

Survival Story Contest Winners Reveal!

Dear readers,

It's our pleasure to announce the winners of the 2023 Survival Story contest that we've ran during the holiday period.

We also want to thank you for your numerous submissions, so many that we will, unfortunately, not be able to publish all of them. However, we will be publishing below the third best survival stories of the many you've been keeping us busy reading fascinated since the start of the year.

We offer our congratulations to the winners and if you recognize your story below, you should look through your e-mail for instructions on how to claim your prize.

Thus, without further ado, our winning entries:

“STOCKPILE SCIENTIST” REVEALS HIS #1 PREPPING SECRET

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Third place: Douglas' Mountain Survival Story

It was back in 1990, give or take a year or two, I went Deer hunting on my quad (A super hopped up Yamaha 350 Warrior) up in the mountains where I lived. Where I lived I could leave right from my back porch and disappear into hundreds of square miles of wilderness about 75 miles east of Eugene, Oregon.

The day started out pretty warm and sunny and it was still

early fall so I let my guard down and did not take my usual pair of insulated coveralls that I normally never ever left the house without.

I was about 50 miles out way up on top of a ridge and it started to get overcast and kind of misty but it was still feeling warm. I had my usual 2 1/2 gallon gas can strapped onto the seat behind me with bungee cords as where I was going I would need that extra fuel to make it back. As I remember my Warrior had about a 75-80 mile range on a single tank of gas.

The mist soon turned into super heavy fog and then turned into the lightest of rains. I decided to head back because riding anything in the rain without full rain gear is not too much fun especially when you are doing 35 to 65mph average speeds. Some might call it a drizzle. I had my goose down coat on and was still warm but I knew I was starting to get wet as I started to feel the wet spots where it was beginning to soak through my coat.

Then it turned cold all of a sudden as I started to drop in elevation coming down off the ridge that I had been hunting on. I mean it turned REALLY cold, like as in now it's starting to snow mixed in with what was becoming a downpour of rain.

I was soaked to the bone now and starting to really feel that I could be in trouble. So I bumped up my speed just short of maximum as I wanted off that mountain ASAP.

I was flying down a stretch of straight away and all of a sudden I blipped out. I didn't know where I was or who I was and what was this strange machine I was on as I released the throttle not having any clue as to what was happening... it only lasted about no longer than 2 or 3 seconds and I blipped back in and in a somewhat semi state of panic thought to my self "what the hell was that" that just happened. At this same instant I knew I had to make a fire and I had better do it

fast or I was
gonna be in big trouble.

I immediately thought of what I knew would be a dry spot as it was one of the nice little places we had out there in the woods that we would always stop at and have a break there. My next thought was how far and how long would it take me to get there because my clock was ticking and I was really getting nervous.

I knew it would be a dry spot under some old giant Doug firs and there was also a rotted black pitch stump there that we always used to comment on if we needed to make a fire.

Back on the throttle as hard as I dared heading for that place about 4-5 miles to go. It was raining and snowing pretty hard and there was still an hour or so of daylight left. As I was rounding a corner damn near sideways it happened again and lucky for me I had completed the curve going back into a short straight stretch because just as before I immediately released the throttle as I went into LA LA land and completely lost touch with what was happening again.

After about the same amount of time I guess, I blipped back into reality. Now I was scared and really getting panicky and I also realized that my muscles were starting to kinda like seize up and it was becoming hard to hold on and to turn the throttle. I was shaking almost uncontrollably and it was beginning to get rough trying to hang onto my machine.

Once again luck was with me... as I blipped back into reality I realized I was THERE at the trailhead to our little hang out spot. I hit that trail entrance at full blast as it was only about 200 more feet and I was there.

I also had a thought about something I had read where after the third time you blip out you don't ever come back.

I was really scared I would blip out again.

I came skidding to a sideways halt, jumped off the quad, reached in my pocket for my leatherman tool and CUT the bungees holding my jug of gas, went to the ground on my hands and knees at the old black pitch stump about 5 feet away, letting go of the gas jug just long enough to claw up a pile of forest debris from part of that stump, grabbed that gas jug, took off the lid and started dumping gas all over that pile of forest debris then literally threw the jug away from me, stood up and grabbed a book of matches that I had in my shirt pocket.

My fingers were so cold they did not want to work to tear out a match as I was having trouble just opening the book and hanging onto it. I knew it was do or die right there, right now. I finally got the match lit. I will never as long as I live forget the very split second that that lighted match left my fingers in slow motion and my eyes followed it as it fell down onto that pile of gas soaked debris as it burst into flames.

I WAS GOING TO LIVE!!! My brush with certain death was over. No one would have ever found me in time to rescue me as far out as I still was from home which was still about 30 more miles to go. Just 30 more miles of winding gravel mountain roads.

I built that fire up nice and big and hot with chunks out of that old stump as it was starting to get dark now but that was no worry as I knew my way home well. By the time I had dried out all my clothes and was ready to start thinking about heading home or staying there it had completely stopped raining or snowing. I was once again lucky to still have enough gas left in the jug as it landed right side up when I threw it. My only thought was I hoped too much water did not get into it from the dripping trees.

Just the sound of a nice hot fire crackling in the dark was now the only sound there was in the quiet silence out in the wilderness. Even the sound of water dripping from the trees

around me had stopped.

I loaded up and away I went as fast as I dared ride in those dark mountains that night and I was very happy to see my porch light on as I came down off the hill.

My roommate upon seeing me come in the door, out of the blue says “you sure look happy and chipper”. I busted out laughing as he had no idea what I had just been through, but in the end we had a good laugh over it all and took the lesson to heart about going out into the wilds unprepared for weather emergencies especially.

Even I still wonder how what was supposed to be a short evening hunt almost turned into something that killed me. I think something or someone was watching out for me that day because the good luck just kept happening way beyond normal.

And might I add that I grew up riding in those mountains back when all we had were those early motorcycles and knew every nook and cranny and am basically very adept at wilderness survival skills and techniques but the one time I let my guard down it almost cost me dearly.

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Second Place: Cia's Hurricane Story

I remember it so well, the first time I heard about a storm far off in the Atlantic had turned into a hurricane. I was standing in line at Publix waiting to order sandwiches when two men in front of me said, “yeah it's a hurricane and heading this way”. My heart sunk, all I felt was impending doom. I started preparing that day when I got home, baking things I could put in freezer to pull out and use, cookies,

filling as many bottles and containers I could with water but all anyone could tell me was, "why are you so worried they always turn and go north or just fizzle out". Outside I was cleaning and putting as much stuff as I could away so nothing would blow away and cause damage to our place or someone else.

As the days continued people started watching the storm hoping and praying it would turn, but with each passing day it was evident that the storm was going to make landfall over us. So many people just shrugged it off, always with the it can't happen to me attitude. When the area realized it wasn't turning and would be an extremely strong storm, then people woke up and started to prepare with minimal time left before landfall.

I was working at a locksmith shop and a couple nights waitressing at the time so our time was limited to how much we could get done. My husband was working between Coral Gables hospital and Mariner's hospital in the Florida Keys, so his schedule was quite tight. My father in-law and brother in-law were living in Tavernier in the Florida Keys both worked at Mariner's hospital. My sister in-law was living with us and working at a dealership in Homestead.

A few days before the storm I went to the store to get what I thought at the time what we would need if we were out of power for a few days, not knowing the depth of destruction we would experience. The day before the storm was to make landfall, I got up quite early and went to the store because I forgot toilet paper. They only allowed about 50 people in at a time and I was fortunate I was in the first group. I was really surprised that so many people were getting food that required refrigeration, I even talked to one family asking why all the milk, and meat and they said they didn't want to be hungry or have to find anything after the storm. They didn't even have a generator.

I then went to the fish and tackle shop to get a block of dry

ice to put in our freezer. My sister in-law and I worked the rest of the day bolting the shutters down and making sure everything we could put inside was picked up and we put straps on the shed in hopes to keep it from moving. While we were working at the house my husband, father in-law and brother in-law were working at the hospitals getting them ready for the coming storm.

Sometime in the afternoon, I don't remember when, we had the tv on and heard that they were still taking toll on the roads leading north, and someone had called into the local tv station to complain, and the weather man said would someone please get the toll roads open so these people can get to safety. It's really sad when the state is so concerned with getting money from people that are fleeing for their life.

Later that evening we all met at our house to ride out the storm. I fixed dinner then we played some games with the kids. We put a mattress in the living room and put the kids down, we have three, they were 10, 5, and 3. I laid down the kids about 10 and around 1:30 my husband woke us up and said the storm was coming in and had been windy and rainy for a bit. We moved the mattress and was sitting in living room chatting.

About 2:25 I called my mom to check with them because dad had to go to work early so they were up. She asked how it was and I took the phone, with the long cable, to the window for her to hear the wind pulling on the hurricane shutters. She said it sounded bad, but I said no, not really. I hung up the phone and looked out the window into the next room and saw the roof lift up. Was walking back to the living room when the phone rang, it was my sister and she asked me how things were, when the room I just looked into was ripped off the house, the window blew into the room and slid the refrigerator across the room. I yelled the roof is coming off, hung the phone off and ran into the living room. A short time later we realized the door to our boy's room was trying to open and it took all

three men to hold the door closed while I went through the house pulling nails out of the wall so we could nail the door shut. The wind was actually pulling the room off the house. As part of the preparations before the storm, I put tools and lifejackets in the hall closet leading to the attic in case the storm surge engulfed our house.

The storm was so bad that the inside wall I was leaning against was shaking so bad it was pushing me off the wall. We turned the power off at the main breaker but the power surges coming through the line was actually spinning the ceiling fan. We had a reprieve for about 20 minutes when the eye went across us, we went outside to check neighbors and it was so dark that you couldn't see your hand in front of your eyes and quiet, it was so eerie. We could hear when the other side of the eye wall was coming so we all rushed back inside and had to ride the rest of the storm out in the hallway. At one point, the pressure was so back in the house, we all thought our ears were going to explode so my father in-law opened the bathroom door, and the pressure released. I believe if he hadn't opened door, the house would have exploded the pressure was so bad.

As the morning started to get lighter, the wind grew less and less which gave up an opportunity to see just how much damage was done. I went to the window that was blown out early and the first thing that I saw was devastating, and the second was a poor dog that had taken refuge in our laundry room, he just jumped off the washing machine and ran off. As I turned to go into the living room walking in ankle deep water, the phone I hung up on my sister rang. It was my sister in-law and all she could do was cry. I asked her to call the family and let them know we were ok, and I would call them later, that was about 7 am.

By 9 am we realized we couldn't stay at the house, so we headed north till we found power, I believe it was near West Palm Beach. I called my mom and asked her to come get the

kids, she lived in Norfolk VA. Two of my brothers loaded the pickup with water and generator and headed down as soon as I spoke to my sister in-law and my mom and sister headed down later when I could tell them where we were at. The following morning my husband and both brothers went back down to the house which took ten times longer than it normally would and started the generator, charged the batteries for the neighbor with medical equipment and the grill and cook everything in the freezer so all could eat. My mom took our kids with her and put them in school in Virginia until we could rebuild the house. We lost power August 24, 1992, and the power was restored to our house on Christmas eve at noon. We brought the kids back home Thanksgiving weekend and lived on a generator till Christmas eve. The neighborhood came together and helped each other and made sure we protected each other. Several of us open carried to make sure the looters knew to stay away.

I saw so many amazing people help others without asking for anything in return and heard horror stories of people being taken advantage of. There was so much more that we experienced through that storm, and I thank God for carrying us through it safely, without God I wouldn't be here today. I now am a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief to help other on their worst day and I'm grateful to God that he keeps me healthy enough to help others.

God Bless

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Our Grand Winner: Pease's Shipwreck Story

On 12-30-2006, a Saturday, I went for a boating trip intending to catch some Spotted Seatrout. This is one of my favorite fish to eat and a fun one to catch.

After an early afternoon rain shower got everything wet, it was a very nice day. I explored a bit and headed toward Christmas Creek on Cumberland Island Georgia. This place was listed as where our state record Spotted Seatrout was caught.

Friends had warned me that it was treacherous, but I had a GPS unit and depth finder and bilge pump; I also had lots of gas, two motors, a cell phone and paddles. I had looked on Google Earth satellite pictures of the area and studied the nautical charts.

Christmas Creek requires a trip out into the ocean past a mile-long sandbar, then several miles in the ocean down the front of Little Cumberland Island. Then you have to come into the Creek parallel to the shore in between two sandbars, which is the really hard part of the trip. This is where the waves break into you sideways and the water gets shallow in the trough between the waves.

On the way in, the boat took on some water and the propeller hit the sandy bottom a few times. The bilge pump kept the water from getting deeper in the boat, but the propeller was starting to spin and lose power from the groundings.

Once inside Christmas Creek, the water was calm. I took the boat to shore and got out in waist deep water to switch the propeller for a fresh one.

Now it was around 4:30PM and the darkness was about 90 minutes away. I decided to try fishing here another day and headed right back out toward home. The wind had picked up some and

the trip back out into the ocean was rougher. The boat got slammed a few times by waves so hard that the hull creaked and slightly cracked. The new propeller hit bottom a few times as well.

After making it into the ocean and heading back north to go into Cumberland River between Jekyll Island and Little Cumberland Island, the bilge pump was getting weak and the stream it pumped out got smaller until it quit. Then water started getting deeper in the boat. The battery got underwater and the gas tank was floating. I moved all the items I could to the bow of the boat to even out the weight and kept heading home.

I got behind Little Cumberland Island and beached the boat to change propellers again. I also took the bilge pump apart and found out it had some seaweed in it, but the motor was now burned up. I took a small cooler and bailed the boat out. The tide was going out, so it was hard to get the boat back off the beach.

I began again to head toward home, it was now dark. The GPS had shown a ground speed of around 25mph when the boat would plane, but I could only go 6mph now. The back of the boat started to fill up with water again.

The motor got rougher and slower, I think it got water into the gas tank. I was started to switch over to the smaller motor (a 9.9hp). Just before I could start the smaller motor, the 40hp motor stalled out.

The water came over the transom at the back of the boat and in seconds the boat was sunk.

I had been watching the GPS/ depth finder and it said 60 degree water forty feet deep. Popping up to the surface, the only things in reach were a gas can and a large cooler. I swam to the cooler, the wind seemed to be blowing it away from me. I grabbed the handle and started swimming with the cooler

towards Little Cumberland Island. My watch said 8PM.

It seemed to take forever, my legs starting to cramp and switching hands to swim and hold. According to my watch, it took two hours to reach shore. I had been close to the shark hole on Cumberland River as well. My trip was one of exhausting strokes. I prayed to the Lord for strength and protection from the sharks. I figured I would have died sooner if that was His will, so I felt like I would make it to shore if I just kept up the fight. I did swallow some seawater and when I tried to rest from swimming, it was hard to keep my head above water. Upon touching ground, it was such a relief and a prayer of thanks went out immediately.

I dragged the cooler up onto the beach and sat on it. It was hard to do something as simple as tie my shoes, but I did, and started walking up the beach.

Now it was near midnight and I had no light except moonlight. I had seen a lighthouse on that end of the Island from the river, but apparently it is not a functioning one. I saw a dirt road go up inland and started to follow but it was difficult to stay on the road due to the lack of light.

I would sometimes have to set a course for the next patch of moonlight coming through the trees and find the road again. I walked two hours when I came upon a small airplane in a small grassy field. I tried to turn on the radio, but could not figure it out.

I went on down the road and saw a small church which was open, but dark. No electricity or water. Nearby was a barn and two homes.

I tried several times, knocking many times on both homes. There was a truck out front of the homes.

I decided to keep walking and walked for another hour. To my great dismay, there was the airplane again!

This time I was desperate when I got back to the homes. I got a drink of water and washed my face from the garden hose. I tried the doors and knocked again. The keys were in the truck and it cranked right up. I turned the heat on full blast and began to drive, looking for help.

I had not seen road signs in the dark, but now the truck headlights revealed small wooden signs at intersections. I got out of the truck at every sign and read them. I went to Lake Whitney, but it was a hiking trail type of dead end. I went North Cut road and it lead to the beach. I drove on the beach, which was tricky at points due to the shifty sand.

I followed my tracks back in the fog and got back on North Cut road. I stopped at another home and knocked loudly, but it was 2:30AM by now and no one answered. I found a road named "Main Road" and this sounded promising, so I followed it. The road passed a private, fenced and dark residence called Stafford Place.

Next I came upon Greyfield Inn. Now this looked like it had people in it as many lights were on.

I found candy canes in the Library and I was very hungry so I ate one along with a can of pineapple juice from a cooler. I then saw a sign that said "Innkeeper" and followed it.

There was a red button on the wall that said "pull in case of personal emergency" and I thought "This qualifies!" so I pulled it. Unfortunately, it set off an alarm which woke most of the residents. The innkeeper talked with me and sent everyone back to bed. This was 3AM. He let me call my wife, who had already called 911, and she was quite relieved. The innkeeper treated me so well (he fed me, showed me the shower, washed my clothes, put me in a room and arranged a boat trip to the mainland the next morning!) I could not have asked to be treated any better than that.

I slept about three hours and had a nice breakfast. Then I

reported to the Park Ranger and took the Park Ferry to Saint Mary's. My wife met me at the dock. I changed into cleaner clothes and dry shoes, then reported to the ER for a chest X-Ray as requested by the Park Ranger. I was cleared by the ER and then had lunch, went to bed at home and slept through the New Year's celebrations.