

## Full Transcript of Bathrobe Moments with Dr. Loren Michael Harris

### [00:00:04.370] - Dr. Loren

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### [00:04:04.220] - Dr. Loren

I was supposed to already be sitting here when that ended, but as you see, it's Friday. Anything can happen on this show. First of all, I woke up, or was awakened at 20 minutes after seven, which it's 08:00 here now, because have you ever done this? Plugged your phone in, but what you plugged it into, unless you went straight into the socket, which on my side of the bed, the socket is way. So there's an extension cord. So apparently the extension cord that leads to the socket came out. So I thought my phone was charging all night. No. Dead as a doorknob. And what is that? A doorknob. He's dead as a doorknob or as a doorknob? That's my ADHD talking, and it's going to keep on talking. Just don't answer it. Welcome to the show. So anyway, my phone did not charge all night, so my alarm didn't go off, so I slept over. So then that puts you behind on everything else. And so I was sitting here thinking I was on the screen and I wasn't. So just get ready. I'm liable to do anything this hour. I said all that to say that that's the bell of purpose.

### [00:05:10.970] - Dr. Loren

I ring it on purpose with purpose. Why? Because it's not a show gimmick. Seriously. It's not a prop. It's a reminder, it's an opportunity that when our guest is throwing all these great nuggets out or you guys are putting all these great comments, there's some truth out. And just like that bell, the truth has a ring to it and I want to make sure we don't miss it. Can I get an amen? There you go. And also here is my sidekick. She's my version of Ed McMahon. That's a guy from an old tv show called the Tonight show. Long time ago for you young ins. She's my version of Ed McMahon. She's my sidekick, and she's been here all eight years. Well, seven years. We're in the 8th year. Lucy McGillicuddy, Ricardo. Welcome her, won't you, please? So it's Friday here in the Chicagoland and the snow is melting. Thank you, Jesus. Seriously. So we can see grass again? It's starting to warm up a little bit. We'll see how long that lasts. How are things shaping up in your neck of the woods? What do you have planned for the weekend? What's one thing you want to make sure you get done, let's say around the house this weekend?

### [00:06:17.400] - Mark

Drop your around the house, honey to do list in one of them. Not that whole long ass list. Put one thing you plan on accomplishing around your house this weekend in the comments. What am I going to do? Oh, I got some new work lights in my basement and I'm going to do some work down there. That's what

I'm gonna do. So today, great show. Great way to round out a phenomenal week. My guest today is, don't get jealous, because I know every time I say this, I kind of am just a tinge envious because it's so exotic. Movies and in novels. Well, this guy actually has done it. He did. He moved all the way to the southern tip of France. I wonder why. We're going to find out. And I love him because he has three names like I do. Mark. Steven Porro. So he's an author and he weaves his stories together. This is an Amazon review, a five star one, that says that this author weaves his stories together employing a wickedly humorous skill not unlike that of David Sedaris and Augustine Burroughs.

**[00:07:40.520] - Dr. Loren**

And that's a pretty bold statement. So the book is "A Cup of Tea on the Commode. Yes. And that's another connection we have, because you do know how many times people mistakenly say bathroom moments? I even had a guy that showed up to do the show sitting on the commode. He had the top down, but he was still sitting there right in the bathroom. So we've got some things in common. He's an American. He dubs himself an American author who is suffering in France. I'm just going to let that hang out there for a minute. Suffering? I don't think so. Suffering in the south of France. So he is a graduate of The Ohio State University. Oh, how I hate Ohio State. That's what we sing in Ann Arbor, Michigan. And you all from Ohio know why? Rivals. Anyway, this guy is not my rival. Although he went to school in a horrible state. Steven, Mark, that's what you get. I'm going to call your name backwards every time you say Ohio on the show. That is a four letter word if I ever heard one. Okay, I'm done. Good thing you're not from Indiana.

**[00:08:56.320] - Dr. Loren**

We got some good ones for them. So anyway, Mark, Steven on the southern tip. I wonder if he's on the tip. Well, he's in the south of France, so here he comes. Put some hearts on the screen. It's our virtual way of saying, welcome to the show. He's never been here before, and I'm ready to find out. How is he suffering in the south of France? Suffering, indeed. Wait, turn your head this way. Okay. Underway. I see no blood coming out of your ears. How in the hell do you consider yourself suffering in the south of France? Look at that villa. Look at that villa behind him, you guys.

**[00:09:52.650] - Mark**

Well, it's almost 500 years old, so it's very cold. I call this the castle. So it's very cold in the castle. That's how I'm suffering.

**[00:10:01.080] - Dr. Loren**

It looks beautiful. Just that room you're in.

**[00:10:04.320] - Mark**

Yeah, well, you got high ceilings, low floors, and. Yeah, this is, I would say is my office, the kitchen behind, but this is the living room, dining area, and also my office where I write and cause all kinds of trouble. So you got to suffer. I came here the first time in April of 2015. It's a little village of about 8400 people, about 20 minutes from the Mediterranean. So we're not quite on the tip, but we're close. And it is the largest wine growing region in the world. And so if you're not into wine, it would indeed be suffering. But I happen to be into wine, so it's okay.

**[00:10:54.080] - Dr. Loren**

Yeah. I want to say something. I want to let you give you a heads up on something. If I freeze on the screen, mark, you're not. I'm watching you on another device. You keep going, they can still hear and see you.

**[00:11:05.790] - Mark**

I'm a good tap dancer, so I'll keep going.

**[00:11:09.150] - Dr. Loren**

Let's go back. Let's start. Okay, here's what we're going to do. I do this every day. I'm going to dip out for about 1 minute, let you just chat with the folks, do a living, breathing, live bio. So I didn't read a bio or anything. Just say, hi, I'm Mark Steven. I am in the town of, I do this and I'm here to just have a great time with you. And I'll be back and we'll get officially started.

**[00:11:31.500] - Mark**

Cool. Okay.

**[00:11:32.700] - Dr. Loren**

All you take it away.

**[00:11:34.200] - Mark**

All right. So I'm Mark Porro, originally from Ridgewood, New Jersey, or exit 163 is the closest Garden State Parkway exit. I grew up in a lovely little village of 25,000 people. And I have five brothers and sisters, two older brothers, two older sisters and a younger sister. I went to school, as Lauren said, at The Ohio State University. And I won't take exception to any of the comments from our host.

**[00:12:05.290] - Dr. Loren**

All right. While I vomit in my mouth.

**[00:12:07.660] - Mark**

Yeah. All right, listen, we let you win this year, so that was okay. Or the last three. Okay, we'll move on.

**[00:12:15.210] - Dr. Loren**

We'll move on.

**[00:12:16.390] - Mark**

So you'll be happy to know that I spent a little bit of time in Ohio. After graduating, I graduated with a degree in design, but the acting bug took hold and I moved out to Los Angeles in 1984 and lived there for about 28 years doing the Hollywood thing. But that also got me into writing. So I wrote scenes and jokes. I did stand up for a little bit and then some screenplays and got the writing bug. And then I also started, I kind of joke, five nonprofit companies, but none were intended to be.

**[00:12:58.000] - Dr. Loren**

Yeah, I saw that.

**[00:12:59.680] - Mark**

Yeah. So failure is good. You learn a lot from it. So my last adventure is at a snack food company out in Los Angeles that actually was a national brand for a while. It was called Grandpa Po's Originals. It was a half-popped popcorn snack that my dad invented when I was a kid, and it just remained kind of a family secret for years. And so I decided to revive it. And my brother and I started this company in 1998, and we were on the Rachel Ray show as the "Snack of the Day,s" and that got us national distribution, and it was a good run. But you're up against the big boys, and we were organic, and we also had soy nuts in it. And the soy craze was just beginning around the year 2000, but you're competing with the big boy. So eventually they won. But in 2011, which is the subject of my book, my mother was on her deathbed back in New Jersey, in the house that I grew up in. So I dropped everything and went back to New Jersey, and hospice was called, and all meds were cut off and food, and we were on death watch.

**[00:14:16.200] - Mark**

And so that kind of was a life changing event. But after a few weeks, she didn't seem to be in any rush to diem she snapped out of it.

**[00:14:26.910] - Dr. Loren**

I wonder why.

**[00:14:28.750] - Speaker 5**

Well, I think that she was living in her house, and we had some people in there that were overseeing household duties and things like that, and they did not get along. So she was kind of a prisoner in her own home. And I think this was a silent scream for help.

**[00:14:50.790] - Dr. Loren**

(looking at a photo) Now, I'm assuming that's mama right there.

**[00:14:53.820] - Mark**

That's Mom after Mark took over. So we got her up and happy, and it was good. But for a few weeks, we thought she was going, and all of her kids came home. And my little sister and I hung out with hospice all the time because we wanted to take care of our mother as much as we could. So we wanted to learn from the pros because we didn't know how long she was going to be here. And once she woke up, I started looking around at the environment and the house that we grew up in, which was a lovely, nurturing, and loving home that was no longer. And so I think Mom wanted love to return back to her home. So I decided to stay for a few months and then by the end of the year, I decided to move back and take over the 24/7 caregiving. And we had a lovely time. And she lived for another three and a half years.

**[00:15:53.240] - Dr. Loren**

Wow. You know, I'm just going to say this. There's a lot to what you just described, and let me tell you why. It's not off topic. It kind of is, but it isn't because I have a client who is in Belize, a coaching client. Well, actually she's getting her tv show ready to bring to my network. And she is a designer, something like you, but she's an interior designer who started during COVID. She had like five or six people in her world that were in hospice that were dying. And it was a horrible time, of course, but she started redecorating their rooms while they were in there. And five of the seven people made a complete comeback. She started going to the hospice and now that's what she does. People that are on hospice, she transforms their area that they're in and 70% or something, some crazy, wonderful number like that, make a full recovery. So you're right about that. I think that's also tied into every time she talks about these wonderful stories of how people started coming back and people had come and said goodbye. It also reminds me.

**[00:17:07.520] - Mark**

Okay, you're froze. So I'm taking over. I agree with all of that. And I have examples of that.

**[00:17:14.850] - Dr. Loren**

Yes. Okay.

**[00:17:17.460] - Mark**

One of the first things I did with my mother, well, first I asked her permission. I said, you want me to come home and make sure that your care is as good as, let's say, the few weeks that I've been taking care of you.

**[00:17:31.710] - Dr. Loren**

Wait a minute. Why would you think you would need to ask her permission? This is important. I have a feeling.

**[00:17:36.940] - Mark**

Well, she's still your mother and it's her house, and you want to be respectful, even though they're older and they may need some help and not be, let's say, 100% with it, she had a little bit of dementia. It's still your mother and they still want respect and love and to maintain some dignity. So once I got her permission, which was kind of funny, because I said, if I'm doing this, first of all, we're going to have fun, second of all, that means I'm in charge and you need to obey me. And her mood shifted completely.

**[00:18:13.850] - Dr. Loren**

I guess it did. Yeah.

**[00:18:15.530] - Mark**

Then she puckered up for a kiss and I wasn't sure if that was a sign of surrender or one wishing me luck. And so I just kissed her and hoped for the best, and we ended up having a good time. But one of my first things, I bought her a new wardrobe because these old drab day dresses and stuff, I just said, that's not cutting it for me and my mom. So, like your friend, I wanted to return some dignity to her. And so we did the new wardrobe. I created a thing called "Day of Beauty" because she used to like to go to the beauty salon. She worked full time. She was a proofreader for The Bergen Record for almost 30 years. But her one treat...

**[00:19:00.740] - Dr. Loren**

Pardon me, is that a newspaper?

**[00:19:03.460] - Mark**

At the time, it was the largest newspaper in New Jersey.

**[00:19:06.300] - Dr. Loren**

Okay.

**[00:19:07.860] - Mark**

But she treated herself to weekly visits to the beauty salon for a shampoo and set and had her nails done. And so I wanted to recreate that at home because I didn't know when the last time she went to one. And also, she didn't look great because nobody was really caring for her in this way. So I created this day of beauty where I normally gave her full sponge baths twice a day anyway, in the morning and readying her for bed. But on the weekend, I would soak her feet in epsom salts while she sat on the commode. I would wash her hair and then blow dry it and either ponytail it or braid it. I did her nails, and she got a full body massage and put on the red lipstick. And the first day I did this, I didn't think that much of it, other than I wanted to treat my mom special. But as I wheeled her in, at this point, she no longer walked. So she was bedridden. And then also, I'd pop her in a wheelchair, and I carried her places. So I'm wheeling her into on the way to the kitchen for breakfast, and we have a big mirror in the dining room, and I parked her in front of that mirror, and she was amazed.

**[00:20:24.320] - Mark**

And I leaned in and I said, who is this pretty girl? And she beamed. And then I thought, my god, when was the last time she felt beautiful? When was the last time someone made her feel special? When was the last time she even looked in a mirror, right. And liked what she saw?

**[00:20:46.020] - Mark**

Yeah, it was amazing. So that little gesture was very powerful, and it did a lot for her, but it really did a lot for me also and anybody else who came to visit. So with the new wardrobe and looking and feeling pretty, her mood completely changed. And then while I was there, since she slept a lot, she's like a baby. I renovated her entire house because I wanted to bring dignity back to her environment, like your friend in Belize. And it was amazing. So whenever I finished a certain section, I would carry her. Either the basement was the first, I would carry her down to the basement, and she would just be amazed at the transformation.

**[00:21:30.320] - Dr. Loren**

Wow.

**[00:21:32.900] - Mark**

There's a downside to that, too. When I renovated the upstairs bathroom, I put a large bathtub and said, I'm going to give my mom a bubble bath. I don't know when the last time she had a bubble bath or even a regular bath. So I put her in the bathtub, and she's beaming, and I've got a photo of her just smiling with the bubbles. It's a very kind of fun, sexy picture for a 90 year old. Then she passes out. And I said, great. Here I am trying to do a good thing, and I kill my mom. But at least she smelled good. So I dragged her out of the tub and put her back to bed. I called up a nurse and they said, you just left her in the hot water a little long. And her blood pressure dropped. And 30 minutes later, she woke up again and she was fine.

And she didn't remember passing out, but she did remember the new bathroom. So I called it a win win for me.

**[00:22:28.250] - Dr. Loren**

Let me ask you. Let's go back to. Okay, wait, I'm back. Okay. Because I froze. I want to bring this in. This is a really big piece, and I don't want people to miss it. Let's go back to. Because you're so used to it, and the book has it in the title, the commode part, but SpongeBob, there she was sitting on the commode and these things. Let's go back. Because you brought in the piece about restoring dignity to the house and to her. Let's talk about what it took to get past, because I know that for a lot of people on both sides, the aging parent and the children who care for those aging parents, that when you get to that transition spot in the journey where now you have to see your parents naked or you have to do those uncomfortable things that a caregiver doesn't even bat an eye about.

**[00:23:34.400] - Mark**

Right.

**[00:23:34.980] - Dr. Loren**

How did you guys have to have a conversation? It may not be a big deal to you, or it could be, and then you get through it, but then it's two people having to get to the same place of understanding and acceptance. Can you talk a little bit about what was that like for the two of you to get comfortable enough where it was like, okay, right.

**[00:23:58.090] - Mark**

Well, it is unusual for a son to take on the 24/7 care. And again, why are you saying traditionally.

**[00:24:07.710] - Dr. Loren**

Daughters will do that?

**[00:24:08.870] - Mark**

Yeah. It's still about two thirds to one third it falls on the daughter.

**[00:24:12.400] - Dr. Loren**

I know that. Okay.

**[00:24:13.470] - Mark**



And part of it may be what you brought up is the awkwardness of seeing a parent, even your, I saw my father naked a couple of days before he passed for the first time. And I was proud of him because that was the first time I saw his equipment. And I went, all right, dad. I was impressed. So with my mom, I think what helped was I worked with hospice for a number of the weeks, so it wasn't just me jumping in and taking over. It was a slow transition of learning how to change the bedding with a helpless patient in the bed, changing the bed pads, changing the diapers. And my mother was pretty cool about all of it. Unlike my dad, he wanted to hold on to all his dignity until the very end. Mom was like, yeah, get going.

**[00:25:07.820] - Dr. Loren**

Wow. But I think also a lot about her.

**[00:25:14.130] - Mark**

Yeah. But also she trusted me.

**[00:25:14.590] - Mark**

And we had a very good relationship, and I was a very curious kid. So I got both of my parents to open up about things that the other kids may not have known about because I was curious. I asked questions and I would try to help wherever help was needed because there was a lot of tension in their marriage at times. And I kind of took that role, I guess, as the mediator on certain occasions.

**[00:25:42.400] - Dr. Loren**

Can I ask a question real quick about your siblings?

**[00:25:45.100] - Mark**

Yeah.

**[00:25:47.000] - Dr. Loren**

Excuse me. So did this kind of put you in the position where you looked like a favorite son? You know what I mean? Like, if I were one of your siblings and you were there doing all this stuff, how could I not feel a little guilty that here's Mark taking on all the heavy lifting, literally, even though she probably wasn't heavy. But you know what to have. Did you, did you see any change in the dynamic between you and your siblings? Did you have to keep convincing them that, don't worry about it, I want to be doing this kind of thing?

**[00:26:25.940] - Mark**

I was very fortunate because they trusted me. They knew that my mother trusted me, or I made myself available to take it on. So I moved from Los Angeles back and said, I'm doing this. Originally, I wasn't going to. I was supervising. I moved back in supervisor because we had temporary caregivers there. But it wasn't working out and I thought she deserved better, so I decided to jump in full time.

**[00:27:00.530] - Dr. Loren**

I just think that it's such a beautiful love story. And that's what I would consider this book. I know people say, oh, it's so funny, and it had me gripping my sides, but to me, and I've got to say this, I don't know how much you know about my story, but my whole thing is that I had 22 mothers. They each played a specific role in my journey. But I do go back, of course, to the main two, the one who bore me and the one who raised me until she died. And I just think it's a beautiful, beautiful thing. It holds a special place for me. So I just want to say that. So let's go to before this book, did you fancy yourself a writer or did it all come together in this book?

**[00:27:51.440] - Mark**

Well, I guess I fancied myself as a writer. It could have been another one of my nonprofit businesses at that time, because when you write screenplays, you have no power. I mean, you write a screenplay, even if it's brilliant, it's got to get into the right hands for someone to really champion and take it all the way across.

**[00:28:09.850] - Dr. Loren**

Sure.

**[00:28:10.380] - Mark**

Yeah. But I always took notes. I wrote poems about family reunions. Kind of encapsulating what happened during those weeks. I created memory books when people had big birthdays, like when they turned 40 or 50 or when my parents hit milestones. Yeah. The first was when Dad turned 75. I just said, I don't know what to give him because he doesn't need anything. And it was always a challenge coming up with something that was going to be meaningful. So I said, I'm going to give him 75 memories. Then I thought, oh, how the heck am I going to come up with this? But once I started they poured out. I started chronologically. I had to edit them down, and I just sent him a list. And the reaction from my dad, I didn't hear directly from him right away, but I heard from my siblings that he was so touched by this thing. And I said, oh, my god, I got something here. Then I did the one for my mom. And as I started doing more, I asked more people to contribute. So they went from a list to very elaborate designed books and other very creative ways to get all these memories in.

**[00:29:28.080] - Mark**

So when, let's say, an aunt turned 80, I had second cousins and cousins and nieces and nephews and people I didn't even know, but I knew through my uncles, and they all contributed. And the reactions from the recipient was just amazing. I did those kind of things. I took my dad to Italy, to the little village where his dad came from in 1995 and shot a documentary of that. So I liked recording family history because people missed out on these moments. They had opportunities to maybe come with us, or if they didn't, they were going to see the film or read the poem or look at the memory books.

**[00:30:10.300] - Dr. Loren**

Let me tell you, I'm a butting in again, because I'm going to tell you why already. I just love this work, and I hope I already know what's happening to the people who are watching and those who will be watching on the replay. They're going, oh, my God, why didn't I think of this? Or I wish I had this opportunity, because it's already passed. I'm going to tell you why this is so important to me, Mark, is that I have been privy not once, but twice in my birth family and also earlier in my adoptive family. So 1976 and then 2010. Lot of space, a lot of growing for me in between those dates. But the same thing happened in both families as soon as the mother died, which there was single families, single parent families. So once that matriarch left, in both families, everything completely shattered. People pulled off masks that I didn't even know they were wearing. And I have the anchor position in both families, the youngest in both families, and I'm the only one who wasn't with both families all the time. So I kind of was a part time sibling, if you will, in both families.

**[00:31:22.270] - Dr. Loren**

So I have a different bird's eye view, and I look at it, and I go, how did these people end up like this? It's as if they were raised by two different women. I don't see where this could come from in the person that I had my experience with. So I want to say this to you, just if you could speak a little bit about how the fabric, the dynamics between you and your siblings, did it get stronger? Did it grow? Did it get better? Or did it dip after your. Because your dad left first? Right, right. And then your mother, after your mother exited, what direction did the sibling dynamics go, the fabric of the relationships up stay the same? Or did it dip?

**[00:32:11.450] - Mark**

Well, I would say at the time of my mom's passing and the whole business of selling the family home and things like that, we were very tight because everybody certainly was involved with all that. And again, I had to finish all the renovations. So I would say again, I was very fortunate. We grew up in a very loving, nurturing home, and we're all different. We're all very independent. Both of my parents were very independent, and that was some of the. I guess the reason for some of the friction, because my mom was not dependent on my dad for money or emotional dependence or anything. So we all grew up very independent. We all had our own businesses. We all have our own opinions, and we have no problem sharing them. So I don't think any of that really changed. We may have gotten a little closer at the time of Mom's passing and then selling the house and then know I moved to France a couple years later, so that

made a difference. Everybody else lives in the same place they did, except for one sister was actually teaching, I think, in Albania for a while. Now she's back in the States.

**[00:33:30.780] - Dr. Loren**

Okay.

**[00:33:31.570] - Mark**

But I would say other dynamics certainly came in. There's six of us, and with politics and religion, that gets in the way of everything, unfortunately. So if there was any dividing line, it would be more of that, not anything to do with our family unit.

**[00:33:48.040] - Dr. Loren**

Okay, well, that's so encouraging. It gives people hope. Now, I saw in my research on you that the book literally was launched on Mother's Day. So, of course, that was purposeful. Another hats off to Mom kind of thing. Let's talk about how this entire process has aided, not only in yours, but your siblings as well, has aided in the grieving process, because a lot of people, because I've dealt with that twice. I've buried two mothers. And the thing that stands out, no matter how much time goes by, is that you still wake up and you go, oh, yeah, she's gone. The void that they left. You're not really, like, crying because she's gone, but you can't help but there's such an empty space left, and the.

**[00:34:43.640] - Mark**

Phone calls, that sort of thing.

**[00:34:46.520] - Dr. Loren**

So talk about how a lot of people end up with some form of regret. Oh, I wish I would have told her when I had time. I wish we would have gone there one more time. I wish I would have done better with this.

**[00:35:03.580] - Mark**

Okay, so with me, I would have to say one of the great things about this journey with my mom was three and a half years, and we more me than her, because she didn't talk all that much. She was a very communicative and social woman in her earlier years, but later years, very few words. But we left nothing unsaid, absolutely no regrets. We talked a little bit about certain things in the past, but again, she had a little bit of dementia and stuff. With my dad, same thing. I only had eight days with my dad, but we cleared up everything before that because anytime he came to visit me in California, we had major discussions and we took trips or I actually interviewed him and recorded it kind of things because, again, I wanted to record family history. And there was one time with my dad that I wrote a monolog in Hollywood that I knew I could tap into the emotion. And it was about my dad because he and my younger sister had a real

problem early on. And she was my best friend. She was a good kid. She was four years younger and my dad didn't appreciate her.

**[00:36:22.920] - Mark**

I think she was born when the marriage was kind of like dissolving. They stayed together, as Catholics do, but there wasn't much love, I think, in the marriage when Deecy was born. And that really was tough, certainly on her, but on me as well. So I wrote this monolog at his funeral or at the wake where I'm talking to my father, who's now dead, in the monolog and brought all this stuff up. And it was easy for me to tap into that for auditions. But I let my dad read it on one of his trips in LA and he went silent. And I said, oh, my God, what have I done?

**[00:37:06.310] - Dr. Loren**

What have I done?

**[00:37:07.300] - Mark**

And then he opened up and we had an amazing conversation.

**[00:37:13.260] - Dr. Loren**

Wow.

**[00:37:13.750] - Mark**

And he admitted his faults. He admitted the problem. And from that day forward, the reparations of that relationship started and he and I became so much closer at that moment. And we talked about his marriage, the honeymoon with my mom, the dating, everything. I got him to open up about everything. And we even had the sex talk with me coaching him because I wanted to find out because the marriage had some problems. And I asked him things because he never gave me the sex talk.

**[00:37:51.470] - Dr. Loren**

Right.

**[00:37:52.020] - Mark**

But it was interesting because at this point I was in my thirties and he was in his seventies. We're having the sex talk. And it was wild, but he was open to it. Yeah, he was a very cool guy. A lot of this stuff is in the book and I don't think that my siblings knew about a lot of these things. So I do have a thing in the acknowledgments about there're some revelations that they're not going to be happy about. Some are new, are the ones they probably didn't want revealed. But I wanted to write an honest book. And so I

didn't leave really anybody off the hook, including myself. And people are resonating with it. So I think if you have, let's say, the storyteller or the narrator who you can trust, people will go on that ride with you.

**[00:38:47.620] - Dr. Loren**

I agree. Let's swivel over to the title. So which came first, the chicken or the egg? Did you have the title when you had the aha. Moment regarding the book, or did you start the book and then the title found you?

**[00:39:05.580] - Mark**

The title found me.

**[00:39:10.280] - Dr. Loren**

Was she literally sitting on the commode with a cup of tea?

**[00:39:13.370] - Mark**

Yeah.

**[00:39:14.050] - Dr. Loren**

Talk about that moment.

**[00:39:15.550] - Mark**

Okay. So I wrote notes all along because I knew I was going to do something with it. I didn't know it was going to become a memoir, so I recorded everything because we had some amazing conversations that I didn't want to lose. And then I took videos and I took a lot of photographs. So one day we had a commode bedside, and sometimes Mother Nature took a little longer than was comfortable. So her favorite beverage was a hot cup of tea, skim milk, no sugar. So one day I offered her a cup of tea. She said, sure. And it was a hit. And so we did that every morning. So cup of tea on the commode. It seemed to be the clear title. That didn't happen probably until I was over in France writing. There was another alternative, which was "Be Patient," which was, there's a chapter in the book. When my mom was in her, I called her a semi-comatose state. She never said a word, but she would open her eyes every once in a while and look at the corner of the room and never said a word, but just looked at that corner, and it was like somebody was either beckoning her.

**[00:40:32.310] - Dr. Loren**

I've heard of that.

**[00:40:33.530] - Mark**

Okay. So we didn't understand what was going on, but she never said a word about it. And then after she woke up, my little sister was with her one time alone, and she asked her about who was in the corner of the room. And my mother smiled. And my sister asked, Was it God? And my mom kind of froze. She wasn't sure if she wanted to reveal it or not, but she finally said, yeah. And Deecy asked, what did he say to you? And Mom said, "Be patient." So that was an alternate title because it's active and also passive because it wasn't her time. So whoever was talking to her, whether it was God or my dad, who died 14 years earlier, saying, hey, no rush, I'm having a good time up here. Take your time on earth. We don't know. But that was a pretty cool moment.

**[00:41:31.560] - Dr. Loren**

Wow, that's incredible. Now, another thing I love about this is I've actually, because I don't know if you know this. But some of you know, we have legacy builders in our conglomerate. That's one of the brands that I have. And we do master classes for people, and I'm constantly telling people, it's exactly what you're describing. I say, when they tell you these wonderful stories and all these things, and I'm going, oh, my God. From someone who never had any of that. I mean, two families I went through. I only have one heirloom, a Bible from my birth mother. And the only reason I believe they gave me that is because they found a birthday card that I sent her in it. And they're probably like, ooh, omen, I don't want to keep this. Give it to him. Right. That was from my birth siblings, my biological siblings. But what I'm getting at is I really believe that it's important some people preserve family recipes, or the person dies in all of that history, because those recipes have stories and stuff with it. And so I really feel that more people, more families should preserve the history.

**[00:42:47.440] - Dr. Loren**

Mark, do you remember back in the day, it was not unusual for a family to have that giant family Bible? Remember those?

**[00:42:54.910] - Mark**

All the facts are in. Yeah, yeah.

**[00:42:56.590] - Dr. Loren**

Everything. Locks of hair.

**[00:42:58.680] - Mark**

I write about that. We don't have locks of hair, but every important event is in there. The birth, the time of day you were born, all the surgeries, your first confirmation, all of it. All that stuff. Yeah.

**[00:43:12.680] - Dr. Loren**

And you don't see those anymore. That's exactly what it reminds me of. It's like a time capsule holding on. In so many families, that person dies. That's the keeper of the stories. And they're gone.

**[00:43:27.760] - Mark**

Right.

**[00:43:28.320] - Dr. Loren**

They're gone. So let's talk about this. Did you ever wonder, while you were writing the book about these intimate, personal. Of course you're worried about, I wonder what my sibling is going to. A lot of people struggle with the memory. I don't want to impact the memory for anyone else or whatever. Like, oh, this is going to hurt so and so, or like you said, your siblings. Some of the things I could have lived without knowing that.

**[00:44:04.990] - Mark**

Yeah, I struggle with that because there are a couple of things in the book I took out.

**[00:44:12.180] - Dr. Loren**

Not just siblings, maybe cousins or your mom's sister or somebody. How did you deal with all of that?

**[00:44:18.340] - Mark**

Well, the only ones I had to worry about were my siblings. They were the only ones who were still alive, but also, I guess, the legacy of the parents who didn't want to bring any shame when it was undue, if it was not important to the story. I cut it out. Though I had a lot of memories and I could have revealed a bunch of stuff that wasn't pleasant for a number of people. But if it wasn't critical to the story, I took them out because I knew it would be uncomfortable. So there are a couple that are still in there, but if they weren't, I think, critical to the story, the full story, I would not have kept them in.

**[00:45:05.980] - Dr. Loren**

Now, did you let your siblings read the book before it was published, just in case, so that you didn't fracture anything within those relationships, or did they have to get it when it was available to the public?

**[00:45:16.630] - Mark**

Well, yeah, I was kind of warned about that because that's always tricky, especially with memoir. I didn't want to pre-edit stuff. There were some things I needed help on, the facts, because I was the fifth out of



the six, so the older kids hopefully knew more, experienced different things that I experienced. So I think I put out a chapter, at least part of a chapter about my background of my mom that I may not have known about. So I put that out and I got some good information from my older siblings on that, but that was about it. I did release excerpts about a year before publication, and a couple of the siblings made some suggestions here and there. So if I had an opportunity to fix those, I did, or correct those. And then when I recorded the audiobook in December, or we released it in December, I was recording it for a number of weeks. And so there were some corrections to the book that I was able to put into the audiobook. Nothing major, but just a couple of things that I wanted to make people a little more comfortable about.

**[00:46:37.070] - Dr. Loren**

So your mom, (refers to my website) I put it back up on the screen just so we could see her face. I'm pretty certain, but I don't want to assume you shared with her. She was aware that you were writing the book because you were writing it was. Oh, she wasn't?

**[00:46:51.930] - Mark**

No, I wasn't writing a book at the time. I was just taking notes.

**[00:46:55.270] - Dr. Loren**

Oh, so she never even knew about this book?

**[00:46:57.830] - Mark**

No.

**[00:46:58.400] - Dr. Loren**

From this side of the journey?

**[00:47:00.250] - Mark**

She does now.

**[00:47:01.300] - Dr. Loren**

She does now, exactly.

**[00:47:03.100] - Mark**

Yeah.

**[00:47:03.820] - Dr. Loren**

Let's say this. Let me ask you this. If your mom were sitting right here with us, like, we could beam her in from the other and get her input on the book, what do you think she would say about it?

**[00:47:20.700] - Mark**

Oh, good question.

**[00:47:21.720] - Dr. Loren**

What would her review be?

**[00:47:23.540] - Mark**

I would think there would be, as I've heard from a couple of my siblings. Oh, I wish you didn't include that part. There may be a little bit of that, because they were very, especially that generation, both of my parents came from the depression generation and they didn't talk about emotions and they didn't talk about anything that was uncomfortable. I have a chapter in the book called "Mum's the Word." Whenever anything came up that was uncomfortable, mum's the word was the response. We don't talk about that.

**[00:47:59.660] - Dr. Loren**

Right.

**[00:48:00.570] - Mark**

So I'm sure she would resent some of it. But I think overall, even a couple of siblings that didn't like certain things, overall, the response from people who don't know my family, they certainly know them a bit now, have never had any negative thing to say about anybody. They are engaged and moved and resonated with the story. And none of them have said, oh, boy, that sibling is a jerk or your mother is this or that. One of the things that was very helpful? Again, when you want to put out an honest book, you may reveal some things that are not, let's say, helpful to either the characters you're exactly portraying and stuff like that. But the publisher, my publisher and the editors were very good at saying, this is not helpful. This will make this person look like this. And I had to think about it.

**[00:48:58.010] - Dr. Loren**

Sticky wickets.

**[00:48:59.620] - Mark**

Yeah. I had the final word, so I could have insisted, but no. I said no. This is a third party or outside party reading it for the first time. I have to yield, I think, to that. Some of them made really good sense.

**[00:49:22.050] - Dr. Loren**

Do you have the book handy? Do you have a copy there? (I hold up the book) Okay, good. And I see that little marker in there. Good. What pages did you have? Something you could read and excerpt. And then after that, I want you to go right into. Because we're about five minutes away from wrapping, I would like you to read a little something from the book. And then here's your follow up question. How, if at all, do you feel the writing of this memoir has changed or affected how your journey will play out? You know what I mean? Do you want someone to write? Are you putting pieces, leaving pieces of your own journey behind, hoping that someone will say, hey, let's throw this into a book or whatever? How has it affected your journey? But go ahead and start by if you have a favorite.

**[00:50:10.350] - Mark**

Well, I have the audiobook they could read because the lighting is not very good here.

**[00:50:19.910] - Dr. Loren**

What's your favorite chapter in the book?

**[00:50:24.390] - Mark**

I'll tell you this story because I think it's better than me trying to read the story in the dark. There's a chapter called "It took a thief." And it was a really important event in our lives. So when I was, I guess, around twelve years old. I was very good at picking locks. I might have been a rebellious Catholic kid, but I was really good at picking bike locks. So after church or after catechism or something, I'd go out to the bike racks and test my skills. And one day, there were some other guys there not having as much success, but they saw me open up a lock to a brand new stingray and they encouraged me to steal it. I didn't need the bike, didn't want it, but I don't know if it was peer pressure or not, but I stole the bike. And because I learned from tv shows like "It takes a Thief" and stuff like that, I stashed the bike in a friend's garage till I knew it was safe. And so on my way home, I saw a police car in front of my house. And I said, oh, those guys must have got caught.

**[00:51:34.900] - Mark**

And they turned me in. That's not cool. So I'm not going in until that police car leaves. So the police car left and I summoned up my innocence and went into the side door of my house. And my mom's sitting at the kitchen table, and she wasted no time. She said, did you steal a bike today? And I looked her straight in the eye and said, no. She seemed to be fine. She believed me. I never lied to her before. And I escaped to my safety of my bedroom and thought about it .Did I just get away with it? And if I did, for how long?

**[00:52:11.640] - Dr. Loren**

Right.

**[00:52:12.140] - Mark**

And guilt just racked me.

**[00:52:14.680] - Dr. Loren**

It didn't feel as good as you thought it was going to feel.

**[00:52:18.330] - Mark**

I felt terrible. So I ran down and I confessed. And I say in the book, I said, I literally saw my mother's heartbreak, and it killed me. And then she confirmed it when she said, you're lying to me hurt more than you stealing a bike. And I never lied to her again.

**[00:52:37.300] - Dr. Loren**

Wow.

**[00:52:38.040] - Mark**

But the way she handled that situation was more powerful than any kind of lecture or anything. I mean, her heart broke. And I said, I'm never going to do that to her again. That was a big one.

**[00:52:57.350] - Dr. Loren**

Yes. On the screen at some point. There it is. Okay. [acupofteaonthecommode.org](http://acupofteaonthecommode.org). Get rid of that period at the end. It doesn't belong. Talk about what people will find when they head over there.

**[00:53:15.200] - Mark**

Well, there's a little bit of everything there. They want links to everything else, too. On top, because we have a YouTube channel which has about 140 short teasers. The Facebook page, of course, Twitter, I even do TikTok things. But there's a fun section that I just started recently on the website called "Fun Extras." They will see some of these poems that I did and memory books and photographs of certain incidents that I write about in the book. There's a number of photographs in the book, but there's a bunch of other things in there that weren't put in the book that I found either after or were more appropriate to put in, let's say living color. And also there's a couple of chapters from the audiobook that are there with a visual so they can hear some of the chapters that they want and find out where to buy the book. I mean,

it's on Amazon and a lot of other online retailers. And the response has been lovely. And it's not only brought my family maybe closer together, I'm not really sure how close since I live in France. But the people from my hometown who I haven't been in touch with a lot of these guys from high school for over 50 years.

**[00:54:32.950] - Mark**

And there's over maybe say 2600 people from, and most of them from my hometown on my personal Facebook page. And they're reading the book and they love it because it's about, most of it takes place in the town that we grew up in. Yeah, they're reminiscing and going through nostalgia and all that kind of stuff, which is lovely, but it is bringing people that again from a half century we haven't been in contact back together again. And it's lovely opening up all these discussions. So the purpose of this book was to help others who are maybe going through the same situation. But it's resonating as also a nice entertaining book too, which is just been really fun.

**[00:55:17.940] - Dr. Loren**

It sounds like it and I can't wait until it is converted into a screenplay.

**[00:55:25.190] - Mark**

People are working on it.

**[00:55:27.270] - Dr. Loren**

I had a feeling.

**[00:55:28.430] - Mark**

We'll see what happens with that.

**[00:55:29.910] - Dr. Loren**

Yeah, listen, you got to let us know when that happens. So we out and you guys head over and check the book out. The reviews are through the roof and for good reason. And if so, Jerry Springer moment. Real quick. We're about out of time. So what would your recommendation be? What would your final thought be to someone who might be considering or is finding themselves considering writing? But more importantly about the journey of dealing with aging parents? What would be the most important nugget you'd want to give them?

**[00:56:04.150] - Mark**

Okay, so I have two. So when I jumped in again, I told my mom, I said we're going to have fun. And one of my goals was to make her laugh at least once a day. And we tried hard with that, and she made me laugh quite a bit. But I have had a pretty adventurous life. And any endeavor that I've jumped into, I said, "find the joy." so I found the joy in this. I found the joy, let's say, in Hollywood, with all the rejection and stuff, find the positive. And so with this, with my mom, even in the very stressful times, because she could be a stubborn piece of work, but you do something and she smiles or she squeezes your hand or puckers up for a kiss, and you had all the payback you needed.

**[00:57:01.410] - Dr. Loren**

There it is.

**[00:57:02.500] - Mark**

It was lovely. So find the joy.

**[00:57:04.560] - Dr. Loren**

Find the joy. And we're told, count it all joy because it is possible. And I just want to say this as we get out of here today. And what a great way to round out the week is this. We don't have to settle, if you will, for leaving this journey with a pile of fond memories. You can do things that will create divine memories. And this book is proof of just that. Get over and check it out, won't you? And in conclusion, I want to say this to you all. Thank you so much for helping me find the better side of myself. Because when we come together, that's exactly what happens. Now, listen, I'll meet you. I promise, God willing, right over there on the front porch Monday morning, where we will be able to do this all over again, should you choose to join me. And I hope you will get out and find your highest self today. And remember, as always, in closing, I say this to you and I mean it from the heart. I love you, and there ain't a damn thing you can do about it. Okay? All right. Hey, listen, anytime you want to come back, the door is open.

**[00:58:04.090] - Dr. Loren**

Love it, Mark. Thank you so much, Mark Steven Porro. Mark. Who's feeling sorry for him, right?

**[00:58:09.630] - Mark**

And it's about time for wine for me.

**[00:58:13.480] - Dr. Loren**

There you go. And listen, if you got a spare bedroom, you stick my name on the door, because.

**[00:58:17.870] - Mark**

Okay.

**[00:58:18.990] - Dr. Loren**

All right, Mark, thank you so much. Mark steven, all of the above and thank you. You guys get out. Have the best day ever. Great job, Mark. Love it.

**[00:58:27.030] - Mark**

I appreciate it. Thanks so much.

**[00:58:28.500] - Dr. Loren**

Great job. Bye, everybody.