this is that, you know, if they'd been dragged aboard the boat, you know, and everything, you would think they would have said, "Hey, our friend Nathan is right over there three or four miles away. Can we go get him?" They didn't do that.

D-Unless it was very apparent what was happening to them.

J-Yeah, they would have had to immediately say, "Hey, good to meet you. We're going to take you out to a slave market and sell you into slavery." And then they would think, "Oh, better just keep quiet about Nathan." Because if they heard about Nathan they'd just be thinking, "Hey, cool, another slave."

D-Yeah.

Justin-They might not even have known their demise. They might have just been held at gunpoint and being treated aggressively, so therefore they don't bring up...

D-Uh huh.

J-Yeah. They don't talk about Nathan.

D-Yeah, absolutely.

J-But that is the thing, one of the things that is mysterious about this whole thing, is that if a freighter came by, and if a freighter picked up those three, why didn't the freighter come for Nathan?

D-Uh huh.

Justin-I don't believe the freighter was there to pick them up. I think the freighter could have been a research ship, or just something totally unrelated...

J-Uh huh, yeah.

Justin-...and, you know, watching the dolphins or, you know, a whale tour and just, half off on Groupon and Nathan just had no idea. He just assumed it was picking up his friends.

J-Yeah, that's, I had a similar thought, which is that there was more than one freighter.

D-Oh. Yeah, I was just going to say that's, it's true that that's a suspicious number of, like, circles...

J-Well...

D-...for the freighter to...I mean, if they're all three in the same location, you just make the one stop, right?

J-And the other thing is if, if they have been separated, then I would think that you would launch your tender, and send a tender to go pick them up and bring them back.

D-You have to be in a certain depth of water for your tender.

J-Uh huh.

D-And actually, there are a lot of, um, I...again, cruise ships, sorry. But the cruise ships don't carry their tenders.

J-Oh, they don't?

D-No.

J-Oh really?

D-Uh uh. They're in the port.

J-Oh, I see.

D-So they go from port to ship to port. So the only ship they would have to launch would be their life rafts, and you obviously don't do that, cause there's no way to get those back on board.

J-Uh huh. Makes sense.

D-But it does seem like a lot of trips, I mean, you know, five or six circles to make to pick up three guys who are presumably in about the same place. That's seems like a lot.

J-That does seem like a lot. But yeah, I was thinking that perhaps, you know, Nathan was, he had been through a lot, and he was exhausted after his swim. He's already, I'm sure, got dehydration and hypothermia.

D-Uh huh.

J-So and he spent a pretty much sleepless night on the boat, and so he might have just been drifting in and out, you know? So he wakes up, sees a freighter, wakes up, sees another freighter.

D-Well...

J-And at several miles away, they're going to look kind of alike, kind of alike.

D-A lot alike.

J-Yeah, a lot alike. So, oh, here's a freighter. Oh, here's a freighter So, it might have just been several freighters.

D-He wouldn't even really have to be drifting in and out. I mean, it just could be that it was just far enough on the horizon that, you know, he thought it was circling.

J-Yeah.

D-So it was going out of view and back into view, but it was really just, like, new ones every time.

J-Uh huh.

D-Right?

J-Yeah, could have been.

S-It's also entirely possible that he was just hallucinating the whole thing. I mean, we know that he...

J-Yeah.

D-That's true, yeah.

S-...was sunburned, dehydrated, and God help me if he made the stupid choice of deciding to drink a little sea water.

D-Oh God.

J-He said he tried hard not to do that. It wasn't, yeah...

S-Yeah, it's, it's very hard to resist, I understand, but it...

J-Oh yeah, I hear.

S-...does crazy things to your brain. That is an instant recipe for hallucinations.

D and J-Yeah.

S-So he could have just been thinking about his friends, and decided, and in his little, you know, sun baked brain, saw ships in the distance, because ships are what you're hoping for.

D-Yeah. I guess that's true.

J-Yeah.

Justin-There is one more idea I came up with for Nathan. It's sort of my specialty, and it's murder.

J-Ah ha, murder.

D-Hmm.

Justin-Murder.

J-Murder most foul.

Justin-Maybe he murdered everybody. I'm not saying he did, I'm just saying that maybe somebody

borrowed his fishing lure, didn't give it back.

J-Yeah.

Justin-Maybe the drug deal went down wrong.

J and D-Uh huh.

Justin-I don't think he would have killed his brother and everybody, but when you cover murder, you see people do the most weird things.

J and D-Yeah.

Justin-And things that you would never expect, so is it that he murdered them all, or things went south and that, you know, through the commission of the murder, the boat suffered damage, and then...

D-Well, I guess for me the murder idea does help to explain these phone calls, too. Right? That it may not be that the phone calls were actually placed, but that people close to Nathan had motivation to say that the phone calls were made because they were trying to cover for him.

J-Um, I think that, if I were in Nathan's position, I would just want to let the matter die, rather than keep it alive (laughing). But, the problem that I have with the murder theory, and there's people who have mentioned that, is that it's easy enough to imagine him killing people and throwing their bodies overboard, but then how does he capsize a 34-foot boat? How do you go about doing that?

D-A hole in the hull.

J-Yeah.

Justin-Or why would he? Cause that's his ticket home.

D-Yeah, that's true.

J-That's exactly true too, yeah.

S-But he could have very easily reversed the bilge pump. Let's say, let's say he...

D-He could have, ok...

J-He could have, well...

S-Let's say he kills them and throws them overboard. He's like, "I got to scuttle this boat."

J-They have sea cocks, you know, too.

S-Yeah, and so...

D-Next question, sorry, not to interrupt.

S-Yeah.

D-But next question, why not just say, “The boat capsized and sunk, and here I am safe on this happy, little vessel that is rubber,” right?

J-Uh huh.

D-I mean, like maybe, maybe the raft was bad, right?

J-Hm.

S-Which would drive him back to the boat.

D-Right.

J-Yeah.

D-But, the raft would actually have to be bad then.

J-Well yeah, that's the whole thing, is that...

D-Why wouldn't...

J-...everybody, he says, Nathan says, that everybody on the raft, the other three, were all, “No, no, Nathan, don't leave us! We got to stay together.” But, and he was like, “No, I'm going to go get help.” But we don't really know what happened. He might have said, “Screw all ya'll. The raft's got a leak. I'm leaving. I'm out of here.” (Laughing).

D-That's true.

S-The best lies are based on truth, though.

D-That's true, yeah.

J-Yeah.

D-So he could have...

Justin-So maybe not an outright murder, but a neglect or abandonment kind of thing.

D-Yeah.

J-Well, and in Nathan's favor, you know, I mean, the other people also had the option of leaving the leaky raft and going back to the hull of the Casie Nicole.

D-Yeah.

J-They did. And they chose...

D-I don't know if it was big enough.

J-Yeah, it might not have been.

D-I mean, Jack or Rose, it's hard to decide.

J-Yeah, it might, I mean, maybe there was a big battle, and they were all, like, clawing each other's eyes out to get aboard the boat (laughing).

D-Yeah, it's always possible.

J-I don't know. I hate, and I shouldn't even say stuff like that, cause I'm sure it's not true. You know, I'm sure Nathan didn't do anything like that.

D-But maybe he did. Our intern seems to think so.

J-Yeah, I think the whole murder thing, or whatever thing that, you know, is probably just the internet.

D-Yeah, I mean, I think it's bunk. Nothing against you, Justin, our intern, but you've been doing this for less time than we have.

J-Good point.

D-So I can understand how you would get, you know, kind of wrapped up in this, you know, kind of internet conspiracy theory stuff, so I, I, but I really appreciate you bringing it to the table. It's, it's good. It's good.

J-Don't worry kid, you're learning. Well, this concludes our investigation. As always, we've solved the hell out of it (Steve laughing). So, anyway, if you want to learn more, go to our website, thinking sideways podcast dot com, where you can listen to episodes. We'll have links out there for you guys to go to, and you can, of course, leave complimentary comments. We have a bot that filters out nasty comments. And that's about it. You guys, last thoughts?

D-Uh, no. I just wanted to thank Justin, our intern.

J-Thanks, Justin.

D-You know, I think you did a really good job on this episode.

S-Indeed.

D-Yeah. And, you know, the reason that we took you on as an intern was because we know you were involved with this, like, other podcast that I guess also had something to do with unsolved mysteries.

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-So we knew that you were going to be a good fit, but we're really happy to see that you're a good fit in this roundtable format, and you really did a good job with the script, so thank you for that. And we're just kind of hoping, I guess, that um, I mean, I don't know, like how are you feeling about this podcast

versus, like, whatever the other project you were doing was before?

Justin-Oh, I'm loving this.

D-Yeah.

Justin-Thank you so much for this opportunity. I don't think I was, I was able to do all these things before.

D-Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah, that's good. So, that's good. So I guess you can, you'll continue with us, and we'll see...

J-And I guess...

D-And I guess that other, generational question thing...

J-Yeah, yeah.

D-...that was happening before, hopefully you'll just continue with Team Sideways and we'll be good to go.

J-Yeah, that's good. Excellent.

Justin-Awesome. Thank you.

D-Yeah. Thank you.

J-So, do you want any help writing your Dear John email?