

Transcript of Interview with Danny Black by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Danny Black

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 04/21/2022

Location (Interviewee): Lansing, Michigan.

(Interviewer):

Some of the things we discussed include:

Hustling for work: environmental sciences, photography, working in a discotheque and DJing at a roller skating rink, selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door. Finding a career in entertainment and deriving happiness from others' happiness. Being recruited to deliver singing telegrams. Acting in different roles: effeminate ballerina, Leprechaun, cupid, Christmas elf, little ape; creating a network of dwarf performers. Performance events shut down in March 2020. Trying to maintain work in the entertainment industry through Zoom; the difference between performing online and live. How the political-correctness of this moment is making working in entertainment harder, taboos on effective marketing terms like "midget"; cancel culture. Multiple surgeries. Hearing about the pandemic from a rehab hospital bed with a broken femur; the rehab introducing COVID safety policy, including a quarantine ward; management stepping in as frontline workers. Rehab staff informing patients about COVID safety precautions when sent home early; homecare workers' unsafe behavior. Becoming an empowered patient. Telemedicine. Video teleconferencing vs. phone calls vs. in-person interaction.

Communications technology changing over time; norms changing over time; learning new apps. Agency on Aging stopped sending social workers out; friends picking up slack from social services agents. Medicaid and medical services for lower income people; for-profit healthcare. The ending of the mask mandate (18 April 2022). Inadequacies of services for the low income, aging population. Maintaining a household with/without help when in crutches/using a walker. Being a social creature; pandemic pausing Wednesday night ritual of meeting friends for dinner since 2013. Accruing health problems with age. Entering sunset/senior years and wondering about wants for remaining years. Quality of life while aging; wanting a celebration of life party while still living. Divisions between the young and the elderly. Political division in the USA; having a reality-show host running the country. Constant, senseless wars and war-economies. Summer 2020 and the BLM protests, fear of personal harm. Guns and personal protection. Getting vaccinated + 2 boosters; listening to experts. Unvaccinated friends dying of COVID; not having caught COVID yet. Getting first vaccination in winter of 2021 and difficulty managing snow covered sidewalks in a scooter. Living through smallpox and polio vaccinations. Dwarfism as a gift.

Kit Heintzman 00:00:00

Hello.

Kit Heintzman 00:00:00

Hey. Hi, how are you Kit?

Kit Heintzman 00:00:03

I'm doing well. How are you doing?

Danny Black 00:00:05

Great. Um, I'm Danny Black. Today is Thursday, April 21 2022. It is 12:07pm and I am in Lansing, Michigan.

Kit Heintzman 00:00:24

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Danny Black 00:00:34

Yes, I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:00:36

Thank you so much. Let me just start by asking you to introduce yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this. What would you want them to know about you in the place you're speaking from?

Danny Black 00:00:46

Wow, that's a loaded question. Of course, I'm a loaded person. Not to be the Say that again?

Kit Heintzman 00:01:07

Tell me about yourself. Who are you introduce yourself to a stranger?

Danny Black 00:01:11

Oh, who am I? Is this my elevator speech? He, it's gonna be a really tall building.

Kit Heintzman 00:01:21

That's fine. That's no problem.

Kit Heintzman 00:01:24

I'm Danny Black. I'm a guy that has taken his disadvantage and, and used it to, to my advantage. Finally, back in. Maybe I did it sooner than then when I began my career. I probably did. I just didn't apply it quite as well, as I did. When I started my career. In 1980 was it? I was looking for something. In the 5-10 10 years prior to that. I was looking for happiness. I think we're all looking for happiness. And I didn't realize my happiness was to be found by providing happiness to others. And a true set of circumstances happened to answer, whatever you want to call it, coincidence. discovered how to do that back in 1980 where I found a career in entertainment, acting and and using my like I said, disadvantage to my advantage feed me lead me on because I know there's I know there's more and you know, there's more. Just it's it's been, what three hours and I'm still not quite awake yet.

Kit Heintzman 00:03:40

Wow. I, I was born in Ohio, moved to Pennsylvania until fifth grade, moved back to Ohio. I another section of the state and was there until graduation from high school came up to Big Rapids, Michigan, where I began a career in or study and environmental health. Back in the 70s. Ecology and cleaning up the world was what us kids did back then. And I thought I was going to save the world along with who's the lady that wrote silence spraying and all those others. And after two and a half years, when I did an internship at the local public, public health department. I quickly realized this wasn't this wasn't what I wanted to do after all, and I thought I stopped Education until a more convenient time when I was offered a full time job

in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan working as a photo manager and assistant manager for a discotheque which was also popular back in the 70s and I did that for two and a half years and through again circumstances I came back down to the lower peninsula of Michigan and started of course of studying photography and through that wound up in entertainment just it the pieces all fit together when you know the big story but I don't know if we have

Danny Black 00:06:15

five six days to do this do we Kit? yeah so I was working part time for singing telegram company. Wait let's back up even even before that while I was taking the photography classes at LCC Lansing Community College I got I got a part time job and a local roller skating rink as a DJ playing playing tunes for the kids to skate by and just jeez this can go longer cant it? Wow So, um so I'm in of course to study for photography at LCC. And my, my camera equipment in the about second year was stolen out of the back of my car, and I was devastated and of course, had to quit school because I had no camera equipment to complete my studies. And I quit school bombed and add to sell home care products and make 100 \$175 Every time I sold some. And I thought I could do that over what a couple of months and quickly make enough money to buy camera equipment back. And what I learned was, it was selling Kirby vacuum cleaners door to door and I did it. I sold 42 vacuum cleaners and eight months and you would think making \$175 Every time you sold one. I could have made a lot of money. It wasn't all that easy. I learned a lot. Yet I didn't make all that much money. There was incentives I had to buy to give away to get in the door to sell the vacuum cleaner. And then I had to give discounts on the vacuum cleaner in order to sometimes sell the vacuum cleaners. So I learned a lot I learned persistence. For one thing, I learned dealing with people, and I learned something else. Yet I'm not quite sure what that third thing is.

Danny Black 00:10:22

But after eight, eight months, and the last couple of months of not being able to sell ice cubes to what Native American Alaskans what we used to call Eskimos, but because it's politically correct, to no longer call them Eskimos I learned to sell ice cube's to Native American Alaskans. And so I quit that, and somehow found a way to go back to school with the camera equipment that I needed to complete school. So at that same time, I was taking classes. I became a DJ at a roller skating rink, playing disco tunes for the kids to skate by. And of course, having worked for the discotheque up in up in Markat a lot of that experience was paying off at the roller skating rink. And after two or three months there, St. Patrick's Day rolled around and the management at the roller skating rink. A day or two before St. Patrick's days. One manager appointed his assistant manager to ask me if I would be a leprechaun for St. for St. Patrick's Day promotion. And of course she was all concerned and that I would be so you know. upset that I was asked a stereotypical question yet I jumped at the chance because little did she know I had done our Cupid promotion up in the Upper Peninsula again for the discotheque for for Valentine's promotion. And because I had done the Cupid, I thought nothing to do with the leprechaun. Well, I went home, died some clothes, died some old clothes green, went to the local drugstore, where they sold clown makeup. And the clerk just happened to have taken a clown class and have been a clown herself. She you know, in the in the three minutes that she was telling me which makeup the by which green makeup to buy. She was telling me how to apply it and all that. And of course I half half paid attention in my haste and applied the makeup and did the promotion yet at the end of the night. The makeup just ran off my face because I I had not applied it properly. But the management at the roller skating rink was like yeah, great, you know, and a couple days afterwards I had

recalled one of the assignments for the one of the photo classes was to have taken pictures of clowns in the clown class that they offered at LCC Lansing Community College and so I said, you know I could probably do other promotions for you. If you and get some training, if you would send me to one of the clown classes at LCC for \$44 \$44 Back in 1980 1979 was more money than I had as a student and it seems like such a small price. Now, in 2022. Yet they offered to pay the 44 bucks. I started taking the clown class and was still DJing at the roller skating rink when one of the families that I had knocked on their door, trying to sell a Kirby vacuum cleaner to six months before they came to the door. And here I was holding a box of tied offering to give it to them just for 10 minutes of your time to show your home care product. And of course, they said no. Yet the wife was the first answer the door and she was dressed in sharp street attire. Short, sharp office wear And she said no, you can't you can't show us the homecare product. But let us tell you what we do for a living. She gave me her business card. And her husband comes to the door while she's talking. And, and he's dressed in a full on ape suit holding the head of the ape and his and his arms. Just going like, wow. These folks are weird. She says yeah, we go to offices and homes and parties and deliver these singing telegrams for \$20.

Danny Black 00:16:53

To folks, and yeah, this is what we can we do and no, you can't show us the vacuum cleaner. But so fast forward to. I'm in the roller skating rink, DJ and taking the clown glass and in walk walks these folks doing the singing telegram in the roller skating rink. In the roller skating rink, and they saw me again, and came up to the DJ booth and handed me their card and said, call us we want you to come work for us. And I thought this is the second time they're chasing me down. I being one to never say no. I called them up a couple days later, went over to their home and I had a short interview and I guess a couple of weeks later, I was working for him as a little ape. Their logic was they wanted me because the big ape scared kids and that they part of their market was entertaining that kids birthdays and to some the costume look pretty realistic on first glance, and I thought okay, sure. They're offering \$5 Every time I go do a singing telegram to a kid. And I think at the same time, they all also offered me the office job working in the office, answering the phones while they went and did singing telegrams during the day, so I think I was making the same five bucks, maybe five bucks an hour. Maybe it was five bucks a day I forget. So I did that and was doing that for six months. Yet I had to quit working as the DJ because it was conflicting with what I was following was kind of an entertainment kinda track where I was working for the eighth place and Taking the clown class, and also trying to complete some photo studies. Yet after six months of the working as the ape, and completing the clown class, I started to put some pieces together. During that time, one of the clients from the ape place knew that our company had me working for it. They called up one day. And of course, I answered the phone. And what they wanted was for the little ape, to deliver a birthday Graham, to somebody in their office down in the metro Detroit area, but not dressed as a little ape. They wanted the dwarf, the midget, the little person to be dressed all in think in a in a in a ballerina tutu as an effeminate character. And back then that was prior to Elon coming out of the closet. And little did they know that they were talking to the actual dwarf that they wanted to do this as at of course, I played it. Cool. That? Sure. Let me check with the management. And let me check with the door photo to see if this would work. And, of course, I checked with the management. And I knew that sure I do it. I was I was willing to do anything new for the first time to give it a try. Check with the management. They said, that's, that's weird. That's strange.

Danny Black 00:22:15

But if the client will pay for the costume, or any costume pieces you need anything like that. On top of the cost of the the singing telegram, and you're okay with it. Sure, let's do it. And so I gathered up the costume pieces, called, called up the client and said, Sure, it'll cost you this, this this, and when would you like to do it? And so we scheduled it. And I had gotten another clown class member involved in this ape singing telegrams. It was called a program. And I was called a program Junior, because I was the little one. And I had gotten another clown class member involved in the epigram company. To do they needed additional tall apes. And this guy was six foot four. Ernie Kitson. Wow. I wish I could find him to this day. He signed on as one of the aides. And I had shared the idea that they wanted this ballerina to come down to this guy's birthday in the metro Detroit area with him. And he wanted to see this all happen. So the wife the owner, Cheryl Cheryl, Ernie, and I drove down to Metro Detroit, and I'm dressed up and this ballerina costume and and I'm just winging it with what little acting experience I had as an effeminate ballerina dancer. Back then, before, like I said, before, LM came out of the closet. The gay thing was something that was still in our head laughed at within closed circles or made a mockery of and so I just winged it and these these office folks thought it would be the funniest thing that If I did this, I did it, I winged it. I just said stuff that came off the top of my head. And after the three of us got back in the car, and was driving back to Lansing, they were like, wow, we can't believe you said that. And, and wow, you got some laughs how that happened? I don't know. But that from that point on, that character was born. So I had the clown from the clown class, dandy the clown. The eighth company was thinking of additional characters that I could do with my size, in addition to the eighth edition to a program, Junior, and I thought, how about a bug, a ladybug. And I thought, okay, I don't get it. But I'll go along with that. And they started making this foam, bug Ladybug costume. And again, I was getting like five bucks, out of the 20 bucks.

Danny Black 00:26:34

And backup, maybe a month or two. All these pieces I, I, I've got I've had numerous interviews, where all these pieces come out. And sometimes they they come come out in great chronological order. And I remember bits and pieces other times I forget them. I should be collate and this all this stuff. And putting it together in my own record, whether it be written or oral video because they make a good story, when they all come together perfectly. But back up a couple of months. When after being in the business, and taking a clown class, after being in the business with with a program. I still hadn't told, told my parents what I was involved with lately. They thought I was still going to school for photography. I still hadn't told him yet. My sister's wedding was was coming up in a month or two. And because we had done weddings, wedding receptions as the ape, I thought, okay how, how appropriate to announce to my family, this is what I'm doing by doing a singing telegram at my sister and brother in law's wedding. So I went to the reception, and street clothes and wedding attire. And after the first 20 minutes of the reception, I went up to the band and said, Hey, I'm gonna come back in here in about an hour. You're not gonna recognize me, but I'd like to borrow the microphone. And then I went to the wedding photographer, and said, Hey, I'm gonna come back in here an hour. You're not gonna recognize me, but you're gonna want to get pictures of what's going on. And so I went out to the car on a hot Labor Day weekend and had a little helium tank, so I could fill up a bunch of helium balloons out of the back of the car. I put on the VA program, Jr. costume. I had my own little Polaroid camera. A bunch of bunch of bananas and just busted into the wedding and grabbed my my sister and brother in law and did a congratulations singing telegram to Have them and all I can remember is looking at the costume and seeing my mom buckled over, and laughter completed, completed a singing telegram. It only takes 8-10 15 minutes at most, went back out to the car, put on street clothes came back

into the wedding. And everybody's asking, what was that? Oh. Is that what you do now for a living? And I said, Mom, yep, that's what I do for a living. My mom says, How much does that cost? It costs \$20. And back in 1980 \$20 was a lot of money. And my mom said, Daniel \$20 is a lot of money. How do people afford that? And I said, I don't know mom, but they do. I'm not questioning it. And so I continued on for a couple more months with the eight gram company yet I saw them kind of stagnating or, or not seeing the possibilities that I saw in and my dwarfism as it related to characters. I saw. I saw seasonal characters, like your Christmas elf like the like the cube that I had done at the discotheque, like the leprechaun I was asked to do at the roller skating rink. I saw the ballerina character that the client had requested a couple of months before that, I saw so many other possibilities. And I was only getting \$5 Out of the \$20. And thought, hey, if I do this business, on my own, I can get the entire \$20. So I started looking into answering machines, because that was one of the big investments. I knew I had to have an origin for somebody to man the office while I was out actually doing the jobs. And while I wasn't even around back home. So I scouted out three different locations for for an answering machine. Back then they cost 456 \$100. Again, more money than I can even afford. So I left my APR Graham Jr, business card, with my home phone number, rubber stamped on the backside,

Danny Black 00:33:07

being the relentless the market or that I've been called, with these three different African machine places, but I wasn't ready to buy it. So a couple of weeks later, for one reason or another one day, I'm not working in the aid program Jr. or the aid program office, answering the phones, one of the answering machine places called and said, Hey, Danny was in here a couple of weeks ago. We're just following up to see if Danny's still interested in buying an answering machine. Well, they put two and two together. The next day when I went into the office, they said hey, we got this call and it looks like you're getting you're looking to get into business on your own. Yeah. Okay, you got two choices, either quit answering our phones and just do the eight a program Jr. thing for five bucks every time you do it. Or there's there's the door Okay, all I find the door I'll find the door. So I went home and decided I got to quickly get into business. And that's what I did. I looked into who was the local reporter at the newspaper to cover new businesses in town.

Danny Black 00:34:50

And oh, yeah, hi. I'm not awake. Found out the who the local reporter was. Got a costume together. Here it was approaching Christmas, the Christmas season. I think it was late October, early November. And I decided when I got into business, I was going to do the clown, the ballerina character, and a Christmas elf. So I put together a Christmas elf character, and gathered the Christmas elf costume and dressed up and went and did a singing telegram to the reporter that was responsible for writing articles about new businesses. I went and wished her a merry Christmas or Happy Holidays, or whatever, again, was politically correct back then, I guess you could still wish people Merry Christmas back in the 80s. And left her again, this time, just a rubber stamp business card with my phone number on the on the front of it. None of this a program, phone number kind of stuff. And a couple days after I did that, she did exactly what I wanted her to do. She called me up and did an over the phone interview. And said, When can you come down here and have our photographer take pictures of your three different characters? And you know, maybe I No promises. Maybe I might do an article. So I went down there took the photos. And sure enough, December 1 1980. A great, great big Well, in my estimation, it was big five by seven article about my new business with three photos dandy the clown, Ernie the elf and to to the fairy, because he added to two and because he was

effeminate was born. And I sat home on the couch, wondering if the phone would ring. And sure enough it rang. And I don't know fast forward to 220 22 here we are and I'm still somewhat doing the business. And in my sunset years having lived a life of overall happiness by sharing that happiness with others. And in returning, getting back the happiness that I was looking for there's a lot of missing pieces What was your question again?

Kit Heintzman 00:38:29

All right, well listen to the next one. What's the word pandemic come to mean to you?

Danny Black 00:38:37

Why Wow, what's the word pandemic? Coming to me when we first talked what was it a month or two ago? I asked you how long is this going to take? And when you ask your question to describe me and now when you're asking what's the word pandemic mean?

Danny Black 00:39:16

I'm going get good. This is gonna take five or six days isn't it? Wow, pandemic another new challenge. Another new way of looking at how I do things how I do the business how I live my life how I deal with a lot of the health issues I had coming at me since what was it 2013 2015 or so when I had my first back surgery

Danny Black 00:40:29

Wow. What does the word pandemic mean to me? I can remember when was it? March 12 13th 14th 2022? When? No, not 2022. March 12 13th 14th of 2020, wasn't it? Yeah. I was sitting in a rehab slash hospital bed with a broken femur watching watching the madness his his daily announcements. I don't mean, but that's another topic, where do we go with him and I kind of saw the writing on the wall.

Danny Black 00:41:52

Because the news of one day would be the reality of the rehab slash hospital situation that I was in the next day. He announced we're shutting down things. And sure enough, the next day, things started shutting down at the rehab hospital that I was at. And even before that, I had learned to adapt to the challenges to adapt to not being able to entertain myself, not being able to, to work a performance myself. Because back in, when was it 1999 I started an agency where I would book and hire other dwarfs from around the country to work entertainment and acting and talent jobs all over the country that said that I couldn't cover possibly because of geographic reasons, because of financial reasons, both for myself or for the client. And yet at the same time, I learned to make a buck off of that sort of income. So I'm in my hospital bed and forget okay. I might be here for a little bit longer than it takes to heal the broken femur because of the pandemic. I'll just adapt. And so because with my first surgery, I learned that within four or five days after the surgery, if I had a laptop or my cell phone and a pad of paper, I could book other entertainers from the comfort if you want to call it that of my hospital bed and that I did. So I was able to still make a buck in my hospital bed during the first and second and third back surgery. Towards the second or third back surgery wasn't quite as good nimble as I was, in my early years, and by, by I think 2019, I pretty much did my last perform live performance down in Chicago in 2019. So the pandemic brought along Long a lot of challenges a lot of ways to, to see the powers to be, and how they can really screw up something that even they don't know how to handle. And so, I learned to adapt. And

Kit Heintzman 00:46:00

Tell me a story about life during the pandemic.

Danny Black 00:46:08

Let me reposition myself for the next five or six days a story about life during the pandemic Wow here's a couple that come to mind. And they always seem to include the business. For the past 41 years, the business has occupied a lot of my life dealing with my life, as it relates to the business in the pandemic was, was a challenge. But I thought it's something that I could I could still conquer. I came home from the rehab center on May 4 2020. The rehab center had done Burcham Burcham rehab, here in East Lansing, done, did it did does will do a tremendous job of coping and managing with the pandemic. I was warned that, hey, you're gonna go home here in a couple of days, this pandemic is serious. Make sure that anybody that comes into your home is is protected is is takes proper measures, you know, has the mask. The vaccine hadn't come come out yet. But just takes precautions and all sanitizers using their hand sanitizers doesn't come into your home unless they absolutely need to. And so I'm working with the local area ag agency on aging. And wow, that's a that's another sidebar on its own. That's going to take another eight or 10 days for just them. But the folks that had was in charge of my care when I came home, was not doing did not do a great job of managing my care. They came home or they they came to my home unprotected. unprepared to with the proper tools to do the job. There were home health care workers that came without masks that came without working cell phones to communicate with their office to communicate with me to clock in properly They just did a terrible job of managing the pandemic. And it drove me crazy. And from what I've heard, over the last couple of years, it's driven a lot of folks crazy. But so I went through multiple agencies dealing with home health care workers. While I was here, still recovering from my broken femur, and

Danny Black 00:50:52

I just did the best I could. And I recall a client that I had worked with for about three years. Right around St. Patrick's or March Madness, the March basketball season. They always had a party, every foot or every basketball season for the March Madness playoffs. And they wanted a leprechaun to be their mascot for this party. So the first couple of years, I did it, alone. And then I think the third year he, he wanted to include myself, and a female leprechaun. I think that was in 2018. And then in 2019, he wanted myself and two other guys that could play some exhibition, basketball with a downsized hoop in the event arena. And entertaining the 250 some odd guests that we're celebrating this March Madness playoffs, and it was a charitable fundraiser. He had a friend that had cancer. And so every year, he'd invite these 250 some odd friends and clients to this party with a donation cover charge and other raffles and that sort of thing, to raise money for a cancer charity or something. And so the fourth year 2020, he booked us again, myself and the two other basketball players. And of course, as as the looming pandemic got closer and closer to the actual date, the date was a couple of days after March 17. So a week or two after the pandemic was officially announced here in the US. The date got closer and he said, I'm not sure if we're, we're gonna have our event because of this pandemic. And of close course, he shut down everything. And the that event got canceled, and it was from my rehab hospitals EDS that I said, Okay. Yeah, I understand. This is part of our new challenges. And so I continued on and I did have a retainer clause where a portion of the fee was still still held. And in lieu of the cancellation, and yet I moved on and saw this as one of the first challenges with the with the pandemic. And then when I went home, May 4, and how they weren't prepared. to deal with the

pandemic, and how a lot of the pressure was put on me the clients and I've just learned to adapt, adapt, adopt. As I've done, I think the last 20 3040 years of my life, or even the last 5060 years, learned to adapt to changes to challenges to roadblocks to things or circumstances or people that said, No, it it can't happen. And me thinking, No, you're no is just another Yes. To me as a reason that it can happen. And I got through the first 3839 years of the business prior to the pandemic, with challenges and the pandemic came on. And I saw it as just another challenge that I had to overcome.

Kit Heintzman 00:56:37

What were some of the changes in the rehabilitation center from when the pandemic started until you left?

Danny Black 00:56:52

At the rehabilitation center, like I said, they did a great job of managing the whole thing. And, and I could see, just by watching the news, what to expect the next day. It was like you're, you're gonna announce no visitors to the rehab center. Sure enough, the next day, no visitors. They started doing daily email announcements. They started new mask mandates with their staff and procedures on how they did things. Temperature checks every morning. Possibly throughout the day. And they started a quarantine COVID Ward, where they put the folks that truly had a COVID outbreak in a separate ward sealed off with you know, medical visqueen and separate staff and the staff of the COVID. Org did not mix with the on the non COVID What's the proper way to describe cheese we get so caught up in labels.

Danny Black 00:58:48

Tell you one thing I want to do with labels. They're They're good. They're like spouses. You can't live with them and you can't live without them. They're like tires on a car. You can't live with them and they get them without them young on COVID personas they did a great job. And I just they offered themselves up to questions. And me being the pragmatic, paranoid, questioning, empowered patient that I've learned to become because nobody else is going to do it for you. Ask questions and they answer did and they they responded with, with emails to respond to my questions. They responded by staff coming up to my room and answering those questions that they did whatever it took to get the job done. If they were short handed, they brought on management staff to work as frontline workers attending to the patients. And I just saw them doing whatever it took and sit knew that I would do the same, do whatever it took to recover

Danny Black 01:00:00

Are those questions that they did whatever it took to get the job done. If they were short handed, they brought on management staff to work as frontline workers attending to the patience. And I just saw them doing whatever it took. And knew that I would do the same, do whatever it took to recover, do whatever it took to work the business, in spite of the pandemic, and get home and work the business from home, in spite of the pandemic they did a tremendous job in contrast to the real world once I got out of the rehab center. Wow, that's when I look back and look at happen upon one of my texts or emails from two years ago, two and a half years ago and see what a cluster you know what it was it's a wonder where here now

Kit Heintzman 01:00:45

Would you say something about the importance of being an empowered patients patient in the medical system that we're in right now in the US?

Danny Black 01:00:54

What I love your questions that are five or six day questions. To me it's I love them there so yeah. And that's one thing I've learned to do too, is ask try and ask open ended questions, not just yes or no questions, cuz you can find out a lot more by the open ended questions and, and your, your questions or give so much opportunity to listen. And that's one thing I've learned and I'm still learning is to listen. And it's important that a doctor all lessons it's important that some of the frontline workers listen if it don't help, in the actual medical treatment of a patient it'll help in the mental or emotional treatment of that patient. But wow, your question brings up so many little tangents to the importance of being an empowered patient.

Kit Heintzman 01:03:48

I'd love for you to follow some of those tangents if you like you're comfortable and if you'd like.

Danny Black 01:03:57

I'd love to to I will maybe one of the questions we need to clear up now is I somewhat got a 4:30 commitment today. Yet Yet I don't want to cut this short I should have left the whole day open. Cuz cuz those tangents Oh my gosh. You're helping me write my book.

Kit Heintzman 01:04:43

You're welcome

Danny Black 01:04:44

It is that the desire of every interviewer like this to help, to write books. Or to or to gather enough material that somebody else writes a book about this old thing. The challenges, let's get back to that answer get back on the tangent about the tangents the importance of being an empowered patient. I'm reminded of my first back surgery down in Royal Oak, Michigan, where a good friend Tom accompanied me down to the hospital for the first day or so. And then my mom and sister came up from Ohio. To see how that went to accompany me. And wow. My sister was a pharmaceutical sales rep. For a good, I don't know, 10-15-20 years of her life. And I think by that time 2013 Maybe it was 2015. I'm forgetting when my first back surgery was. She had by that time she had retired. So she had some experience with doctors. And with my mom in her what was she and her 80s, in that time. Maybe 70s 70s or 80s. She was had some medical issues going on. And my sister was helping with some of that. But we were in the hotel lobby at 6-7am the day of the surgery. And my mom and sisters had stayed at the same hotel and I was trying to get into the vehicle or something like that. We're waiting at the door in the hotel. And Tom, my buddy would accompany me I'd run in my sister and mother in the lobby, and I guess my sister shared with Tom or my mom shared with Tom that my mom had bronchitis. And I should probably keep my distance around my mom prior to the surgery. And I thought oh great, okay. I've got to manage this. And in addition to managing my own surgery and addition to whatever Tom whatever weight Tom doesn't carry. I've got to manage that. And so I went, had the surgery. It went great. Did everything that it was supposed to. Yeah. And so I'm laying in the hospital bed a day or two after the surgery and my mom had run out of a, one of her medications that she needed. I guess didn't didn't pack enough for or my sister didn't manage that enough. And so my sister went and asked one of my doctors, my mom here or ran out of drug XYZ. Could you just write her a script for some more of that stuff?

Kit Heintzman 01:09:59

The doctors like, ah, no something about I'm not earth treating physician you know? You gotta get that from your own doctor and and just what what is it head plant? With my sister even encouraging that that question from my mom or, or on behalf of my mom, like, come on with as much medical experience, you know yet that doesn't happen. And then later that day in my drug induced stupor of sleep or whatever, I overheard a conversation between my sister and one of my doctors again, when my sister asked something about follow up to the whole thing and all I heard was the doctor go, Well, I think we need to let the patient make that decision. You know, not, you know, not somebody else. And after I woke up and after my sister mother had left back for the hotel that they were staying at. I got the staff and said, Hey, I overheard a conversation between this doctor and my, my sister about let the patient make that decision. Can you find that doctor? I want you to find that doctor. Why? No, just just find that doctor. The next day, he shows up. Are you the one that told my sister, I think we need to let the patient make that decision? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, thank you. And then to wrap up that first surgery with another empowered patient story. I had another friend from the metro Detroit area that I'll also was kind of managing the communication to friends and others in the in my community of friends and acquaintances of what had gone on and how I'm doing and that sort of thing. And somebody had asked him, Hey, I'm driving through the Detroit area, on my way back home to the northern Michigan. Can I stop and visit Danny and say hi to him? And he thought, sure. But I'll ask Danny Sister, if that's okay. Because she's kind of in charge of his care, too. Because Tom had since gone home by this time, back to Lansing. And so Michael asked my sister Mary. Yeah, sure.

Danny Black 01:14:04

Let's do it as a surprise. Well, sure enough that that visitor acquaintance shows up for hours later. And it came as a surprise to me. And I was still in a drug induced recovery, sleep, trying to get my bearings and she spent 45 minutes visiting and that was 44 minutes too long. Maybe even 47 minutes too long. And maybe it's because of some of the previous medical encounters with my sister or maybe it's because I and my sister have some unresolved sibling feud that I need. I need we need it would be good for us. We can at least try to resolve but I kind of blew a gasket that surprise visitor with my sister and I via text told her something like that will never never happened again. And she said fine, then your mom and I are leaving back home for Ohio, right tonight without coming to say goodbye to you. Okay.

Danny Black 01:15:56

I gotta take care of me. I gotta be empowered enough to take care of me. Sure enough, sure enough the next day when they had originally scheduled to leave for Ohio, after they said their goodbyes that morning. Sure enough, my sister, sister and mom show up the next morning. Okay. Okay, this is kind of a surprise that you're still here. But it's kind of to be expected. And so we addressed whatever we needed to address about Medicare after they had after they were due to go back to Ohio. And as a last little wrap up, I again reiterated surprises like last night won't happen again. And my sister blew a gasket. And said, drop me off your medical update list on how your recovery is doing. I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to participate in it. She walked out. And my mom just walked up and threw her hands up in the air and said goodbye.

Danny Black 01:17:47

So again, I return to taking care of myself and seeking out other friends that could help me and get back home to to Lansing after I had rehabbed down in Detroit. I don't know, I forget how long I stayed down there. Until I went home and rehabbed in a hospice center. Back then I don't think I had medical coverage for a rehab center. So a friend offered her hospice facility as some place that I could stay there. So I stayed there after the first back surgery. And I stayed there after the second back surgery. By the third back surgery. I think Medicaid had kicked in to where I could have rehab coverage after my surgery. But I've learned that nobody else is going to speak up for you. Unless you yourself do and it's a lot to put on a patient when he's just trying he or she or it Are they again here we come to those labels again. Dang it. Are trying to recover. They've got to also manage their care too. But nobody can do it better than you. It managing your own care, create some different dynamics than just lay in there and do In the care as it comes, but it's important go ahead grab one of those tangents and having me address it further

Kit Heintzman 01:20:17

How have you thinking in a pre COVID-19 world, in general, how do you feel about the healthcare structure where you are through your experiences?

Danny Black 01:20:34

Overall, pre pre COVID pre pandemic, it was great. It was workable, it was doable, it was something I could deal with something I could tolerate. I was empowered back then. I ran into a patient provider kinda head butting a couple times. Kind of standing up for myself and but I came through it and after I served on the board of a my local community health center, the same health center that was providing care to me, I became very disillusioned with the job that they were doing. And the doctor that I had had, for 10-15 years, he transferred out of that system and went into a private practice with the, with a hospital system rather than the local community center. And I sought him out. So and I somewhat resigned, and or was dismissed from working on the local community health center board. Because I was, again, a little bit too empowered to ask questions or challenge a system that wanted to just rubber stamp.

Danny Black 01:22:52

Measures provision, business, and I wasn't, wasn't about to rubber stamp that. So I transferred out of that system where I was asked to resign or forced out and moved from the doctor that was with me there to his private practice. And I'm glad that I did. And he's the same doctor that I butted heads with a couple of times. And I'm glad I stayed with him. Cuz in his private practice, with the local hospital it was a total 180 of the type of care that he provided. He provided a lot better here. Tremendous amount of care, and the local hospital private practice system that he was with now, where he could take 10-15- 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes for an office visit, to just to make sure that the proper amount of care was provided, and would run test and do referrals with no matter what it took to get it done.

Danny Black 01:24:20

So and of course, maybe, what was it 7-7-8 -10 years prior to the pandemic, as I started having some medical issues that needed to dressed a lot more than your typical physical routine yearly exam kind of thing. And then add the pandemic on top of that. Like In total contrast Yeah. This the system didn't know what to do. Everybody didn't know what to do. But they provided decent care prior to the pandemic. So it was just sorting out how they were providing care with the pandemic added on top of it

Kit Heintzman 01:25:34

How did the pandemic shape your access to health care like to ongoing continuous health care with more chronic problems?

Danny Black 01:25:46

Well the the first appointment that I had after the lockdown was a tele tele commute teleport whatever you call it appointment and it was like okay, because I've established a relationship with you prior to what we're doing here and because it was one step closer to actually being there with the chance to see the doctor's face and the chance for him to see my face my body language is body language it was like okay gonna learn how to deal with it this way but...

Danny Black 01:26:58

Wow, so many tangents so many tangents not enough time. The area agent Agency on Aging their social workers weren't coming out in person to their clients homes like they did prior to the pandemic. Yeah yet yet I had home health care aides coming to my home that you didn't know where they been when they left your homes, they didn't know you didn't know who they hang out with. After they left your home, they come unprotected without a mask without proper protection without rubber gloves without knowledge just basic knowledge of doing the job that they needed to do. One home health care worker came and for the first time in my home and did a bed that she took a five gallon bucket of water soapy water I guess and a washcloth the rag or whatever and soaked it and then just held the dripping water wet rag two feet over my body squeezed it and just dripped water on the my body and I'm gone like okay, this isnt how I do a bed bath before but I'll go with it ah and so she proceed proceeded to drip all types of water all over my body and then got a towel and patted it dry but I was still damp and like oh, okay.

Kit Heintzman 01:29:31

I How did that feel?

Danny Black 01:29:39

How did that feel like? WTF

Kit Heintzman 01:29:45

What's it scary?

Danny Black 01:29:47

Not sss. I don't know if I'd say scary but geez. It You know part of my dilemma is I've fallen into a class of care that a lot of folks feel doesn't deserve quite the best the public health care system, the Medicare the Medicaid system, the financially challenged client that's scary. It's what's what's the word to describe it like oh, what what's what's happening in the world that somebody's sitting back in a middle management job and going, just pushing out numbers, just pushing out. Staff for the sake of themselves, and others making income, whether it be above them, or below them, and not not feeling empowered enough to care about the job that they're doing. They're just pushing out.

Danny Black 01:31:56

I've been in a two three year battle to deal with and to try and address some of the shortcomings of the area aging Agency on Aging kind of system. And I've had friends say you can't change it and they care for me. They're, in fact participating in my care. They're picking up the slack that the area aging Agency on Aging can't handle yet they say you can't change it. Just just you've got two choices. Danny, either go to a long term care center right now. For the rest of your life, the same place that I was at for the rehab, I've been to the rehab place two times, once for the broken femur. And again, a year later for poor lower lower muscle control. It's a beautiful place.

Danny Black 01:34:07

You get they do excellent care. Three Meals a Day, pretty much right on time. medications you know, right on time, whether you want them or not. Whether whether they need to be spaced two hours apart, even when you're asleep and wait a second. I don't take these medications. Two hours apart at home. Why do I need to take these medications two hours apart? When I'm in here, well, we want to have a chance to say hi to you. We want to have a chance to check up on you a chance to see how you're doing oh you can do that without waking me up, you can do that without interrupting whatever else is going on in my day. Because at home, I only take medications two times a day, maybe three times if you're lucky. But they did a beautiful job, medications on time, meals on time, they did laundry, you know, they gathered it up and they took it down and they had fresh stuff for you to wear the next day. They had activities for you to do. They had you know TV piped in to you day had internet piped into you, it was beautiful. Not a care in the world. Other than during the pandemic, somebody come say hi to you somebody to interact with you. Oh, great. You could have the zoom. Or you could have the Microsoft Teams or you can have the the Google meet or the or the Skype or the Okay, which one? Do I have to learn to work with this person? Why can't we just have one you know, like, pick up the dang phone and use it. We didn't have to work worried about whether you were an Apple guy or an Android guy or land died landline guy. You just picked up the phone and talk to the person.

Danny Black 01:36:40

Wow, there's another tangent I'm going on. It was beautiful. But I didn't want to be there for the rest of my life. But again, stay in staying here in my home. With a lack of services, home health care workers attending to my needs is awfully disheartening where if I want the floor vacuumed, pretty much I've got to do it myself. Or balancing with a walker two canes, a vacuum cleaner. And one one right dropped foot just to have the place halfway livable or presentable. But I like my freedom. I like having the chance to get up and go go visit somebody, go go do my own grocery shop and go go to the pharmacy and get my meds. Go out and have lunch with somebody. Go just get out and my doctor 20 years ago said I'm a social creature. I can't just sit and watch TV or you know talk to my friend on Zoom. That's part of the entertainment act and guy that I am. I'm a social creature need to engage with folks what was the question again?

Kit Heintzman 01:38:49

I'm just gonna roll with you. When When was the last time you had a social interaction with someone?

Danny Black 01:39:00

Probably yesterday

Danny Black 01:39:02

What was that like?

Danny Black 01:39:08

I again, I feed off of people and my happiness is a result of providing happiness to to others. Oh, it was just last night. Wednesday nights typically for the last. I don't know. How many years has it been? 2013 maybe 2013 Maybe a couple years even before that. Every Wednesday nights. A couple guys, myself would get together at the local Padova for their back then when it started their \$5.99 burrito special. And over the years, a couple of folks have been invited or to join us or included or whatever. But mostly it's the core group of three guys, myself, Don, and Tony. And it's a chance to get out and see people interact with the, with the line workers at qudoba. Every week, you get to see regular regular line workers at qudoba and get to somewhat know them. And then a lot of the clientele they do the same thing. Theyd have an every Wednesday night deal, where you saw some of the same folks every Wednesday night, and you get to know each other. And me being a social creature that I am. I can't go anywhere without having a left pocket full of balloons. When I first took the clowning class, back in, when was it 1979-80, one of the chapters or segments of the class was working with balloon animals and making a dog out of a balloon animal. And I saw that done and said, Wow, that's cool. I gotta learn how to do it. And then there were other things like juggling and stilt walking and magic and stuff. Stuff like that, that I saw done. And I thought that was cool, too. But the balloon animals is like, wow, that just plain flat balloon you made into something that was like, wow, that two and a half cent balloon, you just turned into something that a kid would value for the next three hours, the next 10 days if it lasted that long. But fast forward back to qudoba, and every Wednesday night and not going anywhere without a left pocket full of balloons.

Danny Black 01:43:17

It's in some of the training. You're taught to always have a little gimmick, a little trick, a little giveaway that you can present to somebody either as an entertainer or even when you're not working as a in street clothes, as some little gimmick that you can present to somebody show it to somebody give away to somebody. So I bow always had a left bucket full of balloons somewhere along the way. After I did a good deal of my performances, I learned that you could just blow up these 60 inch long balloons. Just blow them up straight. Put them on the tip of your finger and shoot them halfway across the room. Back. Back when my sister got again this sister that I wanted to become empowered with. Back when she got married. I shot balloons at her wedding reception. Everybody had a good time. I'm not quite sure that my sister appreciated it Yeah, though. It's like the, the peashooters that I took to a little people's convention and 2003 everybody had a good time. But the little people did not appreciate that the hotel did not appreciate that to the point that I got evicted from the hotel but so I've learned to do shoot balloon animal, shoot, shoot the balloons at qudoba, and kids just seemed to have the darkness button with just a plain straight balloon. A lot more fun than they have with. Okay, a dog. A dog looks cute. But what can you do with that? Not much. You can try and play with it. Nine times out of 10 the balloon dog dogs gonna come untied or it's gonna pop. But it's rare that that balloon dog gets to sit on the shelf and look cute for you, either the kid or the family. So I have the darndest fun with shooting balloons across the restaurant and let the kids use their imagination. And have fun with it just as is. Whether it be playing with it as a sword a lightsaber something

that they can try and tie their own balloon animal into or just something to shoot like I've shot. Again, I took your question and went on a bunch of tangents.

Kit Heintzman 01:47:21

Whats happened to qudoba Wednesday's?

Danny Black 01:47:24

What's happened to qudoba Wednesday's?

Kit Heintzman 01:47:27

During 2020 and 2021

Danny Black 01:47:29

Wow. During 2020, they, they kind of shut down like everybody else did. And then they because it was a business that wanted to try and still make money. They said, Okay, you can only get food by ordering it by some kind of convoluted text thing. And then driving up when you told us you would be there. And we'd bring it out to you at your car. And that was you know, rough in the beginning. And um, sometimes we we tried that system. And other times, we just gave up on it and stayed home. And there were times that I was in, in the rehab hospital situation that I didn't have to deal with it during those months. But over the over the 2020 2021. And now 2022 They've learned to adopt and you can, they've got a better system that you can order over an app and pick up the food. And then you could halfway through the pandemic year they you could come through the line but you had to be spaced six feet apart. And then you had to leave with your meal to go rather than ordering it over the app, protect your whatever, and hoping you got what you ordered at first.

Danny Black 01:49:20

And now we can go back and I think it was what just in the last day or two. They announced Hey, you don't need a mask. You don't need an N 95 mask that for a couple months we told you you have to have. you don't need two layers of masks. That for a time we told you you have to have it. Now you don't need any mask. Hu but you've discovered another variant Okay how soon before you tell it to put on another put the mask back on all because the judge who who I've been told has had no actual training as a judge or in law she she was just appointed decided mask aren't necessary anymore again who's in charge here?

Kit Heintzman 01:50:40

How do you feel about her appointment?

Danny Black 01:50:46

With what little I know? how's that weather we're having? Yeah, I guess you everybody likes to take care of their own and it sounds like she was she was taken care of by one of her own - him. It's my technology reminder (medical alarm voice reminder is heard in the background) technology reminder that I need to take a medication. Not as much of of me as there is of you because the eight inch arms require that my my keyboard and my screen is a little bit closer than your 13 inch arms.

Kit Heintzman 01:51:55

I wanted to jump back when we had first started talking about March 2020. You had described watching this cluster expletive deleted. (They talk over each other) Good What 2020 21? Yeah.

Danny Black 01:52:13

You can put the export in there.

Kit Heintzman 01:52:16

All right. All right. You don't use it and I didn't want to I didn't want to impose it. Alright, so there was the after mentioned of March 2020. And then 2020 became sort of notoriously horrible and then new towards 2021 had the same narrative what have some of the things been on your mind that aren't COVID?

Danny Black 01:52:45

Hey, I'm coming to the Twilight or the what do you call it the there's a word for it there's a better word than what I'm I'm coming to my twilight years sunset years have I ever made those that I'm happy leaving have I even begun to enjoy my senior years like they say you should enjoy your senior years? What else do I want to do? before it's all over and what can I correct dang it of the of the of how we deal with the aging population? Cuz because we're, I feel we're dealing with it very inadequately. At least in my financial category. We're dealing with it very inadequately.

Kit Heintzman 01:54:23

I'd love to hear about some of those changes you'd like to see

Danny Black 01:54:32

In dealing with the medical financial system of wow I don't know if it's true of other agencies within the aging population. But this one doesn't know how I feel doesn't in my mind know how to deal with evaluating where they've been before they can know where they are now and where they're going in the future and they have they had they don't seem to learn from their mistakes or they they just keep on repeating them over and over and over again and and sell either the money that they are spending is more wisely spent or more funds become available to appropriately deal with the situation it's it's not going to change and those folks that say just then I'll deal with it as it is and move forward that's awfully disheartening and I like to see some of those middle management people removed because they aint cuttin it (talking over each other) as good health care is available out there I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Kit Heintzman 01:56:50

Oh, tell tell me about that good health care that's out there

Danny Black 01:56:53

There are people that honestly care and are trying and are in systems that look at the past evaluate what they've done right what they've done wrong and learn from learn from the experiences and applied them to the future and I'm sorry, go ahead data it's such a open ended question like all your questions are it's, it's so sad, in my mind that we're caught up in choosing sides. And deciding our sides is doing it better than your side. When we're all supposed to be on the same team. Getting through this game, we call life and trying to

help others get through this game rather than trying to compete against others. And I don't think it's intentional. But in our struggle of my side, your side we feed each other whether it be political. Yeah. Politics is just such an ugly thing that they don't seem to get in much accomplished. Other than I got voted into office, and you didn't. And now it's our side that makes the rules. And your side has to sit back and watch and wonder how, how you're gonna get through the next two years, four years? Eight years. We're trying we're all trying to win and get through this life successfully

Kit Heintzman 02:00:17

Do you feel like do you feel valued for your age?

Danny Black 02:00:08

Sometimes yes sometimes no a good deal of time no individually daily I'll have past clients come up to me and thanked me for for the memories that I brought them whether it be a family friend business event yeah I feel valued for that and I appreciate that a lot but as far as the wisdom that I have good potential for sharing with again the system and so that they can learn from the mistakes of the past or from the from the younger population I as a whole I don't know that the younger population is is willing to learn from the older generation unless it's on a one on one basis now no don't feel valued.

Kit Heintzman 02:01:57

What are some of the mistakes from the past that you wish younger generations would learn from?

Danny Black 02:02:05

Mistakes in my past that the younger generation would learn from our mistakes?

Kit Heintzman 02:02:13

You had said that I thought you had mentioned as a whole you had said earlier that you would hope that the younger generation would learn from the mistakes of the past and feeling like that was not something that was happening among younger generations they weren't learning I was wondering what you were referring to.

Danny Black 02:02:37

They seem to have a better idea of how to communicate than we do. I can just write you a text or an emoji and you'll know what I'm yeah why bother picking up the phone? Why talking to somebody why bother talking to somebody why bother going to meet up at a coffee shop or a restaurant or or a park you can just have fun online you can just communicate online you got to get out there I I don't know that this meta world is gonna be the answer. No. can't learn by staying in your techno online world.

Danny Black 02:04:03

How did I?

Kit Heintzman 02:04:04

Stay in touch with people during periods of lockdown?

Danny Black 02:04:11

Over zoom by by trying new things I think within the first month or two, I had my computer geek run a zoom game. That was just for the purpose of getting seven or eight people together and having fun with the online quiz game show kind of thing. And I brought in seven or eight unrelated friends of mind that it's something I'd like to have done in real, real life. After five years of being in business 35 years ago, 36 years ago, I had a five year anniversary party where I brought friends and relatives together that were, had never met each other that after that party, they formed friendships and, and business associations with each other that it was just so neat to see all the different types of people that were responsible for, for my happiness. And I'd like to do that at least one more time. Before I go, I'd like to have a celebration of life party before I go, rather than afterwards, I want to see what they're doing afterwards. So I want to have it now. Rather than afterwards. Don't don't celebrate it afterwards. Well, you can if you want, but celebrate it before I go. Now, me tell others how much happiness I brought you. And you brought me by us having interacted I can remember so many situations of actual encounters with friends, relatives, business clients, that happened in person that are dear to me that other than the one zoom call, I can't recall one other zoom Microsoft Teams, Google meet interaction that is like, wow, that's gonna that memory is gonna stay with me for the rest of my life. Whereas there's umpteen different actual interaction kinds of things. Pre pandemic, during pandemic that I'll remember for the rest of my life.

Kit Heintzman 02:08:37

What does the word health mean to you?

Danny Black 02:08:42

What does the word health mean to me? It's a multifaceted kind of thing. Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, kinda healthiness. All the facets are not just physical, are important. And be unhealthy enough to function and interact with others in a meaningful way. If I'm not physically well enough to get up out of bed and go interact with somebody, in whatever way whatever form of transportation or means of propelling myself from point A to point B, not physically healthy enough. If I'm not emotionally, emotionally in mentally there enough to interact with somebody to give them happiness. I'm not healthy enough. When any of those arnt enough it's time to go.

Kit Heintzman 02:10:37

What was it like having to adapt to all of this new technology?

Danny Black 02:10:46

In a way, it was nothing new for me, yet it, it was something new. I can think back to what, five or 10 years ago, maybe longer when it came time to renew my yellow pages ad or to think about communication. And I was asked around here it's I don't know how many odd dollars worth of investment in the Yellow Pages ad. Wow, it's hard to even fathom that yellow pages was such a thing. But it was a big chunk of my success. Back in my clown training, you know, I was I was trained. And I'll don't do yellow pages don't put put your don't put your home address in, in your on your business card or your yellow pages ad or in the phonebook. Because people have no more fun but come clown at a clowns house with eggs or toilet paper or something like like, okay, I can deal with that. I just want them to have the address so that they can get the check in the mail properly to me. Or, or. Yeah, so I took out a yellow pages ad 30-35-40 years ago, and it

was great. And then other clouds started following in my footsteps. But I got off on another one of those tangents, didn't I? What question again? I want to answer it. Please ask the same question.

Kit Heintzman 02:12:58

I think I got lost in the storytelling?

Danny Black 02:13:03

I think I got Yes, I did. You did too.

Kit Heintzman 02:13:07

I did too

Danny Black 02:13:12

What was it like? What was

Kit Heintzman 02:13:15

What was it like adapting to new some of these like new technological things that became more mainstream?

Danny Black 02:13:22

Right. That was when I started going off on a tangent. Okay, so I was asking, Will, I was asking some friends. While I was asking about the yellow pages will video. You know, there's Skype Back, back 5-10 years ago, there was Skype that you could video with people, but people weren't using it all that much. And I asked when you communicate with people with business clients, do you do it? ever do it with video? Or just with audio? phone conversations? No, I not just need you just need audio. That's all you need. Well, here we are. No 5-10 years later, doing doing the at all. You're looking at the morning newscast, the evening newscast, whatever. And, and 97% of their news stories are covered by somebody doing a Skype a zoom, or whatever interview with the newscaster at all. And Katie Couric doesn't have to go to Zimbabwe in order to interview somebody. She can do it right from the comfort of her news desk in and in Washington. You can get almost a good portion of the the feel of The interviewer by doing it over zoom. But I, I look forward to the new technology and like I said played that one game with seven or eight friends as a way of learning the technology and kind of a backhanded way for myself and for others. And what was it back in 1992 When my ex went to the Para Olympic games over in Barcelona, Spain there was computer bulletin boards or, or something kind of foreign like that. And I said, Okay, I'm gonna learn how to do that and find out her scores and find out you know, the news of the Paralympics over the computer bulletin board. And a couple hours later, I call up my ex and talk to her about how things went. And, and I would know that she won a gold and a silver medal before she had the chance to tell me and all it like and this was something as obscure as the Paralympics back in 1992 when they fax machines were a new thing. And here we are 20-30 years later, and I think some of the Paralympics are even broadcast over network TV now. And it's like wow so it was nothing new for me to learn some of this new technology and I embraced it, it was challenging but what part of my life hasn't been challenging and I was happier after I learned it

Kit Heintzman 02:17:19

What does the word safety mean to you?

Danny Black 02:17:24

Safety safe from the infection safe from others what was it back end? Or what summer was it? 2020 or 2021 that the BLM Movement was strong in the streets and there was even a threat of some what do you call them back then? Protesters rioters, participants because I live real close to downtown Lansing this mistake capital and they were big news they they turned over a car and burned it here in Lansing and they were breaking store windows and it was only 5-10 blocks away oh was at 10-15 years ago I was with a group of entertainers that all became empowered with owning a handgun and use it for your own personal protection. Yeah, it's it's locked up somewhere. It's been locked up for about 10 years now but I guess I'd have to get it out and have an alarm that I don't know what it reminds me of. Yes, it's locked up right now and I imagined I'd need to get it out again. If the threat of personal safety here in my apartment ever ever happened but being safe from the infection being safe from personal harm

Kit Heintzman 02:20:24

When it comes to the infection, what have been some of the things that you've changed in order to feel safer?

Danny Black 02:20:31

What have I changed and what safer?

Kit Heintzman 02:20:35

In order to feel safer?

Danny Black 02:20:37

Oh, what have I changed in order to feel safer stay in even more gotten even more empowered with my physical health and been more attentive to getting the vaccinations. I've been through you know, the first and second shot and the two boosters and I'm trying to stay somewhat vigilant with some of the other protection measures using a mask is I stay very diligent to that in the first year to not get into crowded situations and just to feel safer and only going out when I had to or when I felt I had to go to the grocery in the pharmacy could have been done with no deliveries or or by having others got haven't gotten recovered some of the stuff brochures but most of the time I I did it myself to use it as a social interaction thing. I drive myself bonkers by by staying here and having everything delivered I thrive on that interaction and a friend Steve he's had five strokes now. About an hour away from here and there's been periods of knowing him the last five or 10 years that it's affected his speech and haven't been able to really communicate with each other real well. But I became somewhat involved in in his care may be too involved and one thing that came out from him during that time was that all he cared about was happiness and french fries he just wanted to enjoy the the last years of his life with a good time and eating even if it meant sometimes endangering himself sometimes so it's become more of a reality for me that yeah, my happiness in the later years last years is important.

Kit Heintzman 02:24:37

How did you decide on your course of vaccination?

Danny Black 02:24:44

How did I decide on my course of vaccination? By listening to to folks that I thought were the experts and again we come back another big tangent there were the two sides. Listen to them, or to them and because as a kid I add, you know, measles, mumps, smallpox vaccinations, polio vaccinations. Back on one round when I was born I think it was invented it's a vaccination. It's gotta protect you. You know this side James we'll be talking a little bit more logically, then that side that side was a nutcase. Ran a reality show. When I knew reality shows were just Yeah, piece of. How could you? How could you trust somebody that was doing the whole reality show with the nation? So you kind of had to listen to the other side. They were talking a lot more logically than the other side.

Danny Black 02:26:50

They say, people in this age group and this kind of medical class vacations, you better get your shot? You know. Next month. Okay, I'll do that. Okay, I'm still here. I guess I should get the second shot. Okay, I'm still here. Haven't got it. Okay, let's do the booster. And then, when friends around me, it finally started getting maybe six months or so ago that I started to know some of the friends. Some of the people that were actually catching it and dying from it. And finding out that they hadn't gotten vaccinated. Okay, it means a whole lot more than just big numbers of people that you don't know. Okay, I'm kind of glad that yeah, I took that side. I didn't inject it and sit in front of a UV light or something like that. yeah. I'm still here.

Kit Heintzman 02:28:30

After you've decided to get vaccinated how easy was access for you?

Danny Black 02:28:37

There we go again with those tangents. First, vaccination, first vaccination was pretty easy. Somewhat January to January 2020. No, no. January 2020-21. Yes, that was Yeah. January 2021. Got an email or something from my local medical hospital group saying you're eligible for the vaccine just you know. Go here to this website. Sign up on here and you know you'll get an appointment. Hey, it was a little challenging. But I having navigated computers and on the internet and all that, okay, got registered. But actually getting to the, boy, on an electric scooter in Michigan In the wintertime I was like, okay, got on the bus. Bus drops me off right in front of the pharmacy. That the area right around the The bus stop is completely shoveled, clear of snow, cement clear. Yet, when you leave the cement pad of the bus stop. There's snow all over the sidewalks. And if you've ever had to talk to somebody with a scooter in the wintertime and snow, even a half an inch unless it's an ATV, Scooter, you can't get anywhere. So I got maybe six inches or a foot down that sidewalk with that was covered in snow. And I was stuck and the appointment was in a half hour. And I was like I'd been an advocate for the city dealing with snow covered sidewalks and not properly enforcing the ordinance. So I was just beside myself, livid. I had to get inside of that pharmacy and get it you know, it was available to me. So I called up the pharmacy. Yeah. 300 feet away and ranted and raved. And the manager finally came out after two or three phone calls back and forth and bad reception and he came out and how can I help you? I need to get into the appointment and I'm stuck on your sidewalks. And rah rah rah rah. You know, there's a city ordinance that says you got to clear your sidewalk. And he pulled me through the snow into his parking lot across grass and got me into this door. And apparently he is pharmacy chain corporate appoints a snow team to take care of the sidewalks and he

thought it was all taken care of. Well, when he finally came out and saw that I was stuck him and another staff member of the pharmacy, all while I'm in there getting the shots are out there furiously, shoveling 1000 feet of sidewalk, shoveling it just me and another guy and salting it. And I came, came out after the appointment and was looking for him and wanting to apologize for my bad temper. And it was like the sidewalks were completely bare. I mean, like perfect. And had like apologized up one side and down the other and then proceeded to go home, go to the other side of the street to get the bus in the opposite direction. And find out there were seven other businesses with snow covered sidewalks in front of them. Oh, and I ranted and raved at them and took photos and so access once I got past the snow covered sidewalk wasn't a problem wasn't a problem after I got the second shot, because it was, what, 90 days or two months later. And by that time the snow had somewhat melted here in Michigan. And then the first booster and the second booster was during good weather. And that was just navigating the emails of the communications coming from when and where to get it to make sure you got the same brand as you had before just in case there were any interactions.

Danny Black 02:34:52

You just had to pay attention and manage your own because I again become empowered and manage your own healthcare and pay attention because if you just went willy nilly and got any brand or didn't pay attention to dates you kind of screwed things up I guess

Kit Heintzman 02:35:24

How did you pick the brand you ended up going with?

Danny Black 02:35:31

Again just trying to listen to the experts and trying to listen to what seemed to be a brand that somewhat had their act together somewhat someone that wasn't just putting putting the drug out there and let's see what happens afterwards trying to trust Yeah, we've done all the test

Kit Heintzman 02:36:13

Now how did your body take to the vaccination? What was that physical experience and after effects like?

Danny Black 02:36:32

I think I think the second shot was the only one that I had a slight reaction or even forget what it was but you know whether whether it be online and emails on on marks communication on matter or Facebook whatever you call it, you're seeing off i i went into terrible shock convulsions and this and that the other day happened to me like okay why didn't it happen to me so there were no reactions really i I was mainstreamed as a kid I I was you know mom would look lick cuts and send you back out on the street without a bandaid and go you'll live I learned to survive you know?

Kit Heintzman 02:38:05

What happened with your business over the course of the pandemic?

Danny Black 02:38:16

I tried to I tried some technology kind of entertainment things over zoom. Most were successful. But people weren't flocking to them. Like they flocked to real live entertainment, in person entertainment, where you can see and feel and taste and smell the entertainer. Some other folks put the technology to good use and they were successful. But at the same time, the pandemic was coming along. I was encountering some some health issues myself. Some mobility issues myself. The economy I don't know. Didn't seem to be all that great. But it was gangbusters, according to him and then the reality of political correctness. Wow, that's another tangent that would take five or six days of political correctness.

Danny Black 02:40:05

It's no longer politically correct to have a elf or a leprechaun entertain your Christmas or St. Patrick's Day corporate met on Christmas party because it's dehumanizing that individual bonk bonk come on you've been doing it for ages with the athletes that are going oh muscle bound and like what else can I do with my muscles other than to play football or basketball or or run track and field and and or what else can I do with my beautiful voluptuous female body but too and I'll sell makeup whatever so I took my advantage and or my disadvantage and use it to my advantage and for for that the politically correct movement is chastising me and and others you got to do you got to be a doctor you got to be a lawyer you got to be, wait a second. Einstein was given this brilliant brain and it's like he didn't say hey, I need to be a track and field star used his brain to invent being thing, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford and they use the gifts that they were given. And some would call my dwarfism not a gift I would beg to disagree. It's a gift that I've been given that I chose to use differently than others want me to use once again, we kind of have closed captions of closed captions of the question and the question needs to stay on the screen so I can refer back to it so I don't go on these tangents and I gotta go farther back. So you can see my body language

Kit Heintzman 02:43:17

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Danny Black 02:43:24

Challenged awfully challenged looking forward to it. But But okay, what's coming next? Cuz I knew I know it was something new is coming along that I gotta learn to deal with. Well after I came home from my second rehabs day, I had a home health aide for maybe four to six weeks over the course of two or three or four different agencies. Once a year, they got it. They gotta learn from their mistakes. Got to go through that many agencies is ridiculous. But I had I had my last home health aide, I think September 15 of last year 2021 So I was without a home health aide and tell about maybe six weeks ago. I did have a friend that was coming couple times a week to kind of scrape off the top layer of the apartment, whether it be with taking out the trash, doing laundry, and changing sheets. And so I got an another health aid six weeks ago, one of the same ones that I had last fall Wow, there's so many tangents we got to do little footnotes, and this C tangent number 33 C, tangent number 59 If you want more, to learn more about that thing. But she only lasted six weeks, she was served her circumstances and ended about 10 days two weeks ago. So I'm again without a home health aide. And back to Ryan, helping out a couple times a week. And yes, the system's back and me trying to make changes, and they don't like it. And my friend keeps telling me just just just deal with it. Don't Don't try and change it. You're not gonna change it. Yeah, right, right. And if Thomas Edison didn't change how he made the lightbulb after the first three times where would we be we'd still be in the dark. So he changed something he learned from his mistakes in the past. And now we're all good up at night

till 2am looking at Facebook, because of Thomas Edison. Dang him why'd you do that Thomas I don't know what's coming. But hey, let's roll with it.

Kit Heintzman 02:47:34

What are some of your hopes for longer term future?

Danny Black 02:47:47

Possibly be some more family, connectivity for the family to come back together a little bit more than it's awfully disjointed in the last 5-10 years with technology my health health changes mom's dealing with Alzheimer's maybe that maybe that might, sad as it is to say, might bring us back together or maybe it might keep us apart that and just to enjoy the, my last my last umpteen years I've kind of put a goal of being in this apartment until 2029 At least before I'm ready to go to long term care. And I think it scares the local area age aging agency, cuz they're gonna have me to deal with for another seven years. And, in a way, get a thick sort of way. I look forward to that.

Kit Heintzman 02:49:44

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the course of the pandemic?

Danny Black 02:49:50

I'm making sure I still connect with friends. Friends, especially. Over the last 40 years, I've had some near and dear friends that have they're successful, or they're, they're the reason for my success what they'd given what they've shared, what they've exchanged, whether it be in a business relationship, or in a friendship towards my business, they've given me pointers on how I might do something better. They Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 02:50:59

Im coming up to my last few questions, and they're all a bit odd

Danny Black 02:51:03

Oh, no, no. Dont end.

Kit Heintzman 02:51:11

I want you to think about like, people who work in the humanities in the social sciences, so people in like literature departments or drama departments or history or sociology or political science, what should we be studying right now, to help us understand this moment that we're living in? What should we be looking at? What questions should we be asking?

Danny Black 02:51:35

The questions that were asked the last time that something like this happened, and what were the answers? The questions that were asked the last time some other calamity happened. Not not identical to this, but similar to this and what were the the answers looking at what happened to past societies that went through similar things and what eventually happened or did not happen to them and why they're not around have we learned yet? As much as it seems like we've learned because we've put a man on the moon

and are able to communicate over near phone line face to face. We still haven't learned Yeah, are we going to be around in 20-2050-2060

Kit Heintzman 02:53:19

How do you feel about the possible answers to that question?

Danny Black 02:53:32

I'd like to be hopeful by but as humans have a good chance of screwing something up if we're given that and not having learned from our past I don't know. I don't know. I'd like to be hopeful

Kit Heintzman 02:54:05

I'd like you to imagine some historian in the distant future distant a lot on offset it's at least a generation out no lived experience of this moment. What kinds of histories would you tell them need to be written about right now?

Danny Black 02:54:30

Historian in the future, writing about history now. These guys still haven't learned they still haven't learned If and this is why I'm writing the history from Mars instead of from Earth because earth ain't around right about anymore I'm just doing it from Mars they haven't learned from the pandemic or the was it the 1918 pandemic thing they haven't learned from Tulsa they haven't learned from the civil war they haven't learned from Abraham Martin and John when will they learned when will they get it right we'll come closer but I don't think so. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 02:56:12

Could you give me a glimpse of what you think getting it right might look like?

Danny Black 02:56:44

How much mind altering medications do our viewers have so that they can come along on this ride. Wow. Getting it right means not having a need for a war all the time. Why do we have to exist on a war economy? Why do we have to exist with a constant battle with each other over my side better than your side? I'm a I'm a side A and your side B side a is always better than side both sides are right. And we can live in harmony rather than at all pouring tons of money into senseless wars getting getting it right means people not living in squalor people not living having to beg for their next meal wow what is? Yep, it's gonna take a lot.

Kit Heintzman 02:59:04

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time and the thoughtfulness of your answers. And those are all of the questions I know how to ask at this moment, but if there's anything more you'd like to share, please take some space to do so.

Danny Black 02:59:25

Look forward to my tangent addendum cuz, cuz maybe the viewers, listeners, readers have more questions on tangents that weren't covered. So, yeah, maybe, maybe there'll be more at a later date. With a with another Alice Drager. or our Kit. Or, or Edgar Allan Poe or something. Yeah, there'll be more.

Kit Heintzman 02:1:00:16

Thank you so much.

Danny Black 03:00:17

Thank you Kit. Thank you. Youre welcome. Thank you