Secrets of a Super-Ager: 97-year-old Herb Waddell's Guide to a Life Well-Lived Transcript

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Opening reflections on curiosity and meeting people

But a lot of people don't talk to strangers, so they don't meet new people, so they don't have new experiences. Now, I did tell you that probably one of the most important things in keeping me young was that about six years ago, six, seven years ago, a little six-year-old girl And I got acquainted and she wanted a local grandpa, so she asked me to be her grandpa.

And it's been wonderful. I've been exposed to a young person with their curiosity, their energy. They're, you know, 100% into everything. That's either plus or minus, of course, but they're so enthusiastic and so inspiring.

So that is something peculiar to me, but it's just the same. As I mentioned earlier, you've got to be open to meeting new people and doing new things.

Welcome to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. I'm delighted today to introduce you to a new friend of mine. I met Erb when I was visiting the East Coast and talking about what we've done at Marama to people at the Juniper communities.

Now, Irv doesn't live in senior living, he actually came from the community and joined us, and I was just really taken by his story. I was so impressed by who he is, his humor, everything he's accomplished, and how well, how gracefully, how well he's aged.

to be not just getting older, but really thriving as he's doing it. And so I hope that you will be as inspired as I have been being introduced to Erb.

He was born during the Great Depression on a small family farm near Niagara Falls in New York. And he learned resilience early on. He unfortunately lost his father at the age of 13 and then was told he had a bad heart.

But he went on to serve two years in the US Navy during World War II as an aviation electronics technician's mate. Using the GI Bill, he then earned a chemical engineering degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

And then later, for fun, he got a law degree from Seton Hall at age 48. Urban and his wife Milka were married for 67 years and raised two children and four grandsons.

At 63, he began his most fulfilling career as a patent attorney, which he continued until the age of 93. And now at 97, Herb remains active, curious, and optimistic.

He's looking forward to his next chapter and aiming to reach 100 in good health and of course, in good company.

Herb's life story and path to thriving past 95

Herb, it's such a privilege to have you here. Thank you for joining us. Well, thank you for having me. It's an honor. So you created a program where you basically talk about your secrets of how to not only survive, but to thrive past 95, which I love it.

The title of your talk is how to survive and thrive past 95. I want to know what some of those secrets are. What do you think helps you to maintain not just, you know, your life, of course, but the quality of your life and what matters most?

Well, that was all boiled down to a single page in my talk, but in preparing for today's interview, I kind of reviewed

my life and came up with a different perspective.

Two years ago, when I was 95, a youngster, I thought that my genes were probably not the key because my father died at 49 from a heart attack, which is usually an indication that his children are going to have trouble.

But now when I look at the whole record up to 97. Hey, five of the nine children that my parents had made it into their nineties. And two of us are still alive with a shot at maybe making a hundred.

Who knows? That's my personal goal. But before I thought it was mostly good exercise and good food and good friends and good family and that was in my disclosure of my secret of how to survive and thrive past 95. The first thing I need is a new slogan, how to I guess stay out of seven at 97. I'd stay out of heaven at 97 or something.

I can't come up with anything catchy. Well, you're still close to 95, which is impressive. So it still works. But I do like that. But I have come to the realization at 97 that just being alive is quite a distinguishing feature.

And especially for a man, it's roughly the statistical equivalent of a woman being 100. And, you know, that's a nice number that everyone says is being pretty old.

So I'm not thinking about how I'm doing it. I'm just thinking about, hey, this is kind of nice, kind of neat. I think I'll keep it up for a while. It seems like you enjoy it and there's a constant curiosity in my experience with you.

There's this thirst for knowledge and understanding and wanting to share. And also, I think what I just heard you say was that, you know, you looked back at your notes from a couple years ago when you gave your talk at 95, and here now at 97, you're kind of changing things.

You've got a new perspective, so you're constantly upgrading how you're thinking about things, your reflections. And that alone, I think, says so much about who you are.

Do you think that has to do with you aging well? Well, I think my constant curiosity is probably the thing that keeps me most engaged with everything.

I make new friends everywhere I go. Because, well, like with you, I chatted with you. That's all it took. Now we're good friends. But a lot of people don't talk to strangers.

so they don't meet new people, so they don't have new experiences. Now, I did tell you that probably one of the most important things in keeping me young was that about six years ago, six, seven years ago, a little six-year-old girl And I got acquainted, and she wanted a local grandpa, so she asked me to be her grandpa.

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Curiosity, new friendships, and the local grandpa story

They're, you know, a hundred percent into everything. That's either plus or minus, of course, but they're so enthusiastic and so inspiring. So that is something peculiar to me, but it's just the same.

As I mentioned earlier, you gotta be open to meeting new people and doing new things. I met her family. They're amazing people. They're all very talented.

And how did you meet her? How did you meet this little girl? She was selling orange juice at the curb during COVID to raise money for their family charity of a church they belonged to.

And hey, I stopped because I like to encourage little kids who are doing useful things. And I noticed a ukulele. I asked if she could play it. She played Ring of Fire, Johnny Cash's famous song.

And so a little later, a couple weeks later, it was just past Halloween, and I had candy bars. I saw her walking by

from the school bus stop with her mother, and I ran out with a Johnny Cash album.

and some candy bars from Halloween, and she was mine for life. So during COVID then, the following summer, She was engaged in at-home schooling, so she would come down with her reading lesson and she would read to me on my front porch.

We weren't breaking the rules, but we were making the most of the situation. And after her lesson, we would play games or make things. We made blueberry houses, for example.

We made wind chimes. We made Christmas wreaths. Whatever struck our fancy, we made. We graduated after the COVID restrictions were lifted to making cakes and pies and all kinds of things.

So I highly recommend a young child in the life of any old person because it breaks you out of your little boundaries. You're fixed in your ways and you're limited in what you can do.

Well, you aren't really. Your brain should be free and talking to a little girl, six, seven, eight, now she's 13, she's a teenager. I'm about to lose her, but that's life.

But she had a local grandpa and I had another generation of children to enjoy. Yeah, to inspire that childlike wonder in the world, right? And hey, my contemporaries are fascinating.

A lot of old people have a lot of stories. I gave a talk at the Chatham Senior Center a couple years ago, and it was about what life was like during World War II.

I discovered to my delight that there were three ladies in the audience who were little children, two of them in London and one in Paris, and they lived through the war as children.

The two in London lived through the blitz. They knew what it was to be bombed. They knew what it was to hear the bombers going overhead. And all of this came out of a chance encounter at a talk that brought them out to experience my talk, but they contributed things that were far more amazing than what I would say.

So I say there are stories everywhere, everywhere around you. In fact, I published a book and I just got something today in my mail, email. A new friend at the Chatham Senior Center said that the book club wanted to use my new book as the topic of their discussion of non-fiction.

Why don't they call it facts, but hey. Anyway, so they're going to feature my book and that'll stimulate some conversations too. Well, congratulations.

That's exciting. So I'm curious, you mentioned to me that you were a keto fan before you even knew what keto was. Tell us about your diet and how that's evolved.

You mentioned that diet and exercise and family and good friends, that these things have had an impact on you aging well. Tell us about diet. Well, which one of those was it that you wanted to hear about the diet?

Well, we work a lot with the ketogenic diet, but I really want to just hear your experience. Well, my wife and I thought we were eating good food. We were eating food that we were raised on.

My dad was an immigrant from England, and meat and potatoes and vegetables were what we ate. and not a lot of spices. And we ate a lot of vegetables because we could grow our vegetables.

We couldn't grow our beef and pork. So eating that way, we never thought about diets. And then the government came out with that stupid pyramid that says eat a lot of carbohydrates and very little fats and never ever butter.

And I'm saying, butter, hey, we didn't have any cows, but the neighbor farm had cows. And I can remember the farmer's wife churning butter in a big wooden churn by hand.

And that's where we got our butter. And I love butter, but we had to buy it. So it was not encouraged that you eat butter. You could eat peanut butter, and jam, but you couldn't eat butter.

And so I rebelled against that. And I said, I love beef. I love butter. I like milk, okay, but it was no longer a staple in my diet. So we just ate that way.

We were both from similar backgrounds. And then the keto diet came along and I said well that's interesting that that says I should lean that way a little more and so I just naturally ate fats protein and carbs were the filler to fill you up and when I got to be about 80 I realized I was not in very good shape And we tightened our belts a little.

We looked at our diets a little more carefully, and we worked on them a little more. And unfortunately, my wife got pretty heavy and had all kinds of problems.

And finally, eight years ago, she had a cardiac arrest. I'm so sorry.

Diet, keto, and changing eating habits

So that ended my married life and now my bachelor life is blessed with my families both being close by, 30 miles for one and 11 for the other. So I get a lot of food from them.

wonderful food. And it just works out that I'm on a pretty good diet. Now when I heard your talk, I said, well, maybe I'll tighten up a notch. Maybe I ought to go keto.

And so I started making, well, I dropped my traditional breakfast of real oatmeal and blueberries and ginger. In fact, I may have gotten a light dose of gout from the shift to breakfast of a lot of fat and protein.

So I've slacked off of that a little now. But hey, it's kind of trial and error. Right. And variety. Maybe variety. Yeah, well, there's a lot of variety to a keto diet.

I mean, of course, there's bacon and eggs, but I get a lot of leftovers from the dinners I have with people, my family mostly, and friends, and take out from, I eat a lot of lunches with the guys.

You know, a big tavern sandwich is enough for two meals. And you're always eating a lot of protein and fat in a restaurant for lunch. Although, you know, salad is great too.

You learn to love different things. And it forces you to have more variety. You mentioned ginger in your oatmeal, and you've said that in our conversations that you have relied on some of these folk remedies like ginger and the heat that it produces for stain well.

I'm curious what you've been drawn to over the years and what you've found effective over the course of your life. Well, when I stopped working at Sloan Kettering, which was my last corporate employer, I joined the old guard, the retired man, and I played golf for the first time since Lord knows when.

But I found that my left hand, I couldn't clench my fingers tight enough to hold the golf club. And I didn't know why, but I started using a significant amount of ginger.

And after months, maybe a year, I don't know, I wasn't paying much attention, but I suddenly realized I could play golf again. Because I could grip the club.

And that persisted until I tried to go keto. And I gave up. Oatmeal and ginger and blueberries that were all part of the package and And I I got so I couldn't hold the golf club again and I said, okay Forget about it.

Maybe it was just happenstance but I'll try going back on ginger, fresh ginger, grated, about a teaspoonful grated. And so it was significant. And now, now, hey, my fingers, I can…

Are you playing golf again? That's great! I was until I had a catastrophe. I've had about six weeks of really bad, bad things happening. We had a flash flood in my, and the water smashed in my basement window and flooded my basement.

So I had tons of junk to get rid of and up and down, even though the family and friends, everyone was helping and I hired people. I did a lot of work over a couple of weeks to get there.

And as it may be, as a result, I developed sciatica, what we used to call when I was a kid, sciatica, but it was inflammation of the sciatic nerve and terrible pain down my leg and, and my butt, you know, it's classic.

Everyone knows. So that was a problem. And then on the way home from my hearing, that's another big issue. And I was losing my hearing and my hearing aids quit on me.

Well, they came from the VA. You got to return them to someplace out in the Midwest to be repaired. And it takes a month. that I could talk about a month about the problems.

Ginger, golf, and recent health setbacks

But anyway, so on top of that, after a session with an outside ear, nose and throat specialist, we're going past a hospital that specializes in strokes treatment and I had a an episode which they later told me was what a transient ischemic attack and it startled me and I told my son who was driving I said turn around we're going to the hospital Big mistake.

But I was there a couple days and finally got my freedom back. And they tried to convince me that I had something happen that nobody witnessed and that never left a trace, but they were sure it happened.

Anyway, I'm here. I'm back. So all of these things, now I still have the back. I was totally concerned that I wouldn't make it here. Yeah, it sounds like you've been through a lot.

I mean, your entire life you've been through a lot and at 97 and a half, Your energy and your mental clarity are really extraordinary. I'm curious, like just zooming out with all of these experiences, what do you think has made the biggest difference in maintaining your cognition at this age?

You talked about genetics around your dad's heart and your siblings, but do you think it's mostly genetics or do you maybe from your mom's side or do you think it's something else?

If it's anything, it's persistence and curiosity. I could give you a list as long as my arm of different technologies I have mastered. I learned early on, you can become an authority in any field.

If you've got, well, my mother used to say, you can do anything you turn your mind to. and I proved her right. I was in all kinds of evolving technologies, areas of science, et cetera.

Well, hey, when I was, what, 63? Yeah, well, 60, well, in my early 60s, I went to work as an intellectual property attorney at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, dealing with medical scientists who were inventing new, discovering new science and inventing new things.

And I had to understand what they were doing and help them understand what they were doing too. And that was typical of how I went through my life. I would always jump in and pretty soon I could talk with the experts.

Well, like if I was a little younger, I'd study more about living longer and I'd be able to talk to you as an expert. Well, I think you are an expert because you have the experience, right?

You have expertise because you are doing it. You have lived such a long and full life and you've seen a lot of health advice come and go and you worked at a major medical institution.

I'm curious about your approach to healthy aging. And, you know, where do you get your advice from? What do you trust? How do you navigate the conflicting medical opinions out there?

And not even just medical, but like health more generally. Well, I'm a natural engineer. I'm a natural lawyer. And I trained in both of those fields. And they're both alike.

You gather facts and make judgments. So I try not to be emotional. Well, in those professions, you better not be emotional. You better determine the truth as best you can.

Very difficult. And you also have to keep an open mind. I'm not right. I just form an opinion when I feel I've got enough information to do so. But I'm open to changing it at any time.

And I hate people who are dogmatic and fixed in their ways because that's just not the way life is. And so I think I've always been that way since I first got a chemistry set at age 12. My first experiments were making explosives, some that had never been made by anyone, I'm sure, because I worked with what I had.

But it made me want to be a chemist, and I'm still a member emeritus of the American Chemical Society at 97. Maybe I'll try a few more years. If you're blessed with a mind that stays active and useful, hey, there's no reason to stop being curious and reading and forming reasoned opinions, but it's different.

As we know better, we do better. Yeah. We can change. Yeah. Oh, go ahead. No, go ahead. Well, you've said that you value amateurs versus authorities, and I'm sure that there's value in both, right?

There's value in expertise and people who have that lived experience, but there's also this value in something that sounds like you hold very closely, which is, and you're very, very good at, which doesn't come naturally to everyone, but this open-minded approach to life.

that you can upgrade your opinion. It can change. It's malleable with new information. And so when you talk about this value of amateurs versus authorities, I'm curious what you mean by that and how that philosophy has guided your choices around health, but also just living a long life in general.

Persistence, cognition, and lifelong learning

Well, I'm thinking to what I put in my book. My mother and father represented the last generation with archaic medicine, with low levels of formal education.

Most everyone in the country in the 1930s lived on a farm. And we didn't have all of the niceties of life today. And my parents just had like six or seven grades of education.

You had to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic. And you didn't need to know more. But So my mother was a great source of the old time knowledge from the simple school books they had in those days.

And they lived a lot by sayings, you know. She would always have a saying for anything that happened. And so I put a few of them in my book because that was the level of knowledge.

And a lot of that was applied to medicine too. There were rules, cold for this and heat for that. And, you know, there were no medicines, really. If you did go to the doctor and he had a medicine, He had it in a bottle.

He would put a few pills in a little envelope and after writing the instructions on the envelope and give it to you and say, take one in the morning, one in the evening and see me in a week.

And it was probably something like magnesium hydroxide or something. Yeah. But so we transitioned through a period of great ignorance compared to today.

And then all of a sudden the world is proceeding at such a great rate. World War II was a big tipping point. Our

scientific knowledge increased tremendously.

And of course, it's continued since. I am in awe of what has happened, but I think we may be running into a period where the negative features of our technology are going to be more severe than the benefits are good.

Hey, I'll be checking out so I won't have any long-term concern. But I have seen, well, GI Bill, all of a sudden millions of people went to college who couldn't afford it.

Before I went in the Navy, I had one year at a small college, Hobart, up in Geneva, New York. It was a small college of the pre-war version. They taught Greek and Latin.

They taught, you know, journalism and you could get a degree in English literature or something. And now, of course, you can get probably 20,000 different degrees and Things are totally, totally different.

But colleges went from the ivy covered halls to the supermarkets of education where you can get anything you want. So, well, how about another question?

Yeah, you've been through many transitions and really seeing the world change a lot. I think your reflections on technology are so fascinating. You grew up during the depression, right?

There probably weren't many cars around. So transportation has changed over the course of your life. Of course, the advent of the personal computer and now in this age of AI, You mentioned that you have this sort of prediction, this feeling that the risks of technology are starting to outweigh the benefits.

Can you just dive into that a little bit more? I'm curious from your perspective what that means and what the risks are. Well, the simplest I can express that is I've always been at the cutting edge of new things, new products, new science, new everything.

And now I just don't care about the cutting edge. AI is more work than it benefits me. Every now, every two months, I get a message. You can't do what you've done in the past.

You've got to do what we want you to do now. If you don't do what we say, you're dead. In terms of what? Well, for instance, cloud storage. Do I really want all my personal information in somebody else's computer?

No, but I have no choice. I like a computer to write on, word processing, to do some research on. But I don't go there for entertainment. I have plenty to entertain myself.

Tell me about that. It doesn't sound like you spend too much time on the screen scrolling or binging on Netflix. So how do you entertain yourself? Well, I read and I write.

Those are two big ones. I love to go to parties and interact with people.

Open-minded health advice and changing with new information

And so there are senior centers and old folks clubs and family and neighbors. The neighbors My porch is a meeting place. My dining room table has a very difficult puzzle on it because the lady up the street is a puzzler and she has no place for puzzles except my dining room table.

And if you're into puzzling, you're doomed. You don't have time for anything else. But we have very interesting people in the area and I don't see them all all the time but I see them frequently enough so that they are very engaging and very important in my life.

It's a real community, spending time with a real community, family, friends, going to parties. You are an extrovert. It reminds me of the research that came out of Northwestern recently.

I don't know if you saw that. At the University of Northwestern in Chicago, there's a woman there who published research on superagers. Essentially, she defined that as people who have the cognition of someone 30 years younger.

at 97, someone who's 67, you have essentially the cognition of someone that age. And I would argue that in your case, you probably have the cognition of someone in their 50s, that would be typical that we would see these days.

Now, I would, of course, argue that there's no such thing as losing your cognitive capacity as you age. There's lots of ways to protect that. And it's actually, shows that you're healthier when you do maintain that sharpness, but regardless, you're in this super-ager category.

And what they found was that the common denominator was not a diet, was not a supplement, was not an exercise, but it was that they were relative extroverts and they stayed engaged with community.

They were going to ball games. They were hanging out with neighbors like you've described. They were enjoying time with family. They were constantly surrounded by other people, maybe not constantly, but regularly and habitually surrounded by other people who they had positive relationships with.

And it sounds like you are among them. You are among these super-agers with that consistent variable manifesting in their lives. Did the study include speculation, investigation of how to make other people like that?

Well, you know, I think as we age, you mentioned hearing. I don't think that they speculated too much on that. That wasn't really the role of the researchers.

But I think what we can take away is what is the practical application of this is to emphasize and put effort into those relationships and into maintaining them.

And I think you mentioned your hearing and how you had to send your hearing aids away for a month. So that makes it harder to hear. For some people as they age, they get their driver's license taken away.

It can be harder to get around. Yeah, it can be more painful you mentioned your your hands with the golf clubs for some people It's a knee or a hip and so it just makes it harder to say yes to that dinner invitation or to instigate getting together and playing cards or going golfing or or Engaging in our in our hobbies with other people because everything just requires more effort, right?

It's more exhausting. I think as we age and there's there's bigger There's bigger obstacles if you can't hear, if you can't see, if it's hard to walk.

It just gets more challenging. But the value of that is, I think, actually is even higher as we age. It's more important as we age that we invent those relationships.

You hit on a very important one with hearing. I can hear a lot of things, but I can't comprehend. It's just noise. And you've got to be able to sort that noise into sensible words and music, but sensible sounds.

And it takes more and more effort. I was definitely afraid I wouldn't be able to carry on this discussion with you because of recent declines in my hearing.

But I think it's improved because of the examination. and unplugging my eustachian tubes. I think using Flonase for a week has made a wonderful difference.

So there's always hope. Well, as long as the heart is still beating. Well, that's not true for mine. I have a pacemaker, so it'll keep beating while I'm gone.

But yeah. Where do you get the most joy and meaning at this stage of life? It's, I think, interaction with people. Yeah. And another thing I've discovered is you can meet people like I met you.

Ninety-nine out of a hundred people who heard your talk wouldn't have made a contact with you the way we made. because it's just not done. But my family members, some of whom are in the wings here, can attest that when we go anywhere I'm just apt to meet new people.

And a bunch of them have ended up being friends of my family as well as friends of me. We went on river cruises. Hey, we had a ball. We had parties with people who were total strangers.

Technology, AI, and staying engaged offline

But you're out there for a good time. And it was enjoyable. But I must admit my wife was not as outgoing as I am and I wouldn't have a lot of the friends I have now if she was still alive because she just had a different approach to social activities.

She had a lot of great friends and she enjoyed parties and dinners and stuff, but she wouldn't go and approach people or situations the way I do. Now, that can probably be taught Yeah.

Well, there's two things I would like to ask your opinion about. One is the relationship dynamic. I think that that's very common that an extrovert will marry an introvert.

And it's not that one of them doesn't have lots of friends, but that one of them makes new friends all the time and has never met a stranger, you. And then your partner is a little more apt to stay like just around the family or with those friends they've had for a long time and want to invest more in those relationships.

And so I'm curious, One, how do you manage all of these relationships? It seems so time consuming. I'm kind of exhausted hearing you talk about it. I love the idea and I want to be more like you as I age, but I'm also like, where do you fit it in?

How did you and Milka navigate that? You were married for 67 years. What did that mean for your relationship? How did you figure out how much time to invest in new relationships versus old ones?

You wanted to engage someone or spend time with them and she didn't. How did you work through that? I don't know because when we were first married. I was what I don't know what they called me at that time but at some time in my life I was what you would call a nerd.

the engineer who is not the party boy, who is embarrassed in social situations. And part of it was I went from being an engineer professionally to being a field salesman so I could learn to get along with people.

I was told to take Oh, who was the guy? How to win friends and influence people. Yeah. Dale Carnegie, I think. Yes, Dale Carnegie. And in his course, you learn techniques for remembering people's names.

They made you stand up and give a talk and so forth and so on. I don't know, it was a bunch of things. I went into marketing. Well, you're trying to convince people that you've got something they need that they'll benefit from.

You've got to tell them how beneficial your product is to them, how it helps them. And I guess gradually, I just switched over. Now, Milk, in the meantime, she had very good friends.

very strong friendships. And I'm sure some of them thought I was a jerk because I didn't have that type of a relationship with people. But then through the years, well, she went to our local seniors club and I went to the Old Guard which met at the same time on Tuesdays, Tuesday mornings.

So we had an understanding when she couldn't drive I would drive her to seniors and I would go there for parties of course and occasional other times and she'd let me go to the Old Guard as long as I got her to her group.

And so we had our separate friends and separate types of activities, but it worked out somehow. And then how do you juggle it all? How do you find time for all of these wonderful people in your life?

Unfortunately, anymore, I don't. I'm getting so old. Well, with this back problem, I haven't… I don't have time for cooking or housekeeping or tending my yard.

I've always taken pride in blowing the leaves at this time of year and I'm getting old. You have lots of relationships that you can lean on here to help you blow the leaves and rake the leaves and keep your house up and make sure you're fed.

Well, but I've got to move out of the house soon because I've gone through this period of intense back pain. And as anyone knows, when you're in pain, you can't concentrate, you can't even read the paper.

Community, relationships, and aging with connection

You just, you just suffer. It's overwhelming. So you get nothing done and your job list gets longer and longer. I've always, I've never been afraid of work and I've always had plenty to do, but now I can't do it and it's frustrating.

Yeah, I bet. And it becomes overwhelming. Yeah. Well, it can be. Yeah. Well, you set your sights on reaching 100. So what is still on your bucket list?

What is on your two experience? I've got to cross that off the list before hitting 100. Well, I think I might try revising my book about stories for my family into a book about boyhood on the Niagara frontier during the deep depression and see if the Niagara Falls tourist people could sell a few.

Not because I wanted to be a commercial author, but I just feel I've done half the job already. Maybe I ought to see what it would be like to finish it.

And I mean, purge all the personal stuff, the names, my classmates, you know, so forth. But that's one possibility. But another one I think is more like, well, about equally likely is.

I think I'd like to try my hand at stand-up comedy. See, you're laughing just at the thought. I was just impressed. There's too much bad comedy out there.

and the world deserves a little more clever, clean, humorous, like my dad. A joke for us? Hmm? Have you got a joke for us? No. No, there's some things I'm not ready for.

All right, you've got some practice. I would like a lady friend to go to formal things with me. Because it's awkward to be a single man or a single woman at a party for couples.

Now it works, but I get invited to neighborhood families because Look, people like to hear me talk, apparently. And I'm happy to go to parties and talk.

Great. Thank you so, so much for being here. Do you have final thoughts for our audience? Well, I'll just say that I ascribe to the philosophy of Satchel Paige, ancient black baseball player who was asked what his secret was.

And he just said, I keep running as fast as I can. And I think that's good advice. If you keep running, you stay in shape. If you stay in shape, you stay around.

And hey, maybe that's the slogan for my next talk. Stay in shape and you'll stay around. Yeah. You've got some good ones. Well, you've had a long time to think about it.

Only, no, I have pondered, what is wisdom? It's miscurious. You have a property, a characteristic that is hard to define. It isn't just being smart. It's being wise.

Now, I haven't even looked it up in a dictionary, but everyone knows that wise is not being smart. It's being wise. This is going to come out my ears if I don't get this thing out of the way.

Ah, anyway, maybe I'll spend some time on that. That'd make a good subject for a talk. Maybe even a little book. What is wisdom? Yeah. Yes. A teacher of mine told me it's the grace to accept what is before you know that it's what's meant to be, basically.

Goals, humor, and final thoughts on wisdom

So that was an interesting, I thought, not an unexpected definition of wisdom. Erb, your story really is one that reminds us that age is not a limitation.

It's an invitation, right? That you have this lifelong curiosity, also discipline, right? To stay in shape, to eat well. And this humor shows what's possible when we care for our body, our mind, and our community, and our family with intention and with joy.

I am so grateful to you for sharing your optimism and your wisdom. and this wonderful perspective and experience with us today. I know that there are listeners out there who are walking away intrigued that you're single, but also inspired to keep learning, keep laughing, and keep believing in what's possible at any age.

You've really shown us what is possible. So thank you so much for being here. It's been a privilege having you. Well, thanks for having me. I've enjoyed it.

Thank you so much for listening to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. If you enjoyed today's conversation, please take a moment to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode with someone you care about.

It's one of the best ways to help others discover tools and inspiration for aging well. To stay connected, get bonus resources and never miss an episode, head over to drheathersanderson.com and join my email list.

Until next time, keep thinking well and aging on purpose.