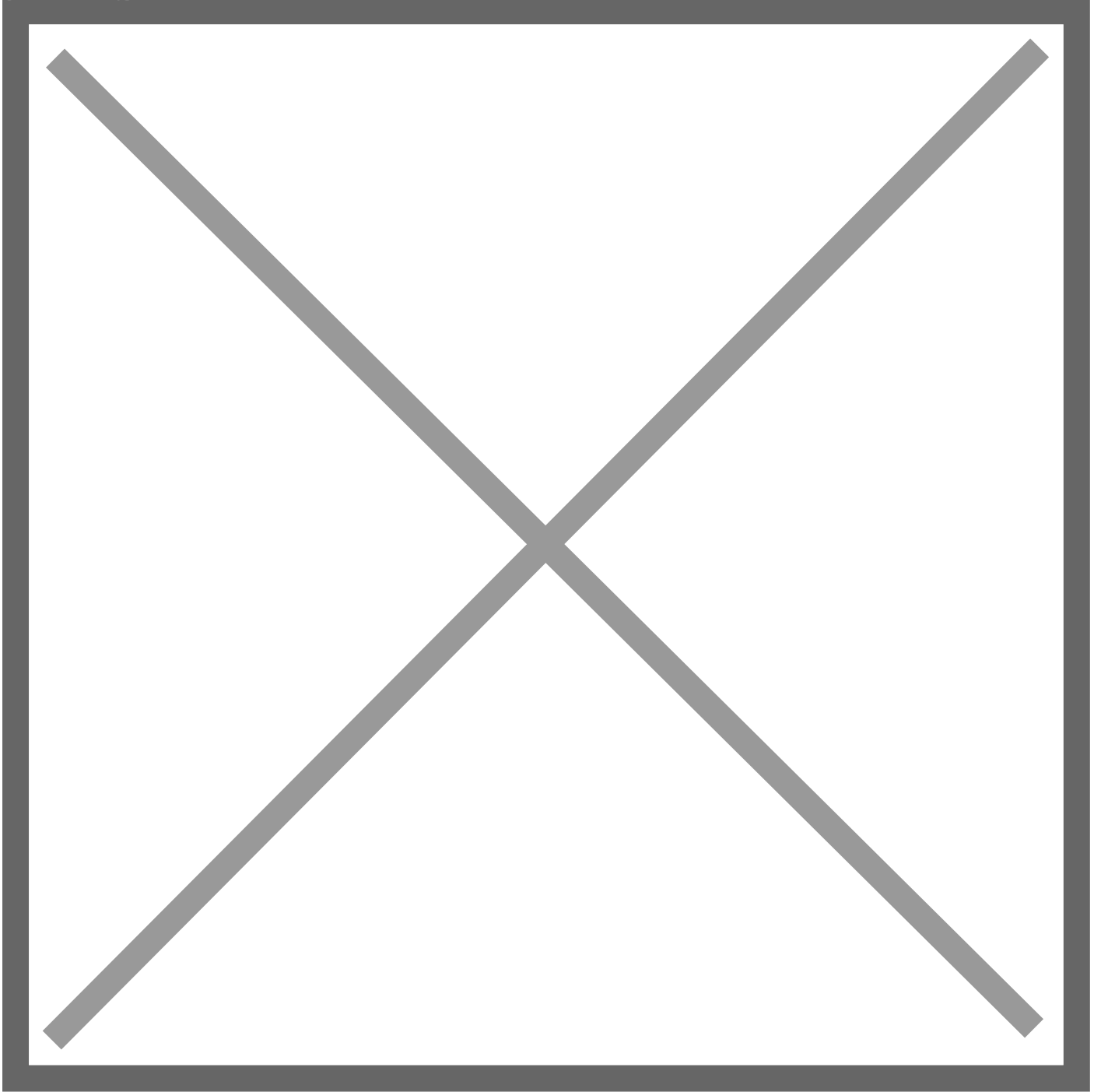


31: FJ Trey & Surviving the Unthinkable

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Everyone loves a good hero story. Trey McDaniel recalls his experience from behind the wheel of his FJ Cruiser before, during, and after the deadly winter storm pileup in Fort Worth, TX last month.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:00:07] In the early morning of Thursday, February 11th, MedStar paramedic, Trey McDaniel, was heading to work when his car hit black ice alongside other vehicles on Highway I-35 in Fort Worth, Texas. In this 130-plus car pileup, Trey's 2011 FJ Cruiser was hit from behind by a semi-truck traveling at a very high rate of speed after it, itself, had hit black ice. He was launched into the northbound lanes. And despite a lot of damage to his vehicle, the main cabin of the FJ stayed intact and he only suffered minor injuries. After being hit, he crawled out of the mangled FJ, and he started helping arriving firefighters and paramedics check cars and load people into ambulances.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:01:17] In what the state deemed a mass casualty event, six people unfortunately lost their lives in the wreckage, and we want to keep families impacted by those losses in our minds and in our hearts. Hearing the people thought he died in the crash, Trey posted about his experience on Reddit, where we at Toyota saw it, and we responded, offering to replace his FJ with a 2021 4Runner TRD Pro in Lunar Rock. We know that other vehicles were involved in this crash, other Toyota and Lexus vehicles, but it's not everyday that people get out of their vehicles, and they go and help others. We are honored today to have Trey McDaniel on the Toyota Untold podcast to tell us his incredible story.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:02:08] So, today on Toyota Untold, the Toyota podcast, we have Trey McDaniel, who is a paramedic and did something kind of unbelievable. And you might think, Trey, that this is like normal, this is standard operation every single day, but you were involved in an accident, a really crappy accident, and instead of just being like, "Man, I got hit," you got out and helped people. So, talk to me about that morning of the accident. What happened?

Trey McDaniel: [00:02:37] So, the story is told where I wake up that morning to go to work. I'm a paramedic over at MedStar in Fort Worth, and it just felt like any other typical morning. I got up, showered, got dressed, had a bowl of many wheats, and I walked out the door.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:02:59] You like many wheats, don't you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:03:00] I do like many wheats. Many wheats are good. I get a lot of fiber in them. It tastes good.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:03:05] Alright.

Trey McDaniel: [00:03:05] So, normal commute to work, it's about 30 or so minutes. And I got to head down I-35. I usually take the tollway, because it's the fastest. And that morning, while on the tollway, I did know that it was a little colder that morning. It was about 24 degrees, but it was typical for Texas to be, kind of, abnormal weather like this, so I didn't really think anything of it. So, the certain stretch of tollway that I was on, there was a little bit of a hill, and then there was a bend, and at the top of the hill where the bend was, you could then see what was a little bit further down the road.

Trey McDaniel: [00:03:47] And as I was approaching the top of the bend, I could kind of see some taillights and some brake lights way up ahead, and on and off the tollway. So, like anybody else, I put my foot on the brake and started slowing down, and I realized that I had hit black ice or I was already on it. The vehicle I was in, it was a 2011. It was an FJ Cruiser made by Toyota. And it-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:04:19] Say it isn't so.

Trey McDaniel: [00:04:20] I love that vehicle. The ABS, the braking system, it kicked in full force. You could feel it. Anybody that owns a Toyota or an FJ understands that feeling you get when those brakes start pumping and doing its job, the brain of the whole vehicle, it goes crazy and you know that. But the FJ was able to slow me down enough to where I just barely tapped a vehicle in front of me. And I was so concerned about slowing down

that I didn't realize what I had just slid into.

Trey McDaniel: [00:05:10] In front of me was a giant pileup of vehicles on the tollway. There were semi-truck trailers, several trucks, bunch of cars that were all piled up together. I couldn't see beyond this giant pileup in front of me. I didn't know how many cars were involved. I just knew this was big. This was dangerous. But I was safe. I was sitting there. Unfortunately, I was a sitting duck.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:05:43] Can I pause you right there?

Trey McDaniel: [00:05:44] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:05:45] Talk to me before we get into the actual accident, talk to me about your 2011 FJ Cruiser. What did it mean to you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:05:52] Oh, yeah. So, I got that FJ in 2012. So, I don't know if this has been explained yet or not, but I used to work at a Toyota dealership, Texas Toyota in Grapevine, and that's where I actually purchased this FJ from. It had 13,000 miles on it. I traded in an Avalon for it. Toyota Avalon, 2001.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:06:21] So, you're just straight up like a Toyota fan?

Trey McDaniel: [00:06:24] Well, yeah. I wouldn't call it superfan, and I've driven other vehicles before, but I always fall back in Toyota. There's just something about them, the way they drive, the fit and finish on the interior. When you push on a little certain panel, it doesn't creak or make any sort of noise. The fit and finish is fantastic on Toyota. So, it always makes me come running back for more. And my 2011 FJ, after working at the Toyota dealership, I did a little bit of—I looked into it a little bit, and the previous owner was also an FJ owner. He traded that FJ in for a newer model FJ.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:07:10] Okay.

Trey McDaniel: [00:07:10] So, he took very, very good care of it. He had upgraded a little bit on his own, put a leveling kit, which I swapped mine out later on for an entire suspension swap, put Ikon Suspension on it, stage three, front and back. And then, I also had front bumpers, winch, rear bumper, jackal mounts, always carry recovery gear with me, put different tires, wheels.

Trey McDaniel: [00:07:38] I had the fuel vector, 17-inch wheels on that. They were two 85 Nitto Trail Grapplers, I believe. And I went through two sets of those or whatnot. I love those tires. And I think those also came into play with helping me stop as well. And so, I went off-roading with that vehicle all the time. It was just so capable off-road. And I wanted to get out there. And people, the nonbelievers, the haters, the people that didn't think that, oh, it's just an FJ, a fake jeep is what I've always heard.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:08:25] What? What did people say about it?

Trey McDaniel: [00:08:29] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:08:29] Wow, as a Tundra passes in front of us.

Trey McDaniel: [00:08:32] Exactly. And so, it's one of those things where I almost felt inclined to prove them wrong on the trails, and it very much showed them up. I mean, I can't tell you how many Jeeps I pulled out of ruts and ditches. It was so capable. Anything that Jeep could do, I could do just as well. And I miss that FJ. It really treated me well.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:08:59] So, flash forward, right? So, you love that truck.

Trey McDaniel: [00:09:02] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:09:03] You took a lot of pictures of it and posted it on your Instagram.

Trey McDaniel: [00:09:07] True.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:09:08] @Treyman780, which people can follow you at if they are so inclined. And let's flash forward then, you lightly tap the bumper in front of you, the person after you slipped on black ice. You're like, "Man, I made it." What happened next?

Trey McDaniel: [00:09:24] So, I need to figure out like where I could go, what I could do as far as getting out of the situation I was in. My first thought was, "Oh, great! Now, I got to go pass along my insurance information to the person I just tapped in front of me."

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:09:39] So annoying.

Trey McDaniel: [00:09:40] I know. And so, I looked up, and after seeing all the other vehicles, it just kind of dawned on me like, "Oh, no! This is a serious situation." And it really dawned on me after I saw a – it was a little four-door car that slammed into some other cars. I was in the left lane. This car slammed into some cars on the right lane and it made a mess of them. And I was thinking, "Oh, gosh, this is not good." And I looked up in my rearview mirror. Of course, I can't get out of my driver door at all. It's up against the center barrier. So, that was not an option. And I'm just watching my rearview mirror, some headlights, and then I start seeing some sparks. And there's a semi-truck that's barreling towards me at highway speeds, not able to stop.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:10:41] And you're watching this unfold in your rearview.

Trey McDaniel: [00:10:45] I'm watching it and I have no other choice but to watch this. I didn't realize what was about to happen, but I still had my seatbelt on, but I grabbed the wheel, and I just kind of put my head down, and braced for impact. And that was-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:11:07] It was all you could do.

Trey McDaniel: [00:11:09] Yeah, that's all I could do, and just kind of hoped for the best there. Honestly, at that exact moment, I thought it was my time, like I thought it was like the end. And, you know, not a lot was going through my mind at the time, just other than the fact that there's a semi heading straight towards me.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:11:31] So, there's video of this, someone going northbound, not on where you ended up, but on the other side of the northbound lanes, was filming. And you could see this. You saw your FJ lightly tapped the car in front of you, and then you see the semi come and hit your car. And you can see it, and it's hard to watch, because you see it hit your car, hit the other car. At that point, you're not sure which car, as you're watching the video, is your car versus the truck that was in front of you.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:12:06] But you see, at some point, like if you watch it enough, your FJ flipped, spin over into the northbound lanes, over that barrier that you couldn't get out into the northbound lanes. And as much as we are reliving and talking about this, like I want to go to the point where you kind of like take stock, you wake up, and you're like—not wake up, but your eyes open, you're like, 'Hey, I'm here in the northbound lanes.'

Trey McDaniel: [00:12:36] Yeah. So, after the dust settled, I kind of just opened my eyes and I moved my arms. I'm awake, which was odd to me. But after the impact, honestly, I had no idea what had just happened. It didn't occur to me. But I moved my legs, I'm okay. My left leg was wedged underneath the brake pedal. I had my EMS

boots on. They're a little bit larger. And so they kind of got wedged under there and I had to kind of break it free. But I was alive, which was a miracle.

Trey McDaniel: [00:13:22] And outside, I keep hearing cars crashing, and then I hear screaming, and there's a lot going on right now. And so, I look out my passenger side window, I lift up the side curtain, every single airbag in that vehicle went off. I lift it up, I don't see any cars. Okay. I lift up the driver's side curtain, I don't see any cars, or I see a few, but they're just kind of stopped and they're intact. They're not wrecked.

Trey McDaniel: [00:13:53] And so, I'm like, "Okay, I need to get out of here. This is not good." It didn't occur to me that I was on the northbound side of the highway, but I crawled out of the driver's side window, and I must have hit my head, but I felt a little dizzy, a little fuzzy, and my eyesight was a little blurred. But finally, I kept mentally telling myself, "Look, you're alive, you're good, just get through this." And after about a minute, it kind of went away. And I kind of just like got a second wind of something.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:14:33] It's amazing what adrenaline can do.

Trey McDaniel: [00:14:35] I know. I know. And it's a great drug, but yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:14:43] Adrenaline, hell of a drug.

Trey McDaniel: [00:14:44] Hell of a drug, absolutely. Hell of a drug. And I started asking some—I started knocking on some windows. There were a few people walking around. I asked if they're alright, and I started knocking on some windows, seeing if other people were okay. I was getting some responses out of them. And then, I saw a police car that was wrecked and I went to go ask him if he was alright. And he was in the northbound side. My vehicle must have hit his because his side doors were impacted. So, I knocked on his door and he kind of opened it. And I go, "You alright?" He goes, "Yeah. You?" I said, "I think so."

Trey McDaniel: [00:15:21] And around that time, I saw flashing lights. It's always a beacon of hope for me every time I see the flashing lights. And I was drawn towards them and they were coming closer to me. They were off the toll road, but they were on the northbound lanes. And I kind of started walking towards there, and I stopped right up next to where my vehicle had landed. And there were still, kind of, smoke coming from my vehicle. It wasn't on fire or anything. It was just a big impact. And like walking past it, I could kind of see the crew that was in it. They jumped out, and they started walking towards me, and they saw my uniform because, of course, I'm dressed in my work uniform.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:16:10] Full MedStar out.

Trey McDaniel: [00:16:11] Yeah. And they looked so confused.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:16:15] Were they like, "How do you get here before us?" We just got here.

Trey McDaniel: [00:16:19] Exactly. Because they were under the impression that they were first on scene. And they looked at me kind of funny and I walked towards them. We started talking, and they asked, "So, what's going on?" I said, "I was just in that." They go, "Wait, you were in that?" And I pointed to the FJ and they were in complete disbelief that I was walking around talking to them. And they were like, "Wait a second, no." And they started asking me some of the questions that you would normally ask patients that were involved in something like this. I started answering all their questions appropriately.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:02] Do you know what day it is?

Trey McDaniel: [00:17:03] Exactly.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:04] Where are you? How many fingers am I holding up? Yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [00:17:08] Exactly. And I answered them, flying stars, and I told them, “No, I don’t want to go to the hospital.” And so, about this time, the first arriving fire crew showed up, and they were able to get inside of the wreckage, start helping people. And the other crew, I think they went back into the ambulance to get some more information about where to go from a command. And I heard a firefighter yell, “Hey, we need a stretcher,” or “We need a backboard,” or something. And I looked over, and he’s carrying a patient in his arms, and she’s screaming in pain. And I yell over that ambulance, “Hey, get your stretcher ready. We got a patient, just raise it up all the way,” because there are four-foot barriers in between the ambulance dividing the highways.

Trey McDaniel: [00:18:02] And so, I went to go grab this patient, and she’s complaining some back pain. And as I’m carefully carrying her over the highway, and keep in mind that we’re still on black ice, there’s black ice everywhere. And so, I see a couple of fire crews, they’re slipping on the ice, and you got to be very careful when you’re walking. So, I’m carefully carrying her over the highway and across the highway. And they’re getting the stretcher out, I’m assessing her, wiggle your toes, make sure, you know, answer my questions.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:18:41] So, you’re doing the same thing to her that basically your ambulance crew had done to you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:18:45] Exactly. And so, without any tools, it’s just basic baseline kind of questions that we ask. And so, where’s your back hurting? That kind of thing. So, with help from another person, because it’s a tall barrier, we helped lift her up and over that divider onto the stretcher. And they took her back to the ambulance to further treat her.

Trey McDaniel: [00:19:16] But then, I hear another firefighter saying, “Hey, we need a backboard.” And I think it was like two backboards or something. And so, they were with that patient. So, I hopped over the barrier again and I went to go grab one of their backboards. I brought it over to a couple of those firefighters. And then, we need another backboard. So, I’m like searching for another ambulance. By this time, there’s a lot of crews that are on scene. So, I go track down another backboard, I bring it to another fire crew. And after I bring it to that fire crew, my supervisor sees me, he’s like, “What are you doing?”

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:19:52] Like, my job.

Trey McDaniel: [00:19:53] Yeah, I’m doing my job. And they saw me, but it’s like, they didn’t know I was there.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:20:02] But you had a cut on your nose, didn’t you? You were bleeding.

Trey McDaniel: [00:20:04] I did. I did. I was bleeding.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:20:06] That was your giveaway.

Trey McDaniel: [00:20:07] That was my giveaway. So, that was the reason why they wouldn’t let me work anymore. So, they noticed the—I pointed to my FJ, and nobody could believe that I crawled out of that by myself.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:20:21] I’ve seen it in person. I still can’t believe you crawled out of that yourself.

Trey McDaniel: [00:20:25] I know. It takes a lot of force just to twist that metal up like it did.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:20:29] But also, the cabin kind of remained intact. Like it’s kind of it’s a crazy beautiful.

Trey McDaniel: [00:20:35] It is. It very much is. And somebody said it, I can't remember, I got a comment somewhere that said, "The FJ was designed to sacrifice itself for its occupants." And, you know, you could definitely tell that by looking at the pictures of the aftermath that the cabin was intact, driver and passenger. And so, it's kind of crazy to think about the designers and the engineers, everybody involved with, that they thought about those little tiny things like that, where to put the crumple zones and whatnot.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:21:13] So, after you go off to the hospital, finally, you saved people, you go off to the hospital, get checked out, and at what point do you realize that like—obviously, this was very big, there were more than 130 cars that were involved in that, and you felt the need to post on Reddit, because that's where we, Toyota, saw your story.

Trey McDaniel: [00:21:38] Yeah. So, that was kind of the spur of the moment kind of thing, my post on Reddit. So, right after it, probably about two hours after the whole incident, I got notified of a video that had surfaced of my vehicle that got impacted, the one that it spread everywhere on the internet. So, everybody saw it, and they were all—a lot of the comments, the general consensus was that guy in the FJ, the guy in the FJ. They recognized the FJ because of the white roof and the shape of it, but they were worried about that guy in the FJ.

Trey McDaniel: [00:22:19] And I felt the need, it was 3:00 AM, I had woken up, I couldn't fall back asleep, everything was going on, it had been less than 16 hours after the incident. I couldn't fall back asleep. And so, I made the post on Reddit. I had all those pictures that I'd taken on the scene and I put them up there. And it was just a notification to everybody that was concerned and worried because there were some people that were very, very affected by that video.

Trey McDaniel: [00:22:57] And it was just my reassurance to them that I was okay and I was alive, and it was because of my Toyota that I survived that impact. And that was my main reason for the post. And I made it in the FJ Cruiser sub-Reddit. And I got a lot of comments. I was finding forums, and comments, and posts about that specific incident in the FJ all across the Internet. And I tried to reach out to everybody that I could to let them know that I was okay. And that one post was my main way of doing that on Reddit. I know it was kind of a niche sub-Reddit, but-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:23:45] I think the first time I saw it was someone had posted the video in That Looks Expensive, the That Looks Expensive sub-Reddit.

Trey McDaniel: [00:23:55] That Looks Expensive, yeah, that one. I saw that cross-post, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:23:59] Yeah. And I was like, huh? And then, you made your post. And so, it's something, obviously, we do community management at Toyota. We watch for things, for trends. And so, I started to see it pick up like Friday into Saturday, which these things always happen Friday into Saturday. Even if the incident isn't then, everybody just gets online and focuses on it. So, at that point, we saw it, and I said, "Alright, first thing, got to alert. Marketing, we got to alert," certain people that this is happening, this is picking up. And what do we want to do about it, right? Because if it doesn't go anywhere, fine, I don't know who you are, so I got to do some research on you.

Trey McDaniel: [00:24:52] Exactly.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:24:53] Because if we're going to the point of like offering a free vehicle, we need to know who's this person, did they do what they said they did? And also, what I thought was fascinating, fascinating when I looked, was I found your LinkedIn. You created that what, in like high school or close to high school?

Trey McDaniel: [00:25:10] Yeah. Oh, we're talking about that?

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:12] Alright. We won't talk about it.

Trey McDaniel: [00:25:13] That's awful. My LinkedIn, oh, my goodness.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:16] I found your LinkedIn.

Trey McDaniel: [00:25:17] Texas Toyota.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:18] That's what it said, it said Texas Toyota of Grapevine. And I was like, "Wait a minute. He's one of us? Hold on." So, you know what we did next.

Trey McDaniel: [00:25:27] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:28] We called Texas Toyota of Grapevine, and we said, "Who is this person? Do you know them? What type of person are they?" And what do you think they said back to me?

Trey McDaniel: [00:25:39] I know what they said back to you. I heard the story from the source.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:44] They said, "Awesome employee. He was great. One of our best salesmen. We really hate that he left. But gosh, darn it, he just wanted to become a medic and we could not stop him." That's what they said. So, I was like, "Oh, man, like another good person in the world."

Trey McDaniel: [00:26:02] I mean, you know, it's always been in my nature. And everybody that I've worked with, they all know that, just generous personality that I'm always trying to pass it forward.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:26:17] You just have to help, don't you? You just can't let it like-

Trey McDaniel: [00:26:22] Yeah. And it sucks. It's kind of a hindrance sometimes, because even in my daily life, like I'm doing something, I got bad ADD and it doesn't help it at all, because I'll be doing something, and somebody asks for my help, and I'll be like, if they ask me first, like I'm very good with computers, I built computers, I fix them, and whatnot, and they'll ask me, "Hey, how does this work?" or "I need help with this on my computer," I'll literally stop what I'm doing no matter what it is, and I'll walk over, and I'll go help them. .

Trey McDaniel: [00:26:50] And I may spend two minutes on it or I may spend two hours on it. It's just, I'm there to help somebody no matter what the task is. And that's just always how I've been. And sometimes, like I said it, it sucks, but there's always good that comes out of it, because people appreciate it.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:15] And this is why-

Trey McDaniel: [00:27:17] Stop.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:19] And this is why I'm like, I wish I was a better person. No.

Trey McDaniel: [00:27:30] That's what it's like, huh?

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:32] Oh, that must be nice. No. This is why people call you a hero, right? And I know that's uncomfortable.

Trey McDaniel: [00:27:40] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:41] I know it's uncomfortable.

Trey McDaniel: [00:27:43] Because I'm not the only person that does this. I know every single person that signs up to do the job that I'm in and even other first responding roles, it's a heartless act.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:56] I have to say that like we know that other Toyota and Lexus vehicles were involved in the accident, but people don't – their first instinct isn't to get out of a car and start helping other people, and that's why what you did, and it's uncomfortable, I know this, and this is why when we see something much like Pandora in Paradise fires with his Tundra, you with your FJ, and now, new 4Runner, when we see this, it can't be ignored. You can't look at that in community management and social media, and say, "Yeah, that's great for him. See you later."

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:28:37] And that's why I, as a social media person at Toyota, raise it up to my leadership, and say, "Hey, guys, this is pretty extraordinary. I think we should do something about it." And they do. They do. The leadership looks at it. And then, they say, "Okay, great. Let's give him a new 4Runner." So, I did. What I do before I responded to your Reddit post, I got to call you, because I'm not going to post something on Reddit for you to be like, "Is that a lie? Like, what's happening here?"

Trey McDaniel: [00:29:04] Yeah. No. Absolutely.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:05] Like, that's weird, what is this? So, I call you. You didn't answer my call. Thanks for that, by the way.

Trey McDaniel: [00:29:13] There was a lot going on that day, okay? That was a busy, busy couple days for me.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:19] I'm joking. Okay. So, listen, in all honesty, I would not have answered mine. I do not answer numbers that I do not know, because let's be honest, it's some extended warranty offer that I do not need here in Texas.

Trey McDaniel: [00:29:36] True.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:36] The Texas extended warranty game is out of control.

Trey McDaniel: [00:29:39] Out of control. Very much so, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:41] So, I called you. You didn't answer. So, I go to step two of the give a free car plan, which is, "Hey, it's Tyler from Toyota. Like, can you give me a callback?" What did you think when you got that text? It's fake, right? You thought it was fake?

Trey McDaniel: [00:29:57] Yeah. Honestly, I'll be honest, I didn't even see that text.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:01] What?

Trey McDaniel: [00:30:01] I didn't see that text. I got a call from my dad.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:04] That's right. I talked to your dad.

Trey McDaniel: [00:30:06] I got a call from my dad, and said, "Hey, I'm sending you a number. They said they're from Toyota. She didn't give much specifics on it, but I think you should call them back." I said, "Okay." And I can't remember what I was doing.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:21] You're driving to Walmart.

Trey McDaniel: [00:30:22] I was driving. I wasn't going to Walmart. I wasn't going to Walmart. I was going somewhere else. I just so happened to pull over, because I couldn't handle what you had told me on the phone. I don't want to be driving like that. So, I pulled over.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:37] Safety first. I love it.

Trey McDaniel: [00:30:38] Yeah, absolutely. And so, I pulled over and we had a conversation. So, that's-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:46] That's right. Because I had a couple numbers for you. I thought they were good numbers, but it was your dad instead. I mean, it's still a good number to have.

Trey McDaniel: [00:30:55] We share the same name, legal name. So, it gets confusing sometimes.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:59] Yes. So, I called, your dad didn't pick up either.

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:04] Of course.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:06] So, I texted your dad the same thing, "Hey, it's Tyler from Toyota. If you could give me a callback, I'm trying to get in touch with Trey McDaniel." So, he called me back. And I said, "Hey, I'm trying to get in touch with Trey. Do you have a number for him?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Okay, great." He said, "You know you don't make the FJ anymore." That's what your dad told me.

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:26] Oh, no.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:27] That's what your dad said to me.

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:28] No.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:29] And I said, "Yes, sir, I'm very aware. And I'm very sorry that we don't make the FJ anymore." And he goes, "Okay. Well, what are you going to do?"

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:37] Oh, my God.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:38] That's what I thought.

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:40] I can't. You're too much, Dad. You're too much.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:43] And that's what he said. And so, I said, "Listen, don't worry. We're going to take care of your son. I just need a number for him." And that's when he finally gave it over. Your dad's a trip. Your whole family is a trip.

Trey McDaniel: [00:31:55] He is. Really are.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:31:56] I love all of them. So then, I got in touch with you. You finally answered the phone. You called me back. Thank God. You know what, your dad, I think, is the whole linchpin in this whole situation.

Trey McDaniel: [00:32:06] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:32:08] So, you called me back, and I said, "Hey, listen, I'm going to post in Reddit. I'm going to let you know that we're going to give you a free car. We're paying for taxes. We're paying for anything that needs to be covered on the vehicle, but we're going to get you a new 4Runner." And then, you had

to pull over in Walmart. What was your initial thought when I called you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:32:29] Well, I was driving with Ali at the time, girlfriend, and you were on the big speaker or something on, what was I in? They gave me a Jeep as a rental. And I pulled over, and I just kind of looked at her, and I said, I just kind of mouthed, “No way. No way this is real.” And you kind of explained a little bit more, and I’m like, “Are you serious?”

Trey McDaniel: [00:32:58] Right after—I was trying to keep it calm and collected on the phone. And unfortunately, I started to tear up a little bit, but I tell you what, after we get off the phone call, my eardrums were ringing for bleeding from her screaming so happily. It was like, “What in the world is going on?” And I was like, I had the biggest smile on my face the rest of the day. I could not believe that the company that I have so much pride in, and I enjoy driving, and I’m an advocate for, everywhere I go, even though I’m not selling them anymore, they’ve reached out to me and they wanted to do something like this. And it still blows my mind, even though I’m sitting in it right now.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:33:54] That’s right. We are sitting in the 4Runner right now. Sorry, Dad. We don’t make FJ Cruiser anymore, but we are sitting in a 2021 4Runner TRD Pro in Lunar Rock.

Trey McDaniel: [00:34:06] Lunar Rock. It’s a very special color to me right now. Very special.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:34:11] It’s a bomb color. It looks different. I mean, to me, I’m also gray, green, blue color, but it changes in like different lights.

Trey McDaniel: [00:34:18] Yeah, it absolutely does. It’s a little overcast today, but it almost looks cement gray on some days. And then, yeah, it looks a bit of—it has a green hue on others, so it’s very nice.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:34:33] Okay. So, Tuesday, I contacted you. And then, nine days later, we gave you this beautiful 2021 4Runner TRD Pro in Lunar Rock. So, we had to locate it, and then we got it there by the—so, we contacted you Tuesday. We got it there by the next Monday after we located it. And we had to have a COVID-friendly presentation, which is not easy in these times.

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:00] No, it’s not.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:02] Because as I told you, when we do anything at Toyota, we come full force. We cannot do it halfway. And everyone was—can I tell you something?

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:12] What?

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:12] Everyone was so excited to meet you.

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:14] I know.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:14] I had to turn executives away.

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:18] And that’s crazy. People that don’t even know me, but people that just want to meet me. It’s-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:23] Is that the wildest part for you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:26] Yeah, it is. It really is because we were talking earlier and I told you that, before all this, like I just kind of glided under the radar, you know. And it’s-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:37] Yeah. Service to others, myself, and-

Trey McDaniel: [00:35:39] Exactly. I went to work. You know, I did my job. You know, I may have gotten a thank you or two here and there, but it was never expected for me. But now, I didn't really have a choice. I was just kind of thrown into the limelight, literally.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:35:57] Yeah, and figuratively.

Trey McDaniel: [00:36:00] True. So, it's definitely a change for me that I'm slowly starting to get used to. Maybe it'll burn off, but we'll see. I was talking to a couple other people, and they just said, "You know, this is all for you." I think you've said that a time or two as well. And so, right now, I'm playing it day by day. I'm trying to reach out to as many people as I can. Everybody that I tell my story to, and they're either inspired or they're so glad that I'm alive after seeing because they probably saw the video and they're so glad that I'm here to share it. And it's just riding the wave, the Toyota wave right now.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:36:50] Here's the thing. It's really a Trey McDaniel wave.

Trey McDaniel: [00:36:53] True.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:36:53] We just happened to be like the surfboard.

Trey McDaniel: [00:36:56] Yeah, I like that. That's a good one.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:01] So, you had the post, right?

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:03] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:03] The post on Reddit, in the FJ Cruiser sub-Reddit, which is very small to begin with, had like 2,300 upvotes. It had like 600 comments or close to.

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:13] Very abnormal for that sub-Reddit.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:15] Right, which is why they pinned it to the top of the sub-Reddit by the way. So, are people reaching out like you never thought they would?

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:24] Yes. And I'm still getting comments on that original post, still getting DMs, which I just recently learned how to respond to. I never knew that was a feature.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:37] This is social media 101 right here.

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:39] Mr. 10-year account over here doesn't know how to respond to a DM on Reddit. Okay. The Reddit has changed a lot over the years, so I'm still trying to learn all the new ins and outs.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:49] You're busy saving people.

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:51] Yeah, exactly. I'm more of a lurker that has an account.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:37:56] Aren't we all on Reddit though?

Trey McDaniel: [00:37:59] And so, it's just crazy how it all worked out.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:38:04] So, after the accident, you opened up your Instagram to be public from private, and you went from like a hundred followers to, now, you have like 1,800 followers.

Trey McDaniel: [00:38:12] Yeah, I know.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:38:13] And it's still growing.

Trey McDaniel: [00:38:14] Yeah, it's crazy. And I kind of made it public, because I want other people to kind of—especially people that have been keeping up with the story or just hearing about the story, they kind of want to follow along this new path, this new journey that I'm taking. Unfortunately, now, it's without an FJ Cruiser, but it's with a new vehicle. And it's kind of like this new branch in my life that I want to share with people. So, making it public, I think it was a good decision. It's kind of weird, because I don't really air out all my dirty laundry to the world.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:38:58] You don't have to.

Trey McDaniel: [00:38:59] I know, but it's just weird going so public with it. And I felt it was right, because I mean, my story is already public. I might as well make a continuation of the story. It doesn't end with that accident. It continues, because I'm growing and I'm living after the fact. So, just sharing that with people. And I made that because I wanted to primarily be the adventures, and then the journey of the mods and upgrades that I plan on doing to this new 4Runner.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:39:40] So, let's talk about that.

Trey McDaniel: [00:39:41] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:39:42] Tell me about the first time that you saw the new 4Runner.

Trey McDaniel: [00:39:46] So, we're talking about the Lunar Rock color? Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:39:52] Yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [00:39:52] So, I first read about it on, I think it was like a Reddit post, or something in, like, my Google News feed, or something. And I'm always keeping up with the latest and greatest. And as far as Toyota goes, at least I try to. And I saw that that was the color for the new TRD Pros this year. I absolutely fell in love with it. My sister, she bought a Lunar Rock RAV4 earlier in the year—or yeah, earlier in that year. And so, I was like, “Wow, that is a very, very pretty color.”

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:40:25] But it looks so different on a RAV4 versus your 4Runner.

Trey McDaniel: [00:40:28] It does, it does. And that's the thing.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:40:30] I have to say, because we lined your sister's and your car.

Trey McDaniel: [00:40:33] She got the one with the light, the snowcap, the white roof.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:40:36] Yeah, two-tone.

Trey McDaniel: [00:40:38] Two-tone, exactly. And it looks a lot different. Kind of her vehicle reminds me of the FJ.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:40:43] What color was your—what is the name of the color of your FJ?

Trey McDaniel: [00:40:46] You know, it's funny you say that. So, mine was a 2011. And that year, that particular year, it's very weird, because when I went back in the service department to get some touch-up paint a

while back, they couldn't pinpoint exactly. It took them a while to pinpoint that exact color. It was a weird color code. It's not the normal silver that you'll see FJs in, like the 2007 to 2010. It's a different, flakier, slightly darker metallic silver.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:41:21] I was waiting for you to say a color, because again, I am green, gray, blue color blind. So, to me, it looks green or blue.

Trey McDaniel: [00:41:31] Yeah. No, I understand, but the way—I don't know what it was, but they finally found it.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:41:37] Someone emailed me, and said, was his FJ yellow? I was like, "It was definitely not yellow."

Trey McDaniel: [00:41:41] I've got people like in the videos and comments, "Who was in that red FJ?" "Purple FJ?" I didn't know they made purple ones. I know they make—whatever.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:41:51] Maybe it had like an iridescent topcoat, we don't know about it.

Trey McDaniel: [00:41:54] Yeah, exactly. So, as far as the color, it was a special color.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:41:59] It's a silver.

Trey McDaniel: [00:41:59] Very, very special. Special silver, okay?

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:42:03] Okay. Alright. So, we held a special ceremony for you at Texas Toyota of Grapevine, because how could we not? As your LinkedIn profile has told me, you worked there.

Trey McDaniel: [00:42:18] Which has since been deleted.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:42:19] Yes, yes. You worked there as a sales—we have done a lot of social media refinement in the past 10 days. So, you worked there as a sales associate from 2013 to 2015. You sold a hell of a lot of Tundras in the month of December, what? 2014? '13?

Trey McDaniel: [00:42:40] Yeah, '14, I believe, top dog Tundra sales. And then-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:42:46] That's so cool.

Trey McDaniel: [00:42:47] And then, number one volume leader for all vehicles in December. So, yeah. I mean, I went in not knowing anything about sales to getting two trophies. I posted those on my Instagram. I'm proud of them.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:43:03] That's so cool.

Trey McDaniel: [00:43:03] Yeah. And car sales is not easy. It's not easy, but I just kind of learned to do it kind of thing. And that job has really helped me in the job that I'm in now.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:43:18] Yeah, connecting people.

Trey McDaniel: [00:43:20] Because sales, it's all about building that rapport. And I told you this before, I was like, I learned to build rapport at Texas Toyota. And now, I'm relating that back to my job now where I have to meet people, and I have to interact with them, and I have to-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:43:40] Sometimes, at their lowest point.

Trey McDaniel: [00:43:41] Exactly. Like I connect with them on their absolute worst day, because nobody calls 911 just to say hi, and everything's roses and whatnot. And it's their absolute lowest point when you meet these people. And so, it's really, really helped me in my job now. So, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:44:06] Yeah. So, we decided to have, it was like a homecoming, I felt like-

Trey McDaniel: [00:44:10] Yeah, it was great.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:44:11] ... to have the presentation of the truck there.

Trey McDaniel: [00:44:12] The presentation, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:44:13] So, you got to come in, you get to see it. What is it like seeing your new 4Runner that's yours? How many miles did it have on it when you got it?

Trey McDaniel: [00:44:20] It's seven miles on the odometer when I hopped in there for the first time, and it was still a dream. I felt like I hadn't even woken up that morning yet. It was—I was kind of overwhelmed with emotion when I first saw it. It was exactly, I'll drop this one, because it was exactly the same. It was the same exact vehicle my dad had sent me a picture of three weeks before that collision. Before the giant incident on I-35, that pileup. He sent me a picture of this exact vehicle.

Trey McDaniel: [00:44:57] He was out and about one day doing errands, and he saw a TRD Pro Lunar Rock 4Runner sitting, parked somewhere in some commercial establishment. And he hopped out, and he took a picture of it, and he sent it to me, and he captioned it, "Next vehicle?" I look back on that. Three weeks before the accident, I got a picture from my dad asking me, if this is my next vehicle. And wow, it's crazy.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:45:30] It becomes like prophetic at some point.

Trey McDaniel: [00:45:32] Oh, yeah. And you never imagine something like this would ever happen to you. I mean, I got up that day thinking it was just going to be a normal day. I'm going to go give some more COVID vaccines to patients. And next thing I know, my whole world is turned upside down.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:45:51] Because that's what you were on your way to do, because sometimes, you work in the ambulance and treat traumas. Sometimes, you do-

Trey McDaniel: [00:45:56] Exactly.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:45:56] ... COVID vaccines. It's like whatever.

Trey McDaniel: [00:45:58] Exactly.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:45:59] MedStar is a governmental agency, so whatever they're contracted out to do.

Trey McDaniel: [00:46:02] Right, exactly. And that day, I was detailed to do the COVID vaccines over at the Tarrant County Outreach Center. So, wow. Now, I'm here talking to you.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:46:22] In the 4Runner.

Trey McDaniel: [00:46:23] In a brand new 2021 TRD Pro 4Runner.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:46:29] It's got that new car smell. I mean, obviously, it would.

Trey McDaniel: [00:46:32] I hope it never goes away. I hope it never goes away.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:46:36] So, what amazed me is you've had this vehicle, hold on, one, two, three, four, we are on day five here of you having this vehicle and you have already started modifications. Tell me what you've done.

Trey McDaniel: [00:46:49] Okay. Just a few things, just the simple things. We did the chrome delete kit on the interior and exterior, AJT Designs. He has some different mods for the shifters, shifter knobs, interior, and then also, the key fobs are really cool that he makes. I've been following him for like six years on Instagram. And I remember when he first came out with those, and I've always wanted one. He made one for the FJ, but I never really jumped on it. But I figured now or never. And then, also, just a couple little tweaks, interior, just the screen protector on the infotainment system. I'm looking forward to maybe a level kit. There's a couple of companies that make a level kit, Westcott Designs makes a level kit for the Fox-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:47:48] Shocks.

Trey McDaniel: [00:47:48] Shocks, yeah. They do a fantastic job. So, I got window tint coming tomorrow thanks to Fat Lip Customs out in Haltom City. There's a lot of people reaching out to me that they want to pay back something, and I don't-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:48:07] This is unbelievable to you. I know it is. I know.

Trey McDaniel: [00:48:11] It's just crazy to me.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:48:12] But people just see it like, again, no one just jumps out of their car injured, and is like, "Alright, let's do this. Give me a backboard, I'll carry this patient. Let's help people."

Trey McDaniel: [00:48:21] Yeah. It's just all I know. It's just what's been ingrained in me for the past five years, ever since I decided to jump into this role. And I haven't really looked back. It's just kind of, I've had my eyes on the prize ever since. And looking forward to, after working so many years in EMS, I'm looking forward to jumping into the fire side of things. I still get the EMS aspect of it, but there's also the additional firefighting aspect, which I'm definitely looking forward to. I went through the fire academy, I went to paramedic school. All my dime. And so, I've put myself through all these different certifications and programs in hopes to further my career. And I'm really, really looking forward to that aspect of it.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:12] I don't think you know how rare that is. Like to do it, then help people, and that you're not asking for anything in return.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:19] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:19] And I think that's what everybody on Reddit is responding to. You do it because this is the kindness of your heart. And while the word, hero, might feel uncomfortable, it is appropriate.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:30] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:31] I know it's uncomfortable.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:33] Yeah. I mean, I don't wear a cape or anything, so that's-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:40] My six-year-old son, he kept asking me questions about you.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:44] Oh, yeah?

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:45] And he said, he kept saying, “What did Trey do after he saved the world?” That’s what he kept saying.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:51] Oh, that’s cute.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:53] It was super cute.

Trey McDaniel: [00:49:54] That’s adorable.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:49:56] He kept saying, “After he saved the world,” I was like, “Well, you know, I’m not going to correct you, buddy.” Alright. So, you kind of talked about it a little bit. You have your new 4Runner, you talked about the things you’re going to do to it, but what’s next in the future? So, you have always, after EMS, you want to become a firefighter, correct?

Trey McDaniel: [00:50:16] Right.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:50:16] That’s the future. Talk about that.

Trey McDaniel: [00:50:18] Yeah. I mean, it’s always something I wanted to do. Ever since I’ve been a little kid, it’s been in the back of my mind. After high school, I had it on back burner for a while. And then, finally, after Texas Toyota, I jumped into EMS. And then, after EMS, I’m like, “Okay.” Just kind of the steps that I needed to take to get into that firefighting role. And so, yeah, I just remember when I was younger, preschool, my mom, every single day, she would stop by the fire station so I could just go say hi.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:00] Really?

Trey McDaniel: [00:51:01] Mm-hmm. Cobb County Fire Department, yeah. I got pictures.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:05] And you would hang out?

Trey McDaniel: [00:51:05] Yeah, I would hang out for, you know, five, 10 minutes, and then she’d take me off to preschool. So, yeah, I remember all those things.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:14] And that was it. That’s when it was born.

Trey McDaniel: [00:51:16] Yeah. I knew it was going to happen. I just didn’t know when it would happen. And now that I’m grown and I’ve reached the maturity level, I can finally kind of start gearing for that particular role, because it takes a lot. It takes a lot of integrity and a lot of backbone to be able to do a lot of these jobs.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:43] So, we had some surprises for you at the presentation of the 4Runner.

Trey McDaniel: [00:51:46] Right.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:46] And I told Ali about them and she did a good job keeping the secret.

Trey McDaniel: [00:51:49] Yes, she did.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:51:52] So, one of the secrets was that our CEO of Toyota Motor North America or TMNA, Ted Ogawa, was coming. You didn’t know that. What was it like to meet the CEO of Toyota?

Trey McDaniel: [00:52:05] He was very appreciative of what I did. And that whole time, shaking all these hands, every single executive that I met, it all felt so unreal that I was actually there in their presence. Especially during COVID, I never thought that would happen. But it's like, wow, everything that you do for this company is really, really showing, especially today. And yeah, he's a fantastic guy. I probably could have talked to him for another hour or two, but time was limited.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:52:46] You know we had executives fighting to come to this, but we were limited on space.

Trey McDaniel: [00:52:51] That's what I heard. And it blows my mind that they're fighting just to meet me. It's like, I don't know. I don't know.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:53:05] It's wild. I know.

Trey McDaniel: [00:53:06] I know. It is.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:53:06] But we had to be like, no, you can't come, but you can come. We've got—we all have to stay six feet apart.

Trey McDaniel: [00:53:13] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:53:14] And then, the one thing that Ted said, part of his message, was that he has shared your story with Akio Toyoda, obviously, the CEO of Toyota Motor Corporation, the entire global company. What does it mean that like Akio knows about your story?

Trey McDaniel: [00:53:31] That's wild. That is wow! I knew his name when I was working there at Toyota, but I never really imagined that I would actually have a connection with him. And then, being able to make a video message to Akio, wow! WOW! And from hearing from your feedback, I mean, he loved it. Absolutely, he loved it. He loved hearing back from everybody. And I just never even imagined that this story would reach all the way to Japan like that.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:54:08] I heard this morning from when I went to the office briefly, someone was like, "Oh, Japanese media got this and they love it." And you know when Japanese media get it.

Trey McDaniel: [00:54:18] Oh, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:54:18] It's a big deal if the Japanese media get a hold of it.

Trey McDaniel: [00:54:22] Oh, man. I need to hire a translator or something, I don't know.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:54:27] Start those Duolingo classes.

Trey McDaniel: [00:54:30] Yeah, exactly.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:54:33] So, the other surprises in store were TFS, Toyota Financial Services.

Trey McDaniel: [00:54:39] Oh, my goodness.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:54:40] Generously, like Mark Templin was there, he's the CEO of Toyota Financial Services. And while he did not speak, I know you talked to him privately, they provided and covered this 4Runner for a VSA, Vehicle Services Agreement, for maintenance and warranty. So, you're kind of like covered on this.

Trey McDaniel: [00:54:59] Yeah. I mean, I never had any issues with my FJ, whatsoever, and I doubt I'll have any on this, but it's nice to know that I'm completely covered no matter what. It's crazy. Crazy.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:14] Yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:14] Wow.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:15] And then, there was one surprise that even caught me by surprise. The person who organized the whole event, your former general manager at-

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:25] And partner now.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:26] And he is a partner now, yes, Neil from Texas Toyota of Grapevine, he gave you insurance for years. He cut you a check.

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:37] Yeah, he did.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:38] That was a surprise to me.

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:39] I know.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:39] How did you feel?

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:43] Everything didn't really hit me up until that exact moment, because it's like, I was blindsided by this. I wasn't expecting it. Everything else, I was kind of like mentally preparing throughout the week, and then he blindsides me with this.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:55:56] A big check. He brought out the big check.

Trey McDaniel: [00:55:58] A big check. It was the fat check. It was the ones where you have to stretch your arms out to hold.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:56:02] Yeah. It was like Happy Gilmore style, throw out in the back.

Trey McDaniel: [00:56:05] Exactly. So, working with Neil, he's always been like a leader, and he's somebody that I looked up to, especially when selling vehicles. He always had like the best advice. Whenever I was feeling down and about, maybe some customers didn't come in for their appointment, or I didn't sell a vehicle, or something like that, he always had the best advice of bringing me back up. And he was just kind of like that figure in my life, but not a lot of people get to appreciate that. And the fact that he still remembered me after all these years that I've been in EMS, it's like-

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:56:49] He also told an awesome story about how there was like some sort of ice situation.

Trey McDaniel: [00:56:55] Icepocalypse, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:56:58] Previous to this one, where you were in the accident, where people got stuck in ditches in front of the dealerships, and once again, not even in EMS yet, you raced out there with your FJ to like pull people out.

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:10] Uh-huh. That's exactly right.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:57:11] You just can't help yourself, can't you?

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:13] I know. I mean, I used to carry chains and tow straps, just recovery equipment in the FJ just for that sole purpose.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:57:21] Just in case.

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:22] Just in case. Absolutely. Always be prepared. That should be a life philosophy.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:57:29] Were you a Boy Scout?

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:33] I was. I didn't go all the way through the Eagle Scout, but, you know, I'm still carrying out all of those traits.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:57:38] Be prepared. Yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:39] Absolutely. And that's what I plan with doing with this 4Runner, just can be like an overland kind of preparedness kind of vehicle.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:57:49] I feel like that's a Texas pride thing. It's a transplant here. It's like, just be prepared for anything and help out.

Trey McDaniel: [00:57:55] Yeah, Absolutely. I mean, absolutely. And so, yeah, I got to rebuild my kit for the back, because I had a really nice steel box with all my recovery, all of my jumper cables. And I had a whole bunch of stuff in that kit, just like emergency kit. It was a big giant plain old box that just got shattered with the accident. So, I got to rebuild all that up.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:58:21] Is there anything that you saved from the accident?

Trey McDaniel: [00:58:23] There is. So, in the FJ Cruiser, at least in my particular model, in the center console, there was a metal FJ Cruiser cutout. It was like a cover for that center console. And I was able to salvage that. My plan is to frame it up, put the license plate that I had. Yeah, just kind of make. So, just a little something for the wall just to remember it by.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:58:52] Of course, a tribute.

Trey McDaniel: [00:58:54] And the other thing that I was really concerned about getting was my patches.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:58:58] Yes, because you got patches all over the roof of the car, yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [00:59:01] Yeah. I haven't put them up yet, but they're in the back of the 4Runner right now. They're all in a bag. So, I had to shake all the glass and everything out of them, because it was a mess.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:59:09] Oh no!

Trey McDaniel: [00:59:10] But my mom was helping me scrub the glass out of each interval patch, because every time I would take it off, I had to start putting gloves on, because I would get glass shards in my fingers pulling those things off. But I was adamant on getting those patches back. I had probably about a hundred something, a hundred plus patches. And it was kind of like a badge of honor having those things up there.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:59:36] They were before the accident, though, too.

Trey McDaniel: [00:59:37] They were. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:59:41] They were coming back with you.

Trey McDaniel: [00:59:43] I did retrieve those, and I'm happy to put any other patches anyone one wants to send me as well.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:59:51] Alright. Well, I'm sure Allyn and the Pandra, I think he has one.

Trey McDaniel: [00:59:55] Oh, that would be awesome. I need to make my own.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:59:58] Yes. The FJ needs a memorial patch.

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:02] I like that.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:00:03] Yeah, 2011 to 2021.

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:04] Yeah. Someone reach out to me, give me some ideas.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:00:08] Or a pen.

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:09] Pen? Yeah, absolutely.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:00:10] Pen would be good. Yeah.

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:11] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:00:12] Alright, Trey. So, that is an amazing story. Everything you've told me is just like just crazy, but also, there are things in the future, right? With what happened with the FJ, you now have the 4Runner and there are more things to look out for in the future. What is next for you, the 4Runner? How can people follow you?

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:32] Absolutely. So, I mean, next for me is getting back on my feet. I sustained a slight injury during the accident on my left ankle, so I'm trying to rehabilitate that one. I'm going through physical therapy. So, as soon as I can get that, I can get back to work and get the ball rolling again, start testing for more fire departments, and kind of progress my career in that way.

Trey McDaniel: [01:00:56] Of course, the FJ is no longer, but I'm going to try to relive its memory through this new 4Runner by upgrading it. I'm looking into new bumpers, front and back, winches, new roof rack. I'm really going to rig this out the way I want to. I have a vision for it. And I hope everybody can follow me throughout that journey on my Instagram, would be posting up all my pictures.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:01:28] And what's your Instagram so people can follow you?

Trey McDaniel: [01:01:31] Absolutely. So, my Instagram is @Treyman780. And so, it's T-R-E-Y-M-A-N-7-8-0. And I'll be posting up every single picture that I can in regards to all the new upgrades, every little single—every single tweak I do on this vehicle. So, I'm very excited and I hope to see you all there.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:01:55] Yeah, because people who are interested in you, because you're fun, you're interesting, and also, you love Toyota, so you know that helps.

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:03] Yeah, it does. It does. Absolutely.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:06] When can we get your mom into a Toyota?

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:08] Oh, okay. Alright. That's going to be difficult. That's going to be hard to probably all that.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:13] Alright. Listen. I have a difficult husband. They exist in our families.

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:18] True. True.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:19] I'm going to work on your mom.

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:20] I got every other person in my family into a Toyota, so I'm doing alright on that front.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:27] Tell your dad, I still profusely apologize about the FJ, alright?

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:30] I think it was out of your hands at that point, but I will.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:37] I'm still sorry about it. I never want to disappoint that man. Alright. Trey McDaniel, thank you for joining us today on Toyota Untold.

Trey McDaniel: [01:02:44] Tyler, appreciate it. Thank you very much for having me.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:02:49] Hearing Trey McDaniel's story is not easy and it wasn't easy for him to tell. I've had the honor of interviewing both Trey and Allyn Pierce from the Paradise fires. And what I can say about these two gentlemen is that while they are regular people just like you and I, they are extraordinary human beings. They won't call themselves heroes, but it is clear from their actions that that's what they are.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:03:14] And in this type of year that we've had because of the pandemic, it's really hard and challenging for a lot of us to have these good, new stories that we can listen to, and enjoy, and feel like we're a part of, just brings us closer together as a community. Thanks for listening to Toyota Untold. This is Tyler.

Tyler Litchenberger: [01:03:38] A reminder that modifying your vehicle with non-Genuine Toyota parts can negatively affect your warranty, safety performance and street legality. The opinions expressed in this podcast are those of the guest(s) and/or host(s), and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Toyota or Lexus, Divisions of Toyota Motorsales USA Inc. Please note that Toyota Motorsales USA Inc. is not responsible for any errors or the accuracy or timeliness of the content provided. Used with permission. All right reserved worldwide.