

The Story of BOOGALOO

[00:00:00] From Talking Mouths.

[00:00:04] EVAN WISE: I've ridden this trail, I swear, like hundreds of times.

Let's get the sound foley.

My name is Evan Wise. We're sitting in the lee of the wind at the old cabin on Upper Boogaloo. So I live in Riverdale. And the best thing about Boogaloo is that it is an after dinner loop. It's a before dinner loop. It's a "I have an hour of time and I can pin it and go all the way up to the top of downtown, get down to the bottom, make it home in an hour." And I've gotten my exercise, I've gotten my adrenaline kick for the day, and that just allows me to basically be a better person.

I think my favorite section of Boogaloo is midtown because you can pump the trail and not pedal the entirety of it. And so it's a little bit of a personal challenge to pump all the corners and then you get to the compression and you can just, you can roll down that, you can send it a little bit and you get to the bottom and you pop and then you can hold your speed so that you get to the... You called it the Dave King Memorial Swamp?

You can get to that bridge and it's a personal challenge to be able to, to not pedal. The overall character of the trail is just fun. Like you can make this a hard trail by trying to go really fast. You can go for a cruise, you can take your kids on it because it's challenging for kids and it just flows... Like, it really is a classic trail. And what's amazing is that it's a year round trail that I will ride in the winter a ton as well. And I really don't get tired of it. I just really enjoy riding this trail.

[00:01:55] HOST: You're listening to Every Trail Tells a Story.

In this podcast, we explore the origins of our favorite Yukon trails. Guided by the dreamers, planners, bushwhackers, builders, obsessive personalities, and yes, the rogues who brought these trails to life. In this episode, builders Jesse Devost, Thane Phillips and me, Mark Koepke, recount the crazy history of Whitehorse's very own Boogaloo movement. I don't care. That's what I'm calling it.

This is the story of Boogaloo.

[00:02:56] THANE PHILLIPS: Why do people go out there and wander around the bush and decide to put a mountain bike trail in instead of sitting on the couch?

[00:03:01] JESSE DEVOST: It's just kind of a no brainer for me. I mean... You just have it naturally in you that you want to do it and, you know, it's not like I sort of felt like I had to go and build a trail. Like, I just wanted to do it. It's fun work. I like being outside. I like, you know, hacking around in the bush and exploring and doing that. You always have a laugh with your friends and, like, you know, there's nothing bad in any of that. So it's kind of an easy thing for me.

But I guess maybe not everybody's wired that way.

[00:03:31] MARK KOEPKE: When I first started riding, I couldn't think of anything that seemed stupider to me than building bike trails. And I remember one of the people I was riding with a lot that summer, I wanted to go riding one day, and he said he couldn't because he was going to go up to work on this new trail on Grey Mountain called Mother Tucker. And this didn't sound like an easy place to get to or easy work. And I'm like, "We should be out having fun, riding our bikes,

and you're going to go do this. Why would you do that when there are hundreds of kilometers of trails already perfectly good for riding? Why take a sandwich to a feast?"

And that's sort of what trail building seemed to me.

My name is Mark Koepke. I was born in Whitehorse in 1972, and I lived here most of my life, and most of that time I've lived in Riverdale.

I had no experience with mountain biking, really, until 2003. I was living downtown on Lowe street, and I had a lot of friends who lived in the same building, the same area, and they were into mountain biking. And by that point, I was big into cross country skiing. Like, I cross country skied all the time in the winter and mostly for fitness. And then what I found was in the summers, I was kind of losing my fitness. I didn't have a sort of an analog for cross country skiing in the summer. And I thought, "Okay, I'm going to get into mountain biking because I need to do something in the summer." And so that summer of 2003, we would ride Riverdale constantly. And basically we had two choices. We'd either go out towards Chadburn Lake.

[00:05:14] JESSE: My trail and your trail,

MARK: Or we'd--

[00:05:16] JESSE: Head out towards Long Lake.

MARK: Fat Tire Fever.

I got so excited about mountain biking that first year, by the end of that first year, that I didn't want to ride... I felt like riding roads, just like riding up the Grey Mountain road... I didn't want to do that anymore. I wanted to get on single track as soon as possible.

[00:05:33] JESSE: Mark and I were, you know, just really curious about ways that we could get up into the trails without having to ride up the Grey Mountain Road.

[00:05:42] MARK: I had the very first mountain bike map that Forest Pearson had made. And so I really started to kind of study this map. And I think, specifically, what I was looking for was a route that would get you on single track from as close to Lewes Boulevard as possible up to that point on the Magnusson where you could go ride the Magnusson Yellow out to what's now known as No Shirt, No Service. Which would get you to Hilarious. I don't even know if I was thinking specifically about building it, but I looked at the map and realized I think there is a route where an up track could be built. That was probably April or May of 2004.

Really quickly after that I pulled in my friend, Jesse Devost.

[00:06:26] JESSE: My name is Jesse Devost, I've lived here about 25 years and I grew up on Hornby island down in B.C. and Hornby island has got kind of a really famous mountain biking history. So, kind of a group of guys about maybe 5ish years older than me were real pioneers. They bought some of the first mountain bikes in Canada and made, I think, some of the first mountain bike, kind of purpose-built mountain bike trails. And so there's like a, what we call a mountain on Hornby island. It's about 900ft high and we covered that mountain in a whole bunch of trails. And so like I said, i was a bit younger than them, but when I was a kind of a kid and a teenager, I'd go up and help them at work parties and, of course, we rode all of the trails and, and some of the things they made on Hornby. I could talk about Hornby island trails forever, but, but some of the things they made, I think really influenced things that got built in a lot of other places too and certainly was some inspiration for things that we did here.

[00:07:19] MARK: Jesse and I, actually over the last almost 20 years now, we've done a lot of different creative work together. Like when I was working as a freelance writer, Jesse did graphic design for me. So we worked together in that capacity. We for a couple of years we co-produced like a little radio segment for CBC Yukon. So this was another thing that Jesse and I did in what's been a kind of long creative association. So it was an outlet for us to do something completely different, way more physical, but still creative.

[00:07:51] JESSE: We put most of Lower Boogaloo in really in a few days.

[00:07:55] MARK: I'd like to say that we built what is Lower Boogaloo probably in a single weekend. Like, it seems like it was a single weekend to me.

[00:08:01] JESSE: Mark and I did a lot of the scouting. There's that little pond behind the snow dump that's kind of on the other side there. And I think we just went out exploring one day. We found like bits of kind of existing trail. They were maybe little walking trails. We'd be out there until 11:00 or midnight, just kind of poking around and things. And then it was kind of like, well, "I guess we can just start digging into the ground." And we just, yeah, we managed to round a couple of people up and we actually started to build a trail.

[00:08:25] MARK: There were little bits of trail in there already, and a lot of it was just clearing stuff off of it and then basically identifying a line between those segments.

[00:08:35] JESSE: Christian St. Pierre and Jean-Paul Molgat came out and helped us.

[00:08:39] MARK: And I think we were using garden rakes. We didn't have MacLeods and things like that.

[00:08:42] JESSE: The terrain was kind of open and pretty easy to build on, and we.

[00:08:46] MARK: Had a rideable trail before too long.

[00:08:49] JESSE: I don't remember a specific moment where we realized that Lower Boogaloo was actually not a very fun trail to ride because we rode it up and there was, yeah, there was some point where we realized that you could go up the Grey Mountain Road and take Rip out to the top of Lower Boogaloo and come back down it. And I think because there was that one section of Lower Boogaloo where there's that little lake and the trail kind of from the ridge would slalom through the aspens down to that lake. And I still think that that is the funnest part of all the Boogaloo trails. It's a bit worn out and they've rerouted some of it because it's just... I don't think we've maybe built it very well and it just got kind of ridden out. But in those first couple of years, it was just like being on a little roller coaster going down that section. So I think riding down that a few times, we realized that this is just way more fun.

[00:09:40] MARK: And so maybe this wasn't going to be an uptrack because people were riding it down and it was like, oh, that's interesting.

[00:09:48] JESSE: I still think that Lower Boogaloo is kind of like the most underrated part of all of the trails. I don't think people ride it. I think they often cut off to do other things. And it's actually the Piece that. And I'm going to ruin it by saying this now, but it's like the piece that's been ridden the least and is in the best shape, I think, of all the Boogaloo trails. And so I always make a point of going out there because you can still hit it pretty fast, and it's smooth and fun. And so in a lot of ways, I think Lower Boogaloo, and I don't mean this for nostalgic reasons, this is maybe my favorite part.

[00:10:16] MARK: So that was just Lower Boogaloo. The goal was still to get up to the Magnusson. So we continued to build Upper Boogaloo, thinking, "Okay, well, this is going to be an even better downhill thing now because you're going to be able to go through this gully, but it's still going to be, you know, an uptrack, too." But by that point, maybe the up track thing was fading a little bit.

[00:10:33] JESSE: Upper Boogaloo, from my mind, was always going to be a down trail because there's a nice little gully that, for that second half of Upper Boogaloo, made me think of, like, some of the trails I'd ridden on Hornby island that really took advantage of the sides of a gully, or maybe like a half pipe or something like that. And I thought, that's in my mind. I thought, "Wow, this is like a perfect place to build a trail that goes swoops in and out of the sides of a gully and then pops out at the bottom." And so I remember really thinking, like, "How can we take the most advantage of this gully to get as many turns and banks and things in there as we can as you would fly?"

[00:11:07] MARK: That fall, we went back, and that was pretty much just Jesse and Christian and I.

[00:11:13] JESSE: The first part of Upper Boogaloo was just getting to the top of that. That first drop. It's a little off-camber and ridden out now, which is too bad. But when we first built it, you go swooping into that bottom bit with a lot of speed, and it was really, really good time.

[00:11:27] MARK: We once again used some existing trail, like from the lookout over the Magnusson up to where there's an old cabin, and that was an existing piece of trail. There's some stuff on the exposed ridge there where it was super easy. I mean, there was kind of a tread there already, because any exposed ridge, there's been foot traffic and there's something there. So that part was really easy. But then we dove down into that gully.

It was like pickup sticks in there, so many trees down. There was a lot of cutting and stuff. And once again, we did it all with hand saws. This is not a remote area, so we did not want to be running chainsaws and drawing a lot of attention to what we were doing at this time. Because--

[00:12:07] JESSE: Because everybody was kind of doing it on the sly at the time. Because it wasn't really an organized thing.

[00:12:12] MARK: There was no process.

[00:12:13] JESSE: There wasn't a lot of structure and rules around who could build trails. And so you kind of did it on the sly. It was before the city stepped in and did some, I think, some really good work to kind of organize and formalize a lot of that. And the trails that they've been built since then are just, frankly, a lot better.

[00:12:28] MARK: So that was really driven by, from what I remember, Jesse and Christian and myself.

[00:12:35] JESSE: Yeah, Christian was out a lot with us in those early days. I think he was pretty keen.

[00:12:39] MARK: And then towards the end, when we'd done all the hard work in that gully, that's when I remember Thane Phillips entering the picture.

[00:12:49] JESSE: He was just all of a sudden there and quite central to a lot of it.

[00:12:54] MARK: My first memory of getting involved with Boogaloo was because I built a bunch of structures in my yard out of wood.

And I believe Mark told me, "You should put those on Boogaloo." And I was like, "What's Boogaloo?"

[00:13:10] JESSE: That's right. He was keen on building stuff. And that's kind of when ramps and those ladder bridges and all that kind of stuff were a bit of a new exciting thing for trails. And so we just put them in. We didn't even need them, you know, we just put them in because they were fun.

[00:13:24] THANE: My first memory is of carrying this really, really heavy piece of wood, pieces of wood all nailed together up from...

[00:13:34] JESSE: The power line at the bottom part of Upper Boogaloo. We had built a line in, and Thane saw an opportunity to build a ramp. And so, well, we're like, "No, we can't put these things on here." And so he just went and built his own line.

[00:13:46] THANE: There was a bunch of people, I can't remember who was all there.

[00:13:51] MARK: It was the first time that quite a number of people were involved hauling in these prefabricated structures that Thane had made. I remember Jonathan Kerr helping out... Alistair Smith, Stephane Aucoin...

[00:14:03] JESSE A: And so we had the A line and the B line at the bottom of Upper Boogaloo. And Thane's was the B line with the ramps. And the A line was the original one that we went down.

[00:14:11] THANE: Those structures have since obviously been replaced, which is good. I mean, they weren't built to any standards for anything. They were just hacked and hammered together. So they were solid when we put them in, though, because I would say they were overbuilt when we put them in, which is how you want to do it.

[00:14:28] JESSE: And people can still choose the way they want to go.

[00:14:31] MARK: We must have been thinking, not only would it be fun to be able to kind of crisscross them for people going down, but obviously we were trying to make sure that there was a climbing line to go up the gully.

[00:14:40] JESSE: Really? That's great.

THANE: I was never convinced that was a good idea. And then once we started putting the structures in, I think that pretty much solidified it as a downhill.

People are riding down to go off the drops and to go over the ramps and all that kind of stuff.

I am Thane Phillips.

[00:15:03] JESSE: Thane, from the minute he got involved, pretty much right to the end, was full on.

Thane's an enthusiastic guy. So I think if there's something Thane is into, he gets into it 100%.

[00:15:12] THANE: I think I'm someone who likes to get involved. So, I started mountain biking in the early 90s, actually went to the Canadian nationals for racing biking and quite a lot racing quite a lot. Also cross country skiing in the winter. I was using mountain biking as a sort of off season training and then sort of stopped doing all that kind of stuff and went to university.

[00:15:33] MARK: And working with Thane was a really great way to reconnect with like one of my oldest friends from childhood who, you know, I grew up with, but hadn't seen him as much. And it was really cool to reconnect with Thane and have such a bond over this trail. Jesse brought some trail building experience and Thane was a way more experienced mountain biker than me. And so I think, you know, those two guys are probably responsible for whatever good decisions we made in terms of the actual flow of the trail.

[00:16:07] JESSE: I just love picking a line and love trying to figure out what was going to be the fastest, flowiest, you know, kind of most interesting or challenging, or keep you on your toes, make you use your brain.

[00:16:16] THANE: I like finding the line, the creativity that's involved with that.

[00:16:21] JESSE: I always just loved walking through the woods, thinking that I was on my bike and just pretending I was, you know, bombing through the trees. I would run through chunks of the woods just to kind of dry run it, just to kind of see what it felt like.

[00:16:35] THANE: Arms out straight to your side and you run through the bush and whatever feels fun, that's probably the way to do it because that's the width of trail you need, and it gives you that sense of what you're going to feel on the bike as you go along.

[00:16:49] JESSE: His style of line was a lot twistier than mine. I liked a little faster and the corners a little bigger.

[00:16:55] THANE: Mark was definitely a lot more concerned with, "I want to get the trail here, like, up to this point. I don't necessarily care what happens in between point A and point B."

[00:17:05] JESSE: Mark's role was more the macro direction of the trail. Like, "Hey, let's try and incorporate this hill, or let's try and loop in this cool rock feature. Or, let's try and see if we can more or less direct it towards this thing." He was looking at the bigger landforms, I think, and maybe Thane and I had more opinions on the specific placement of the trail as it went.

[00:17:25] MARK: I was part of a bigger team that made sure that it was a fun trail to ride. And I was mostly focused on just putting the route in.

[00:17:33] JESSE: I don't know if I think of myself really as a trail builder. I'm just like a guy who built. Who's built some trails. You learn by doing.

[00:17:41] THANE: You don't need to read books and watch videos and take courses. You can also just go out and do it yourself and figure it out as you go along. There's a lot of value in that, I think so many aspects of life, we learn by doing.

[00:17:53] JESSE: We just kind of went ahead and did it as opposed to.... I think I had a book. I think I bought a book, and we would occasionally leaf through it, and it talked about sort of benching something properly or whatever. The theory around trail building is so much better than what we did in our day. And it shows because a lot of the trails are ridden out in ways that were probably pretty preventable.

[00:18:16] MARK: Upper Boogaloo was done by the end of 2004. So, we basically built that whole thing between May and September or October maybe. It was getting later into the year. From that point, we actually thought the trail was done.

[00:18:33] JESSE: "Where is it?" And you go, "Well, you know, when there's that tree and there's a left turn and, you know, you know..." It was just impossible to follow somebody's directions unless you showed them.

[00:18:42] MARK: I think we had a very makeshift sign, and I think we spelled Boogaloo wrong. I think we spelled it B, U, G, A L, O, O, more like Bugaloo.

[00:18:53] JESSE: B, double O, A, G, double O. Right. So, yeah, well, yeah.

How did we come up with the name Boogaloo? Yeah, well, you know, a Boogaloo was like kind of a style of dance.

[00:19:07] MARK: There's an article that was about a race on Boogaloo and the article begins with "Boogaloo wasn't named after the 1960s dance craze." Didn't go on to say what it was named after. And I find that interesting because it's kind of true.

[00:19:22] JESSE: Mark came up with a name and it was based on like an old, very off-color childhood joke.

[00:19:29] MARK: The joke, you can look it up on the Internet. I'm not going to get into it, but the punchline to this joke [redacted]. So I heard this joke and I either heard it as and got confused with the word Boogaloo at some point along the way or I was told the joke but the person who told it to me was confused and instead of using [redacted] they used Boogaloo. This word stuck in my mind for some crazy reason and I think I just threw it out there.

[00:20:00] JESSE: Just a kind of a fun sounding word that kind of maybe elicited something twisting through the woods or whatever. So it's kind of one of those onomatopoeia words that just describes the sound or the feeling or something of what's going on.

[00:20:13] MARK: For sure, for whatever reason it just, it just stuck and we liked it.

[00:20:17] JESSE: But of course it got controversial about three or four years ago when all these right wing nut bars in the United States started calling themselves Boogaloo Boys. And so there was, I think there was a letter to the paper...

[00:20:28] MARK: Basically, lobbying the city council to change it in light of the connotations that were now around Boogaloo. And there was a lot of stuff about Boogaloo in the media.

[00:20:38] CLIP: We're against the state, bro.

[00:20:40] CLIP: Floral shirts and guns.

[00:20:42] CLIP: Two signatures of the so called Boogaloo Boys. Shifty is a self proclaimed Boogaloo Boy.

[00:20:48] CLIP: The George Floyd riots were a magnet for the Boogaloo Boys.

[00:20:51] CLIP: Boogaloos have been out in force. Both accused of belonging to the Boogaloo

Movement.

[00:20:56] CLIP: Boogaloo three percenters, right wing militias.

[00:20:58] CLIP: They are not the irrational ones. All new at 5, a member of the Boogaloo Boys.

[00:21:02] CLIP: We're all Americans, right?

[00:21:03] CLIP: Boogaloo Boys.

[00:21:04] CLIP: Why do you think you're a Boogaloo?

[00:21:06] MARK: We're not hearing a lot about the Boogaloo Boys anymore. This term existed long before it was ever co-opted by this group. And it really did refer to, like, a 1960s dance.

[00:21:17] THANE: I always tell this to everybody: I didn't come up with any of the names, but one thing about Boogaloo that people give me a hard time for is the fact that, you know, it's one trail, but it's called Lower Boogaloo, Upper Boogaloo, Boogaloo Heights, Downtown, Boogaloo, Boogaloo North. The one thing that doesn't make sense to anybody is that Downtown Boogaloo is the highest part of the trail.

It's the furthest away from downtown. But whatever. I mean, it is what it is. It goes down, and you're going to town. So I guess Downtown sort of makes sense.

[00:21:53] JESSE: It wasn't supposed to make sense.

[00:21:55] MARK: When we started Boogaloo, the idea was only to basically connect to the Magnusson Trail. And I think, in our minds, it naturally evolved because we kind of did it in two phases. The lower part and then the upper part. We just started referring to Lower Boogaloo and Upper Boogaloo. And then later on, we started to expand the trail. I guess we faced a choice. Are we going to call some of these, you know, the new extensions? Are we going to give them new names and call them new trails, or are we going to, you know, continue with this? And for whatever reason, I think we just kind of thought we wanted to keep the Boogaloo name. And we thought it was also kind of ridiculous by just adding all these other modifiers to it.

[00:22:28] JESSE: By the time we got to, like, Boogaloo Heights, it was just a laugh by then, you know. They sounded like suburbs or something like that. We were just having a good time with it, you know, and the more ridiculous it was, the better, for sure.

[00:22:45] MARK: And then that kind of got reinforced when Jesse decided to do the initial run of trail signage.

[00:22:51] JESSE: Well, people didn't put signs on trails back then, so that was a bit of an interesting piece. You know, there's some people who love that exclusivity in, you know, a special find that nobody knows about. But we're building a trail on the edge of a city. Like, of course we want people to know where it is. And so that was, like, a fun piece, too. So at the time, I was doing a lot of graphic design, and I was really into fonts, and I was really particularly interested in the font that they use for highway signs. And so I found it on some US Department of Transportation website. And silk screened these signs for each section of the Boogaloo trails and spray-painted them on the green and did all that. So it kind of had that look before the city, like standardized it. But I think there's one or two still out there.

[00:23:35] MARK: Summer 2005, what we did was we wound up going in and building what we

called Skinnies for Ninnies behind the cemetery.

[00:23:45] THANE: Everything was incredibly low to the ground.

[00:23:48] JESSE: They were all like 4 inches off the ground.

[00:23:52] THANE: You could have fallen off everything and maybe sprained your ego literally... Mark was definitely a ninny.

[00:23:58] MARK: Half of the Skinnies for Ninnies I didn't even ride.

[00:24:04] JESSE: I'm terrible at riding any of those things, But I definitely give them a try.

[00:24:09] MARK: We focused on building that in 2005. And I think that's about all we did.

[00:24:15] THANE: We worked for hours and hours and hours, creating an environment that was safe for everybody to use, fun for everybody to use. Challenging in a way, if you wanted to do it, it would be great. If you didn't want to do it, also great. You could ride around everything.

[00:24:31] JESSE: I remember telling some friends about it and I said, "Oh, we built these little, you know, wood structures that you can ride and stuff. And we built like a little loop that you could do and all that." And people like, "Oh boy, I wouldn't ride that. You know, I'm not into that kind of thing." And I said, "Don't worry about it. This is a trail built by a bunch of middle aged guys." Like, we're not out to like hurt anybody. Well, we were in like our 30s, you know, we weren't like, you know, we weren't young punks. We built things that we could ride.

[00:25:00] THANE: We buried two tires vertically in the ground. And these were like automobile tires, truck tires. And we kind of nailed/bolted a 2 by 8 on the top of it. So you had to get up onto it, and then the tires were naturally going to be a little wobbly, that you had to bike across. Your tire tread's 6 to 8 inches off the ground. On the way in, there was a skinny that I remember, it was a tree that had fallen down, was horizontal. We built a ramp up to it. And I took a chainsaw and notched the entire length of the top of the tree, effectively as it's lying down, and then hammered and chiseled all of it out.

[00:25:41] MARK: A lot of that work Was done by Colin McKenzie.

[00:25:44] THANE: Is that Colin McKenzie? Okay, maybe I just had a hammer.

[00:25:49] MARK: We actually did use a chainsaw for that. But at that point we weren't so worried about drawing attention to ourselves because as far as we were concerned, like the trail part was already done.... We [also] made a springboard.

[00:26:02] THANE: Oh yeah!

[00:26:04] MARK: We had an old tire. We buried half of the tire in the ground. And we had a skinny that was attached to the tire, like bolted to the tire on the end. And you could ride out to the end and kind of bounce on it and then bounce off.

[00:26:18] THANE: I actually think I only rode that successfully once after all the attempts....

[00:26:24] MARK: We had a teeter totter that we built and there was a whole other little loop in there that's now disappeared.

[00:26:29] JESSE: Often we'd be riding it and there'd be lots of people just doing sessions.

[00:26:36] THANE: I believe I was on a canoe trip and I came back and I had all these messages like, "You gotta come." Because it was all chopped up with chainsaws into like bite-sized pieces.

[00:26:45] MARK: It was like the Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

[00:26:48] THANE: I was almost going to burst into tears. I was so upset because I was just like, I just want to go home and have a drink.

[00:26:53] MARK: How the newspaper coverage got started was that I think it was some parents who were phoning to say, "Hey, somebody went and destroyed all of these features that our kids love to ride."

[00:27:05] JESSE: It seemed to be a pastime of rednecks to bomb in there and slice them up.

[00:27:10] THANE: I heard later that it was the City crew that took it out. They denied it, but I heard later that it was definitely the City. The one positive to come out of that was the City learned that structures like that are a positive impact on the citizens of the city. Now the City trail crew has put in a few little features, little rollovers, and some quite wide skinnies, if that's the right word.

Definitely they're much less ghetto looking than the ones that were there.

[00:27:42] JESSE: Certainly after we'd built Upper Boogaloo, it's like, "Well, there's got to be a more fun way to get to the top of Upper Boogaloo." And so that's when we started poking around the woods and we built Boogaloo Heights.

[00:27:53] MARK: Boogaloo was getting ridden so much and people were having so much fun on the trail that I think it was just like, let's make this thing bigger.

[00:28:04] THANE: It was sort of like this positive feedback loop of, you know, we do something... people would ride it and they really enjoyed it. And then you get pleasure out of people, out of people enjoying what you built. That's also tied to our skills. We're improving as trail builders and we're learning techniques and we're learning how to pick better lines and how to do things. And I think we had some really interesting structures. The one I always go back to is that cabin.

[00:28:34] JESSE: Was it the top of Upper Boogaloo or the bottom of Boogaloo Heights? It's funny, I don't remember a lot of the goings on about the cabin.

[00:28:43] THANE: When Mark and I and Jesse found that cabin, and we were like, "That cabin has to be a feature on the trail." We didn't know right away what we were going to do, but that was like, "We are going to use that cabin for something."

[00:28:55] JESSE: It was a bit of a no-brainer to build it because it was just a cool thing to do.

[00:28:59] MARK: It was a decrepit, falling down old...

[00:29:01] THANE: Trappers cabin that didn't have like a roof or whatever. It kind of went up above about four or five feet, I think. So the square of the cabin was there and that was about it. Probably about 10ft across, I guess. And so, let's build like a ramp that goes up the wall of the

cabin and across the void of the middle and then down the other side before you hit this fun little downhill piece. And so we put it in.

[00:29:22] THANE: The amount of work that went into building that structure, it was substantial.

[00:29:27] MARK: And that, for a long time, was the coolest feature on Boogaloo.

[00:29:33] JESSE: It was this pretty badass structure. It was incorporating this Yukon heritage piece.

[00:29:38] MARK: It was the only trail in Whitehorse where you would ride over the remnant of a cabin.

[00:29:42] THANE: And we had built it in a way that I thought was really safe because it was quite wide.

[00:29:46] MARK: It wasn't super skinny, but it wasn't really wide.

[00:29:52] THANE: The defining features of the width of the boardwalk, I remember as we said, you could stop and put your feet down on either side of your bike and have enough space to do that. There was no technique needed to ride the cabin other than to be brave enough to get up onto a height. And your wheels were probably six feet off the ground.

[00:30:09] JESSE: It was a pretty advanced stunt.

[00:30:13] THANE: It was a structure that was easily rideable by people who didn't have a lot of skill and they could get a lot of enjoyment out of it.

[00:30:23] MARK: I have to confess, I never once rode it. I am a conservative rider, which is a nice way of saying chicken shit.

[00:30:30] JESSE: Oh, I never rode it. I don't even think I walked across it. It was so scary.

[00:30:35] THANE: You know, each to their own.

[00:30:41] MARK: I do not subscribe to the Rob McConnell philosophy. Like, "You know, if you're going to build it, then you better be prepared to ride it." I do not believe that at all. I was all for building this structure over the cabin, and I spent a lot of time working on it, but I never once did it.

[00:30:57] THANE: I was definitely conscious that everything I built on the trail I would want to ride. And I'm not a hugely technical rider, so I'm not going to build something that other people would think is unsafe.

[00:31:09] MARK: But what happened was, once again, people started vandalizing it.

[00:31:13] THANE: We were really lucky when it got vandalized that I think the first person who rode it, her name was Skye Newnham. She's a friend of mine. And for whatever reason, she went up that ramp. And when you climb the ramp, onto the ramp that's on top, you cannot see anything that's coming because of the nature of it. Either she felt something funny and she stopped, or she decided to stop her bike and walk up the ramp to look first. And that's when she discovered all the boards on that top ramp had been removed, but all the nails were still there. It would have been a disaster if somebody rode that. Like, it would have been really, really bad.

[00:31:53] MARK: It happened more than once.

And I know Thane and I were actually... we were obviously getting really concerned about that, and we were looking for one of those mirrors that you see in hallways. We were going to actually get a hold of one of those and mount it on a tree so that as you approached it, you could at least do a quick visual in the mirror and confirm that the down ramp was still there. But before we could do that, somebody actually went in and basically just destroyed the whole cabin. It looks like maybe they tried to burn the thing down.

[00:32:23] THANE: That was... That was hard to take.

[00:32:25] MARK: And so there's been no effort to replicate or rebuild that since then.

[00:32:30] THANE: The really unfortunate part about that is the cabin was a signature feature of that trail. A lot of people really enjoyed it, and the people who vandalized it, they had to work hard to vandalize it. Like, that's just weak. Makes me really sad when I go by there and it's sort of half a wall now.

[00:32:46] MARK: That was kind of like the marquee feature on the trail.

[00:32:49] JESSE: It'd be all over Instagram today if it was still up, I'm sure.

[00:32:58] MARK: We built Boogaloo Heights in 2006. That's when I first met Sylvain Turcotte. He was a friend of Thane. So Thane at that point dragged Sylvain in. And Sylvain did a ton of work on, I think, Boogaloo Heights. Definitely Boogaloo North.

[00:33:14] THANE: Every single time we needed help, he was like the first person in line. He was always there for Boogaloo North, for sure.

[00:33:22] MARK: And Jesse at that point was out of the picture. I think he had a.... I don't know where Jesse was.

[00:33:28] JESSE: Yeah, I wasn't a super-big part of Boogaloo North. That was really....

[00:33:33] MARK: Thane and I driving that one. And yeah, lots of work from Sylvain.

[00:33:38] THANE: I was always impressed with Sylvain... how much work he put in, considering he was building and starting a business right at the same time.

[00:33:45] MARK: Everybody brought kind of endless enthusiasm for it, and it waxed and waned depending on what was going on in your life. Like, I wouldn't say the enthusiasm waned, but the ability to act on it would wane.

Once the decision was made that this trail could be extended in both directions, like both north towards the hospital and also back higher up onto the mountain, I spent a ridiculous amount of time poring over maps. I read maps in bed. I drove my wife crazy.

I got a hold of, like, manna from Heaven, the orienteering maps that had been done by Forest Pearson, once again. And these were really, really detailed. The contours, information about the vegetation. You could see rocks. With those maps in hand, we started really looking at other places where the trail might be extended. And so it would just be like, "Hey, I think we could push the trail a little further this way." And then we would go out and.

[00:34:44] JESSE: We would often be in three different places going. I think I found a spot and we'd come and check it out and maybe it worked out or not. And somebody would go, "Well, what about this feature that we can try and link in?" And we'd go and check that out and see if it worked.

[00:34:56] THANE: Did we always all get along? Absolutely not. Which is fine. Like, that's life.

[00:35:02] JESSE: It was a really democratic process. And we just discussed it. And if it made sense that that idea was better than this idea, we just went for it. I mean, we all wanted the trail to be fun.

[00:35:10] THANE: I remember Jesse and I getting into a disagreement about a jump.

We disagreed over, like, the orientation of the jump, which again, is like, funny now, but, you know, we were both pretty passionate about what we were doing, which is great.

[00:35:24] MARK: We would often choose a line that was the path of least resistance. Like Boogaloo Heights, Lower Boogaloo, Upper Boogaloo, Boogaloo North... the line was picked based on basically what would require the least cutting. If the trail would have been way better with cutting down a tree, like one tree or something, we probably weren't doing that. We would just go around it, just...

[00:35:46] THANE: Avoiding things we had to chainsaw.

[00:35:50] MARK: When we were doing Boogaloo North in 2006, my wife was very, very pregnant, and she felt this overwhelming need to go be with her mother.

And the next thing you know, my wife was gone down to Kamloops. And I was like, "Oh, yes."

And that's when we got a lot of Boogaloo North done.

Yeah, she'd put up with quite a bit, not only the maps in bed, but I can't count the number of times that she caught me, especially driving down the south access.... "ogling," I guess, would be the word. Ogling Grey Mountain. I mean, it was almost pornographic sometimes, the way I looked at that mountain. She'd go, "Are you looking at the mountain again?" I'm like, "Yeah, I'm looking at the mountain again." So it was sort of like the other woman a little bit. But she got over it.

[00:36:42] STEPHANIE BUCHANAN: I loved it that these were men... approaching an older age than one would think for playing. And they were playing. They were building these trails and digging and getting obsessed with maps. And I was... I was impressed.

[00:37:00] THANE: If you didn't enjoy the physical labor involved in building a trail, you would stop much, much, much sooner than we did. I remember in one instance, on Boogaloo North, there was this tree that was just in the wrong spot.

And I remember, like, taking a Pulaski and just hammering it, and it took an hour. Sylvain was there, Mark was there. And eventually we got the tree out. And there was a lot of enjoyment in, like, the physical labor involved in just manhandling this thing out of the line.

[00:37:38] MARK: Those times when we did have to cut down a tree and there was a stump left, you know, we called it stump fucking.

[00:37:45] JESSE: Stump fucking.

[00:37:46] THANE: Stump fucking. Yeah, we did a lot of stump fucking.

[00:37:50] MARK: If a stump needed to be got out, somebody had to go fuck the stump.

[00:37:53] JESSE: And it was just this awful grunt work. And so usually we give it to Mark because he was like the Bam Bam of the crew. And we just give him some heavy tool, and he'd go ahead and stump fuck these things out of the ground, and it'd just be like a pristine thing had gone through and there'd never been a tree there before.

[00:38:11] MARK: I don't know if we ever twigged onto this idea that maybe if it was at least waist height or higher, they're easier to get out.

[00:38:16] JESSE: Not to say that, you know, we were exercising our finest intellect. A good way to work out your frustrations, though, is to hack a root out of the ground in the Yukon. I mean, you wouldn't be able to do that in a lot of other parts of Canada, but here they're not that deep.

[00:38:27] MARK: I really remember one morning when it was kind of not a very nice day. It was drizzly.

[00:38:33] THANE: Oh, that berm.

[00:38:36] MARK: We decided to build a berm.

[00:38:37] THANE: That berm, it was a right hand corner that took you down to where RIP meets the trail.

[00:38:45] MARK: Thane was out. I was out. I think Jesse was out.

[Redacted] was out. I think it might have just been the four of us. I'm sure it was a Saturday morning. It was not a nice morning, but we were out there and I think we amused ourselves the entire morning just talking about dirt holing.

Basically it was several hours of nothing but innuendo around dirt holing.

[00:39:09] JESSE: Definitely when you're out there digging and hacking, getting bitten by bugs and you're sweaty and dirty and hungry and, you know, the, the, the juvenile humor comes out pretty quickly.

[00:39:19] THANE: That sounds very accurate. Talking about dirt holing and all that stuff for two hours.

[00:39:24] MARK: And I don't even really know what it means. It sounds vaguely...

[00:39:28] JESSE: Yeah, no, we definitely had some laughs about some really dumb things for too long of a time. When any sane person would listen to us, they would wonder what was going on. But I think you just... A fun way to hang out with your friends, though, is to do some hard work outside, right? And yeah, you just do stupid jokes forever.

[00:39:45] MARK: I love being out there doing that stuff with my friends. At some points, I think, actually, I started to enjoy the trail building more than the ride.

[00:39:56] JESSE: "How far up Grey Mountain can we get?" We wanted to see how high up we could get. So we kept on building pieces up and up and up and into Grey Mountain.

[00:40:05] MARK: 2007. We were back scouting and working on what became Downtown Boogaloo. Actually, 2007 is probably when we did what's now known as Midtown Boogaloo.

[00:40:17] THANE: I remember Mark found the compression, so.

[00:40:20] MARK: We would have done that first and connected that to Boogaloo Heights. And then I think the following year was the big push to do Downtown Boogaloo.

[00:40:31] THANE: When it comes to actually building a trail and deciding where it goes, I think two is a magic number. Three, it can get complicated. More than that, if you're actually planning a line, there's way too many pinions. When it comes to, like, putting in the tread after the line's already been built, then, yes, you want bodies to help you: to shovel, to fill, to cut, to do whatever.

[00:40:52] MARK: Everything above Midtown Boogaloo was the first time, I think we really started actively recruiting work parties to come out. And by "we," I mean Thane did the bulk of that.

[00:41:04] JESSE: He whipped up a lot of interest from a lot of other people.

[00:41:09] MARK: Downtown Boogaloo may have been the first trail built by Facebook in Whitehorse. Because Thane was working Facebook hard.

[00:41:18] THANE: That was when Facebook was just sort of becoming a thing, especially in Whitehorse. And so, yeah, like, we needed bodies.

[00:41:24] JESSE: All of a sudden, you'd be like, "We're going on Thursday, because I've got, like, 14 people ready to go" ... in vehicles and tools and wood and all that kind of stuff.

[00:41:31] MARK: And so we'd meet at the Magnusson parking lot, and we'd load up in the back of trucks, and we drive up Woodcutters Road.

[00:41:39] THANE: I remember we got Philippe from, you know, the bike mechanic. And I remember as he was driving us up the Woodcutters Road, sitting in the back of his pickup, and he was going way too fast, and we had tools flying around in the back with six or eight people trying to hang on into the back of it.

[00:41:55] JESSE: We'd be like, foreman and kind of running a site, you know. Instead of Mark and I just kind of quietly picking away in the bush and Thane joining us. Then we had lots of people out.

[00:42:06] MARK: And Downtown Boogaloo is the first point at which any significant chainsaw work was involved. We were much further away from town at that point.

[00:42:16] THANE: Andy Preto: I told him where the line was, and then I went behind him, and he was chainsawing, and I was just throwing logs out of the way left, right, and center.

And it was a revelation to me how useful a chainsaw would be in trail making.

[00:42:29] JESSE: All our brains just went like, "Okay, let's do that." And we didn't cut down a lot of trees with the chainsaw, but we could cut through big piles of dead fall and things like. And we just realized the potential. It's like, okay, we can actually pick the line we want to pick and not have to choose the line around a bunch of stuff just because it's inconvenient.

[00:42:47] MARK: One of my favorite memories from the build isn't even my own memory. It's a secondhand memory from Jesse.

[00:42:55] JESSE: Dave King had told me this story. So, Thane bought a chainsaw because I think maybe he needed one at his home or he came up with some weak reason to do so, but I think he really wanted to get it for the trails. And so Dave King, who is also helping us a lot, also bought a chainsaw the same day. I think they may have bought them together or something like that. And so they were really excited. "Let's make a plan to go out and, you know, practice" with these things or use them or whatever. And anyway, nobody could get a hold of Thane and, and, and this was the day Thane had bought his chainsaw. So apparently his girlfriend at the time had come home and Thane wasn't there. And there was an empty beer can on the living room table and the chainsaw safety video paused on the TV at about halfway through and he and the chainsaw were gone.

[00:43:43] MARK: I think it'd be funnier if Jesse remembered that with at least two empty beer cans.

[00:43:48] JESSE: Yeah, maybe it was two beer cans. I'm not sure. The more beer cans, the more fun.

[00:43:53] THANE: I don't remember that story, but would I argue against it? No, absolutely not. I do remember watching a Husqvarna safety video before heading out.

[00:44:01] CLIP FROM HUSQVARNA YOUTUBE VIDEO: Always read the instructions before you start using the saw.

MAR: KSo he was responsible enough to know that he needed a little bit of education.

I guess he was endeavoring to give himself that education.

CLIP FROM HUSQVARNA YOUTUBE VIDEO: The chainsaw is an efficient tool, but it can also be dangerous if used incorrectly. That's why safety must always come first, even if you're just cutting some firewood out...

[00:44:25] THANE: You learn by doing. You don't need to read books and watch videos, .

[00:44:31] MARK: "All right, I know enough. I'm going out."

[00:44:35] THANE: After, you know, hundreds of hours of a handsaw and Pulaski, to have a chainsaw in your hand is like life-altering.

Downtown. Boogaloo. The top section has become really rooty and bumpy. It's a whole series of bumps and jumps, which, when you ride it at speed on a full suspension bike, is really fun. And it's a challenge. Um, is it the buff, flowy single track that you find everywhere now? No. Um, and that's why I like it. And there's also the reason... there's a section on that trail that I remember every time I ride it, how much work Mark and I did just putting in this 20 meter section of trail. The one thing I would have done differently is that one section that's always wet and kind of unfun to ride. Kind of near the middle of Downtown Boogaloo. I probably would have routed

around it.

[00:45:34] MARK: There was another boggy area near where we built the Buckway, just on the uphill side of where Go-T branches off. There's a little bridge there now, but there wasn't a bridge there for the longest time.

One of the guys who helped us build Downtown Boogaloo was Dave King, who was a CBC reporter. And he used to ride Boogaloo all the time. It was what he did on his lunch break. And when we knew he was leaving town, I started encouraging him to build a bridge over that little wet spot. And I kept saying, "Dave, if you build that bridge before you go, it'll be your legacy. We will call it the Dave King Memorial Bridge. I'll put a sign there and everything."

And a week would go by, another week, and I'd be riding the trail and there was no bridge. And I'm like, "Dave, you're running out of time. If you don't build the Dave King Memorial Bridge, I'm going to name this the Dave King Memorial Swamp." I don't know how many people know it because the sign has faded, but to me that's still the Dave King Memorial Swamp.

[00:46:29] SHREK: Huh?

What are you doing in my swamp?

[00:46:37] MARK: Boogaloo Lakes was an afterthought that I think maybe we did in about 2010, 2011 maybe. And that was really just Jesse and I. I think there'd been a gap of a year. We hadn't really done anything.

[00:46:48] JESSE: Boogaloo North spit you out at Booby Trap, which is where Rob just about impaled himself to death. But you had to go downhill and then back up the Broken Truck Trail, I think. And it was this really inconvenient kind of loss of elevation, which you had to immediately gain right back again. So again, it's kind of like problem-solving. Some of the trails, you know, just sort of build themselves because you're like, "I just don't want to ride this, like, shitty section, so let's find a more fun way around it." So, Mark and I went scouting around that area and it turned out there was this fun little zip down by the lake right there. So we just, we popped it in like really over a couple of days.

[00:47:29] MARK: And that was a nice finish to the trail. Nothing's been done since then.

[00:47:34] JESSE: I think one of the early plans was to try and build something all the way out to Long Lake. We could have just kept on spidering out through the woods, and there would have been, you know, much more Boogaloo.

[00:47:44] MARK: I was always excited to ride the trails after we built them, but I think sometimes I was more excited about getting out and building the trail and seeing where that was going to go than actually riding. And it also fed my OCD at some point, I think, like, I just was determined to keep this thing going.

[00:48:00] THANE: Yeah, I was definitely obsessed with trail building on Boogaloo and just sort of extending it further and further.

[00:48:07] MARK: We were all pretty obsessed with it for a number of years, so I don't know what stopped it in the end, but there was a point at which I think, like, this thing could have wound up in Carmacks.

[00:48:18] THANE: Hundreds of hours were put into building that trail.

[00:48:21] JESSE: Yeah, the hours. Oh, just hundreds. I mean, it never felt like a job, though, because we were having a good time doing it, and we just felt like we were making the whole system on Grey Mountain a little bit better and more fun, so it didn't matter how long it took.

[00:48:36] THANE: Working with Mark and Jesse was really interesting, you know, highlighting in lots of ways how different we all were, looking for different lines. Definitely wanting different things out of the trail, which is all good because it ended up with a trail that I think we should all be proud of. One thing I really like about the trail, and I would attribute this to Mark, would be the fact that you can hit the trail at multiple points and do, like, a harder ride and do the whole thing, or you can hit it at Midtown... If you don't want to go that far, you can just hit it at a Magnusson, do Upper and Lower... Just do Lower...

[00:49:15] MARK: I think one of the most interesting features on Boogaloo is actually on Lower Boogaloo, and if you're riding down Lower Boogaloo, it's kind of on your left just as the snow dump would be disappearing out of sight behind you.

It's an indication of our approach when we first started this trail in terms of not cutting things. The trail takes this crazy, just sharp turn, like, out and then right back in. And that was because there was a piece of deadfall that came out, and the trail ideally would have gone right through the center of this deadfall, but we were too lazy to even cut the deadfall, so we literally routed the trail around the tip of the deadfall. Once that piece of deadfall is gone, it's just going to be like, "Huh. Why would they do that?" I always laugh at that every time I ride that. I think, "Man, were we lazy."

[00:50:14] JESSE: One of the unintended results was that Boogaloo ended up being this kind of hub of a whole bunch of other things that people built trails off of that, which is really cool. Yeah, it really is a bit of a nerve center of a lot of the trails on Grey Mountain now.

[00:50:29] MARK: There's been a lot of stuff done to it since we finished. More and more in recent years.

[00:50:33] THANE: I made a conscious decision a number of years ago, because I just didn't have the energy or the time in my life to remain active in the building community, that if the City was so inclined to change things on the trail for certain reasons, I was fine with that.

[00:50:48] JESSE: Yeah, it's great when you can just enjoy it and not feel like you're responsible for it. There's still the odd moment where I feel like I'd see something that could need fixing. It's like, I should call the City. Can I just tell them, like, "Hi, original builder here. Can I go out and cut that thing down or reroute this thing?" And would they go, "Oh, you're like one of the... Yeah, go ahead." Or am I just some idiot who just, you know, rides and wants to fix something and they would just ignore. I don't know.

[00:51:16] THANE: I think that if the trail builder is still invested in the trail and still wanting to contribute and work on it, I think they have almost right of first refusal if someone's like, "Hey, I want to put this jump on the trail," or "I want to reroute this corner." I mean, I think out of respect to the trail builder, you got to ask them.

In the context of Boogaloo. I know that I made a decision that I don't need to be asked about anything anymore. People, out of respect, have asked me in the past, and it's kind of like that torch is to be held by somebody else now. You know, there's a lot of people with a lot of really good ideas, and I don't need to be consulted on them anymore. The only one I was disappointed to hear about, and it got pulled out right away, was somebody put jumps on Boogaloo Heights

right on the trail. Why wouldn't you make it so people don't have to ride structure on a trail that isn't super technical? Like, nobody should have to ride anything on that trail they don't want to.

[00:52:13] JESSE: I think over the years, I feel a little less close to it because, first of all, I don't live close to it. I do still ride it a few times a year, but I live closer to the Mount Mac trails, and so that's a little more convenient for me. But it does feel kind of like going in your old neighborhood again when you go down and you ride it. And I still really enjoy it, and I kind of anticipate the corners. And I still always think of, like, you know, when we were building a particular section of it. It's kind of neat knowing that you kind of made that impact.

[00:52:45] THANE: My relationship with Boogaloo right now would be, you know, it's a sense of pride that it's something I was involved in making. Absolutely. Every time I ride it, I enjoy it.

And I think Boogaloo really pushed trail building in Whitehorse and in the Yukon because it highlighted to many, many people how much enjoyment there is in something that's simple, like single track. You don't need to be a, you know, daredevil to ride the trail. You can be at all different skill levels. I mean, when my kids were really, really little and on a run bike, we rode portions of it.

[00:53:22] MARK: So my kids are going to outlive me, but that trail is going to outlive my kids, and it's probably going to outlive their kids and their kids and, yeah, that's an interesting thought to me. Nothing that I would have been thinking about at the time I was doing it, but when you're forced to reflect upon it, I came 180 degrees from that first summer when I was riding and thinking that only an idiot would spend their time building a trail instead of riding all the perfectly good trails that were already there.

[00:53:51] THANE: If you want to think about it, the amount of money that is spent by people and governments and individuals and groups on recreational facilities and how much money was not spent building Boogaloo. And hundreds and hundreds--well, thousands of people in the summer--get enjoyment out of it. I mean, that is a real sense of pride.

[00:54:10] JESSE: I don't think a lot of people think about who built the trails. You know, because Mark and I are both kind of lower key members of the mountain biking community, people just don't know that we did it. And it's interesting because it's probably one of the more popular trails in town. It'll come up in conversation and I'll say it, and people are like, "Wow." It's like they're so impressed. It's a nice thing to hear, but I'm kind of surprised about it, too. And then people are like, "Wow, thank you for, like, doing that" and "It's so great" and all this. And I'm thinking, "Yeah, but, you know, we just did because it was fun." We just wanted to have a trail there, and it was just fun to do. Right? And people think you're doing some sort of manual labor, community service punishment kind of thing, but it's just a fun thing to do.

[00:54:57] MARK: Every Trail Tells a Story is made by Talking Mouths. The theme music is Blue Ska by Kevin MacLeod. You can find detailed episode credits at talkingmouths.com A special thank you to my two partners in crime. I'm also very grateful to Alex Sokolon. Despite never meeting me, he accepted an invitation to talk about Starbuck's Revenge in my basement. And then he returned the next day to interview me about Boogaloo.

Thanks for listening.