



0:00: Hey, it's your friend Sarah, and welcome, welcome to Stories of Survival in the Modern Age.

0:14: Today I'm chatting with my husband, Brett Henry.

0:17: Brett is no stranger to the podcast.

0:20: In fact, this is his 3rd appearance, and each time we chat, we seem to find ourselves exploring a different chapter of life.

0:29: We first talked about authenticity and reinvention and then about gratitude and as is the

case for so many of us I'm sure quite a lot has changed since we last recorded.

0:41: Regular listeners will know that a couple of years ago we moved from California back to the UK, and since then Brett has stepped into semi-retirement, started drawing his Social Security, and has been thinking about what this next chapter of life might look like.

0:58: Well, after a fair bit of soul searching, he's now training to become a civil a civil celebrant.

1:06: Something that when you look back at his earlier career and the path he almost took many years ago, feels surprisingly like a full circle moment.

1:17: So today we're talking about purpose, the skills we carry with us, finding meaning in what does come next, and whether sometimes the next chapter is actually hiding inside everything we've already learned.

1:32: So Brett, welcome.

1:34: Welcome back to Stories of survival in the modern age.

1:38: Great to be back, and that is such a flattering introduction.

1:42: Do you want to be my press agent?

1:46: Oh, I don't think you need one.

1:47: I don't think you need one.

1:49: Since we podcasted 6 years ago, we chatted about, among other things, reinvention, and yet we had no idea just how much reinvention there was for us still to come.

2:02: We had, we dealt with your mum's passing, we did another relocation, the decision to start drawing your pension and your Social Security, and you know, the homeowners of our house that we loved so much when we first returned, they themselves came back to the UK.

2:18: And we had to find somewhere new to live.

2:21: So, if you could talk, how inconsiderate.

2:24: I think so.

2:25: I think so.

2:25: So if you could talk to the Brit who first recorded in 2020, what would you tell him about the next six years?

2:34: Well, first off, and I was thinking about this, and I've had conversations, not only with yourself but with others.

2:44: It actually is not reinvention.

2:49: It is taking what I or anyone else has accumulated through their life, either personal or professional, and Let's say as if it's a puzzle, refitting the pieces based upon that accumulated knowledge.

3:10: So Yes, I worked for many years in broadcast television.

3:16: I worked in many years.

3:18: In the public relations field.

3:21: I'm also a photographer, and for those of us who you and I alike have worked in Hollywood, We're storytellers and we tell stories in so many different ways.

3:39: In fact, during the time I spent at Warner Bros., our official motto was, we tell stories, including your own.

3:51: So now, this whole process over the past years, I thought I was looking for how do I reinvent itself, but actually.

4:01: It's more of a realization of all right.

4:09: You are who you are.

4:12: Take that whole package and move forward for something that I've actually have already trained to do without even realizing it.

4:23: So I guess you would sit, you would sit in front of Brett from 6 years ago.

4:28: Discussion with him about those sorts of things, and yet, do you think you've changed in that time?

4:35: I know it's only 6 short years, but a lot has changed.

4:38: Or do you think, or do you think you're simply expressing different parts of the same person?

4:45: I'm definitely a more mature person, and I don't mean that just chronologically, but emotionally, and I think a lot of people can and should.

5:01: come to a realization that yes, you are a work in progress and you get that maturity along the way and just to kind of go back in my personal history far beyond these past 6 years is that when I was much younger and I have shared this with you and with others, is that I had a very strong calling to a vocation.

5:29: I almost Made that big leap to go into the seminary to study to be a Roman Catholic priest.

5:40: Instead, I chose a different route.

5:43: And that was to go into television broadcasting.

5:49: And You mentioned how I am currently in training to be an an independent civil celebrant.

5:58: Well, actually that's a vocation, and maybe all those years, including the past 6 years, I have been actually preparing myself for this vocation that I have chosen, and I think the two Catholic priesthood.

6:17: Independent civil celebrant have a lot in common with each other, and maybe the higher power said, Brett, you need to do all these other things before you get to the finish line, which is the civil celibrancy.

6:32: Yeah, and I know I was gonna bring this in after, so you've kind of stolen the thunder really about that full circle, about that full circle moment, because obviously that brings us to where we are today, obviously because when we talk about all of those changes, there is that common thread weaving throughout, life has changed around you, around us, and sometimes because you choose the change and sometimes because, Not just you, but one has very little choice in the matter, but each time you've had to work out what next, what

now, and perhaps, you know, that's what this next chapter really is about, not simply what you're going to do.

7:20: But what do you want to take with you from everything else that you've done before, which obviously brings us, as I say, to that full circle moment to, to train as a a civil, I can't get my tongue round this word, to train as a civil celebrant.

7:37: I think it's easier for me just to call it a celebrant rather than civil celebrant.

7:42: You can call me anything you want because as you know I answer to many names including hey you but also, yes, this past 6 years I think has taught me, has taught you, taught us both that, to be more patient, and You know, it takes me back to when I worked for ABC is that in our office where I worked, we had this big sign up on the wall that read there is nothing permanent but change.

8:14: And as soon as we accept the fact that, hey, that's what life is all about, there is change, and you have to be flexible to go with the change and to learn from it and to adapt to it is, yes.

8:28: You know, a couple of years ago we were living in this very lovely home, and unfortunately the circumstances of the homeowner that we were renting from changed and they had to come back to the UK and needed their house back and It Resulted in a major change for us, but we both agreed that this move that we have made from a 4 bedroom home into a smaller one is a strategic move until More a tactical move than a strategic, yeah, that's it, yeah, a tactical move.

9:08: In fact, your good brother came up with that term because we were using the term strategic, and he says no, it's tactical, yeah, because tactical is short term, strategic is longer.

9:21: Yeah, so yeah, I have learned, and we have both learned is that we have to be patient and that things happen for a reason and to embrace that change because You have to look at the light at the end of the tunnel and say, you know something, there's a reason this is happening, and we are going to be better people as a result of this, and our circumstance is going to be much better than we thought it would be.

9:49: Hm.

9:50: So obviously, you know, when we originally talked about this celebrant thing and, and decided to, to, to explore the options and to look at the training.

10:01: Was there a point that made you think, yeah, this could be me, or did you think, oh, it's just something else, maybe I'll explore something else and see if it lands?

10:09: No, it did speak to me because is that.

10:14: One of, let's say, the dilemmas that I have been going through for the past few years wherein I thought I had to reinvent myself or do something that was a part of a past profession.

10:35: was that I wanted to be able to do something where I came from a place of service to others, and that is actually when I look back, everything I've done has been coming from a place of service to others whether I realized it or not, is that even when I was in television, not in front of the cameras but behind, is that my role literally was providing service to the entertainment industry.

11:04: Yeah, and, and that is what I've done all along throughout my life is somehow it was service oriented and as our great mentor Jack Canfield has instilled in us time and time again, it is the successful people of the world who come from a place of service to others, and it's not just financial success, it's personal success that he's all about.

11:33: And that is true is those people who truly all around are well rounded, are successful are those who come from a place of service to others, and that's what I was looking for is what can I be doing next that fulfills that personal need of mine.

11:48: And that is also where, you know, the civil celibacy is speaking to me.

11:55: And you described it earlier, not here, but when we were chatting.

11:59: And connecting with people and helping their stories be heard.

12:07: Just, just talk a bit about that if you don't mind, Brett, what does that mean to you, helping their stories be heard?

12:16: As I said, I mean, we are all storytellers.

12:20: In fact, I mean, storytelling has been part of the human fabric since day one of civilization.

12:32: but one of the things that I do to keep myself out of trouble and out of your hair is that I am also, I provide tours to coach parties of our home area of the River Valley, as well as coach tours that have to do with the Pendle witch trials of 1612, which literally all took place in our very backyard here.

12:56: And I've always loved the interaction with people, and this is a way that I can connect with others, you know, visitors to our area and share a bit of our local history and folklore in the process, maintain that human connection, and somehow.

13:16: It's inevitable that I have one or two passengers on my coach that will tell me afterwards, you know, how much they enjoyed the tour, but they found their own personal connection with what I was sharing with them.

13:33: And so that gives me a warm fuzzy feeling inside because we're not when we, when we say celebrant celebrancy, we're not talking about an offician a wedding ceremony, are we?

13:48: well, a civil civil celebrant fulfills the need for those who either want a wedding or a funeral, but in a non-traditional sense is maybe.

14:05: They don't, they're not particularly religious people.

14:08: Maybe they don't belong to a church.

14:11: Maybe there is a shortage of clergy when they want to get married or need to have a funeral.

14:20: Maybe they want something that has a more personal touch to it than just going to the local.

14:27: Authority registrar's office.

14:30: That's how civil celebrancy has come about to fill that niche, to give it a more bespoke, a more personal touch to their ceremony, whether it is marriage, whether it is a funeral, whether it is a naming ceremony.

14:50: I find a personal connection with a Now deceased, Catholic priest that you had the pleasure of knowing and meeting, and that was the late Father Robert Jaborough, and he was very instrumental in my own personal spiritual formation.

15:11: And like many priests, and literally, I mean he really was a priest's priest, you could not come up with a person that was more suited to be one, and he fell in love and he got married to a wonderful woman.

15:30: And, you know, he went through all the administrative rigmarole that one has to go through to be released from his vows as a Catholic priest, but he still remained a Catholic in good standing, and He went on to become a funeral director and He was in California.

15:55: An independent civil celebrant because even though the Catholic Church released him from his religious vows.

16:03: The state of California still had him as a licensed member of the clergy, so he was able to fulfill the needs of people who came to his funeral home who needed someone to perform the funeral.

16:16: He also did marriages because legally he was still able to do so.

16:21: So that is what here in the United Kingdom, what a civil celebrant does is that, They fill that void for those who are looking for someone pretty much, go to their personal needs.

16:39: And I think that's right, what you said there, it's, it's creating that bespoke service for what those individuals want, and I think that's what I meant by, by helping their stories be heard, whether it is, yeah.

16:54: You know, somebody who has passed over and their families are having a celebration of life funeral type service, and, you know, it's more than just eulogizing that person, connecting the dots of their life and telling it through stories and letting their story be heard.

17:18: And also let's, not kid ourselves.

17:24: And, you know, a good friend of ours who happens to be a funeral director even has shared this with us, is that, you know, I look forward to doing both, but funerals.

17:36: are mainly ceremonies for the survivors, not for the person who is.

17:39: This is true.

17:40: This is true, yes.

17:42: And so the survivors, the family of the person who has passed on.

17:50: and the friends is that you are custom making a ceremony that is also going to be addressing their emotional needs, and that's what I'm looking forward to doing is taking my own, you know, 40 some years of storytelling, professional storytelling, but, doing that in yet another way that at the end of the day.

18:18: Is coming from a place of service to others, hm, hm, and so by reinventing in air quotes yourself again, you think that you're actually bringing all of those elements, all of those pieces of yourself, That have always been there all along together for something else.

18:41: And that's the thing is that, you know, I once described myself and I even told Jack Canfield this, I, at a stage in my life was feeling like a rudderless boat that was drifting around in circles and That was a stage in my life that I.

19:02: was not recognizing.

19:05: What I had in front of me.

19:07: And, and, you know, too often for many of us, you don't see, you don't recognize what's right beneath your nose.

19:17: It takes someone else to point it out to you and say, hey, look at that.

19:22: And so through this journey, I, you know, call it an aha moment and it's like, Brett, you've got all these elements, all this experience that you have done all these years.

19:39: Look what it's pointing towards.

19:41: This is what you are intended to do.

19:45: And I was just gonna ask, so do you recognize it now, but obviously, clearly, with the way you expressed that, you do see that now.

19:53: I believe I do.

19:55: Hm.

19:57: So I was just listening to Mel Robbin's latest podcast and she was chatting with Oprah and they were talking a lot about purpose and I know we just mentioned purpose there, and I just wanna read this line that I heard that she said in there.

20:13: And Mel said as you were talking about purpose, it reminded me of one of my favorite ways to think about purpose, which is that purpose is not the thing that you do, purpose is the thing that happens in others when you do the thing that you do.

20:32: Mhm.

20:33: And I liked it and I know Oprah even said oh she I like that, I'm gonna write it down.

20:37: Purpose is not the thing that you do, purpose is the thing that happens in other people when you do the thing that you do.

20:48: I don't know whether you'd concur with that or agree with that, but I just, you know, because often people talk about, oh, what's my purpose, what's my reason also, my reason for being here, and, and that just struck me when I was listening to it in the car.

21:03: No, I do concur with that quote, and that also goes hand in glove with, something else that, I have learned along the way, and you may have even been in the in the room at the time, is that it's how you describe yourself.

21:23: Is that I am not a photographer.

21:27: I am Brett and I take photos.

21:33: I I'm not a public relations practitioner.

21:40: I happen to be someone who for a living.

21:44: Has practiced the art of public relations.

21:48: It all comes down to not being defined about what you do professionally, but always recognize that you are a unique individual.

21:58: There is no one else out there like you.

22:00: You are very special, and it just so happens that along the way.

22:06: You photograph photos, you make sure that, your client has good ink and all the other things.

22:19: So yes, I do like that quote.

22:21: Yeah, I do.

22:23: And then Oprah just wrapped things up and she said, you were born to fulfill the dream of your life here on Earth.

22:31: Get about the business of doing that.

22:34: The guy, it's worth repeating, you were born to fulfill the dream of your life here on Earth.

22:40: Get about the business of doing that.

22:44: And I believe that we're all put here for a purpose.

22:49: It may just take some of us a little bit longer to find out what that intended purpose is than others.

22:56: And yes, I guess it has taken me 66 years to finally realize what my purpose is.

23:03: Get about, get about the business of doing that.

23:07: But guess what?

23:07: What that journey has been one heck of a roller coaster ride that, has made me the person that I am today.

23:20: So, you know, obviously we could talk about this till the cows come home, and over the dinner table we do talk about it, not quite till the cows come home because they're in the field behind us, but in the essence cows are actually our daily wake up alarm.

23:35: They are, so in the essence of.

23:38: You know, keeping things to time and keeping things brief.

23:41: We will wrap that up, but I just want to revisit my quickfire 5 with you and see if over the years your answers have changed.

23:49: OK, that'll be fun to see.

23:51: OK, fire away.

23:52: So, what's your go to comfort food?

23:58: My go to comfort food still remains a good roast lamb shank or a leg of lamb.

24:06: I thought you might say mac and cheese actually.

24:10: a book or a an audio that you're currently enjoying?

24:14: I am actually, enjoying, a book that's all about, a, history of Lancashire that, we, picked up at a new bookshop that has opened in nearby Clitheroe.

24:30: And by a local author, and this is someone who has traveled the world, seen the world.

24:36: He was a journalist for a couple of newspapers here in the UK, and from all that experience, he literally has come full circle and he's come home to where his journey started, and now he's writing books all about where he was born and raised.

24:54: Another one with a full circle moment, yes.

24:58: What's the one thing in this moment, Brett, that you're most grateful for?

25:03: I am Have been and always shall be grateful for you.

25:08: I see that is the same answer that you gave last time that I can remember.

25:12: Well, I'm, I'm not surprised.

25:14: I am, I am grateful that you and I both awoke this morning.

25:20: I'm grateful that we're both upright and breathing.

25:23: I am grateful that we're having this conversation that you will be sharing, with your followers, and I am grateful.

25:31: That with the less, with the less than ideal weather that we've been having this past week, the sun is shining right now, there's a blue sky right outside the window here.

25:42: Hurrah, hurrah.

25:44: Yes, go to self-care practice, what's important to you?

25:49: what's important, to me is, doing my, daily morning prayers and affirmations, and, part of those affirmations, pretty much is, telling me, you know something, Brett, you're OK.

26:06: Yeah, you're not too shabby.

26:08: You're OK.

26:09: You're a kid.

26:10: and in this moment, what's the one thing you would tell 21 year old Brett?

26:19: I would tell 21 year old Brett is, be more patient.

26:27: be aware that, guess what, there are good people out there and that you are loved.

26:34: It's always a delight to podcast with you and I'm sure we will do this again.

26:41: For now, for now, thank you very much.

26:44: You're more than welcome.

26:46: I think what I'm taking away from this conversation is that perhaps we don't always need to reinvent ourselves as much as we think we do.

26:56: Sometimes, sometimes life takes us in directions we never expected, and sometimes we choose those directions ourselves.

27:06: And yet, along the way, we collect experiences, skills, stories, and pieces of ourselves.

27:13: And perhaps the next chapter is simply about bringing those pieces together in a different way.

27:18: And listening to Brett talk about his journey, I was struck by something else, and that's maybe purpose isn't always about something we have to go out and find.

27:29: Sometimes, well, sometimes it's quietly been there all along, just waiting for us to recognize it.

27:36: So perhaps, wherever you are in your own life, the question isn't necessarily, what do I need to become next?

27:44: Maybe it's what do I already have that I'm ready to use in a new way.

27:50: Thank you for trusting me, and thank you for sharing this with people you care about.

27:55: And when you come back, I'll be here, ready to meet you where you are.

27:59: So until next time, stay safe, be well, and of course, as always, be your own definition of amazing.

END