

## **Full Transcript from The World's Mayor Experience with host Joshua T. Berglan**

**[00:00:00.250] - Joshua**

So you beat me to what I like to normally do because you were so prompted on time, like a proper guest is normally. And you were so on time, I didn't get to do what I was going to do, which was hit record. Because I've said this before, sometimes some of the most interesting parts of the conversation happen before I hit record, and I didn't want to miss this. And sure enough, I'm complimenting this amazing backdrop you have, and you are telling me where it's at. Now share with the audience where you at so we can imagine with our minds being there with you.

**[00:00:34.590] - Mark**

Okay, big picture, I'm in the southwest part of France. It's a little village of about 8400 people. They call this the village of Moliere. He was only here for a few years, but in the, I guess, mid 16 hundreds. He came down from Paris and he wasn't Moliere yet. And he was sponsored by Prince Conti, which was a prominent guy in town. And he wrote a couple of his big plays here and became Moliere, so they say. Moliere was born here, originally from Paris. And you'd think he built the place with how much he's got tributes all over the place. There's museums. It's actually lovely because last year was the 400th anniversary of Moliere's birth, and they had events all throughout the year. And at one point in a weekend in September, for three straight days, I would say probably half the village got dressed up in 16th-century costumes, and they had plays all around the village. They put up temporary taverns in the 16th century. It was just very cool, and the town is very artsy. Anyway, there's a lot of theater, music, artisans of all kinds here, but also has a lot of political and architectural history.

**[00:02:07.720] - Mark**

So I came here for five days in April of 2015 and fell in love with the village and bought this apartment.

**[00:02:16.810] - Joshua**

Wow.

**[00:02:17.850] - Mark**

After spending five days and said, this will be my home, and I moved here a couple of years later.

**[00:02:24.270] - Joshua**

I've done that a lot in my life. Go somewhere where I'm only supposed to be a few days and then end up living there, how I ended up in LA, how I ended up in Minnesota. Wow. I guess we can start the interview, I guess.

**[00:02:39.860] - Mark**

Okay.

**[00:02:47.220] - Joshua**

Welcome, everyone, to conversations with Joshua T. Bergland. I am so honored today to have Mr. Mark Steven Porro. Did I say your last name right?

**[00:02:55.820] - Mark**

Yeah, Porro. I say Zorro with a "P."

**[00:02:57.070] - Joshua**

With a "P." Zorro. I love it and I'm so excited to have this conversation today. And the main reason why is I love my mommy. It's why. And I didn't get the bio for our guest today until late last night, and I know he sent it before I misplaced it, and I just went to go look at it this morning. I'm going to read this to you, and this is why I'm super excited about this conversation. Hold on just a.

**[00:03:27.830] - Mark**

Okay.

**[00:03:28.520] - Joshua**

Okay. So, Mark, Steven Porro, like Zorro, but with a "P," New Jersey native. Shout out to all my friends in New Jersey. Earned an industrial design degree from The Ohio State University. Years of agency work. His love of acting led him to Hollywood, where he appeared in dozens of television, film and stage productions. Mark also spent his 28 years in Tinseltown. Entrepreneurship like you can LA is entrepreneurship in LA is a sport. He started five nonprofit companies, but hold the applause, everyone. None were intended to be my favorite. Now he lives in the south of France, but hold your pity. This is his writing, by the way. It's genius. He, of sound, body and mind chose to suffer in the heart of wine country, where the locals insist his french isn't so bad. At least that's what he thinks they're saying. He's an award winning designer writer. This is not why I love him yet, by the way. But I like this too. Award winning designer, writer, director. He also has lots of jokes, clearly. Several screenplays. One award winning short film, cup of tea on the commode, a sad, sweet, funny debut memoir, chronicles his multitasking adventures of filling his mother's last years with love, laughter and joy.

**[00:04:56.930] - Joshua**

Though not always successful, he came pretty damn close. So this is the pitch that's in the email. I'm just going to read it to you for full transparency because I think it's so beautiful. I love when I ask for bios. I ask

for what you want, links to what you want to promote and all this. I love it when I get things like this. So at 55, I gave up my carefree bachelor life to become a first time parent to a 90 year old, sharp tongue, guilt tripping, stubborn as all get out, and yet funny lady who could barely remember my name. My mother. It's rare for a son to take on 24/7 caregiving, but I jumped in with gusto to fill my mom's last years with love, laughter and joy. Not always successful, but I came up pretty damn close. A cup of tea, which is his book, cup of tea on the commode chronicles my multitasking adventures. My hope is not only to entertain, but to inspire others, especially men, to find joy as caregivers. I did, and I'm a better man for it. Ladies and gentlemen, I just want to give this man a hug, but please welcome him to conversations with Joshua T. Berglund. So honored to have you here, sir.

**[00:06:19.720] - Mark**

Thank you.

**[00:06:20.150] - Joshua**

And I want to ask you out of the gate. I haven't asked this question in a long time, but I think you'll give me a good answer. What are you grateful for today and why?

**[00:06:30.190] - Mark**

Well, definitely the book, I chronicle my adventures with my mom, but also I had a short time with my dad, so I was with both of them when they took their last breath. What fueled, I think, my experience with my mother. And that is what I'm, I think, most grateful for was the short time that I had with my dad kind of prepared me. Even though their deaths were 17 years apart, I selfishly wanted more time with my mom. There's five siblings, and I jumped in and took over. I didn't want to miss all those moments that I chronicle in the book. They were just precious dialog and precious moments that we had that everybody else missed. And when you're doing that 24/7 caregiving, it truly was an honor for me to do that. And my goal, I had a number of goals, but one of my main goals was to make her laugh at least once a day, and she ended up pretty much making me laugh quite often. So it was a win win. And both of my parents left this world, I think, in a way that was the envy of anybody else who leaves this earth.

**[00:07:55.630] - Mark**

They were surrounded by love. They died in their own beds, in their own home. And it was our family home for about 65 years, and it was great. So we left. At least with me, I was a very curious kid, so I had a different relationship, I think, than the others, with both of my folks, not only because I was an actor, but as a designer. You're studying human behavior and things like that. So I was a very curious kid, and I got them to open up. I was the fifth out of the six kids. I'm the youngest son. I have one younger sister. So I had two older brothers, two older sisters, and I asked them questions that I guess nobody else did. And a lot of that I put in the book because I think it's an important story to really describe. Well, both of my folks. I mean, the main focus is on my mom, but there's a lot of my dad in there, too. I would say definitely

sending my parents off the way I certainly wanted to, and I think most people would want to. So we'll get into more stuff, but I think.

**[00:09:08.110] - Mark**

I guess it wasn't so brief. But if I could sum it up that way, I'd say definitely.

**[00:09:13.520] - Joshua**

That is the name "A Cup of Tea on the Commode." Is there any reference to two cups of tea? That book?

**[00:09:24.330] - Mark**

No. So my mom's favorite beverage was hot cup of tea, skim milk, no sugar. This whole thing started in 2011, February, about nine days after her 89th birthday, I get a call from my brother. I was in California, living in LA at the time, but I was in Michigan, actually, at the time, visiting my sister. And you get a call and he says, mom just shut down. The doctor cut off all meds and food, and I put her to bed, and hospices called, and it was like she was on her deathbed. And it came pretty suddenly, and so everybody flew back. I got back there the next morning, and she was in, I called it a semi-comatose state and opened her eyes very rarely, but didn't speak, didn't really acknowledge any of us. She did respond to touch, she would, or shift her body a little bit. When she opened her eyes, which was very rare, she stared in the corner of the room, and it was. Somebody was talking to her, and she wouldn't say anything about it, but she would just open always in the same spot in the room.

**[00:10:52.540] - Mark**

And after a few days we had the priest come in and give her the last rites, and we were basically on death watch. And then a few weeks later, it was literally, I think, probably at least three weeks. Again, no medications, no food. The hospice nurses, we found out that a lot of them, they kind of prescribed their own medicine and their own cures, so a lot of them did not follow the directive. The directive was, no food. Do not get her up out of bed or anything like that. She's going, we'll let her transition. Well, this one nurse, we showed her the directive because we found a few others disobeyed their supervisors. So this one looked at the directive and said, yeah, that's fine. She walked in, sees my mom in bed, and she says, Mrs. Porro, are you hungry? And my mother's eyes snapped open for the first time in weeks. And then this woman accused us of starving our mother to death. So my sister and I were kind of freaking out and we said, call your supervisor because you're not supposed to do this.

**[00:12:03.770] - Mark**

She calls her supervisor and again, accuses us of starving our mother to death. Supervisor says, you broke the rules. Leave. We're going to send another nurse in. In the meantime, I'm thinking, oh, my God, are we in fact starving our mother to death? So I went into my mom, and she's still awake. And I said, mom, are you hungry? She goes, what do you got? And again, the first words in weeks, I said, anything

you want. And she says, how about some pumpkin pie this time? It's March. March is not really pumpkin pie season. But my older brother was in the living room, he lived locally, so he took on the challenge to go find some pumpkin pies. And by some small miracle, he came back about a half hour later with two pumpkin pies.

**[00:12:54.890] - Joshua**

How about that?

**[00:12:56.100] - Mark**

And so we went in and we gave mom a spoonful. Again, it's the first food in weeks. And she spit it out. And I said, well, that didn't go so well. So we tried again, and the second spoonful went great. She downed half the pie, pumpkin pie. The next day, she finished off the rest of that pie and then moved on to the next one. And then she went on to sherbet, and only sherbet. She ate about eight bowls a day. That's all she wanted. Now, she was a type two diabetic. And we said, this is probably not the best diet for you right now. But she was back. She was awake. She was alert. And she hit me with a zinger, too, because I hadn't been home for a while, because she became a grumpy old person like Archie bunker, and I didn't want to be around her. So I was not there for several months. And so when she woke up, she says, well, I haven't seen you in a long while. So she was very good at guilt tripping, but she was awake. And so I started looking around at her house.

**[00:14:07.620] - Mark**

We had people living on the second floor. They were supposed to keep mom company and do cooking and laundry and stuff. At that point, she could walk, I mean, walk and get herself to the restroom and all that kind of stuff. But after this incident, she was bedridden. So I brought a commode that we had for my dad 14 years earlier, and my parents were recyclers, and my brothers kind of fell into that. Also, nothing left our house. So when we couldn't get my mom into the bathroom safely, I said, well, we have a commode downstairs, and I'm sure it's still in this house, because we don't throw anything away. So I found the commode, cleaned it up, put it next to her bed. Sometimes Mother Nature took a little long for things to happen. So this one day, I offered her a cup of her favorite beverage, a cup of tea while she was on the commode. And so that's what became the title of the book.

**[00:15:14.870] - Joshua**

Oh, I like that. And I appreciate the context of the story, too, because that's way more interesting than what I was thinking.

**[00:15:27.030] - Mark**

I guess it became like a morning ritual, a cup of tea on the commode.

**[00:15:34.970] - Joshua**

So I worked in healthcare before I got into media and entertainment and product development. And I got to work around everything from pediatric people that were disabled, that were pediatrics, up to geriatrics, cerebral palsy, ALS, muscular dystrophy, cvas, you name it, worked with a lot of different conditions. And the one thing I can say for sure is that, yeah, the patient, they're doing everything they can to just get through life and get through the day. And whether it's with a good attitude or bad attitude, they just want to get through the day because their whole world has been changed. But the one thing that often gets overlooked, and not in every case, but a lot of times, is the importance of caregivers and the importance of the family or whoever stepped up to help take care of, whether it's the child or the adult, the parent, whatever it may be, caregivers do not get highlighted enough, because from what my perspective, being just an observer, that caregiver has the potential, like making the loved one laugh, taking on that role, or that caregiver can absolutely make that patient's life miserable. And so I have a lot of respect for people that go, look, I was having fun.

**[00:17:05.670] - Joshua**

I was living on the beach. I was living my life. I was making movies. I was doing all this stuff. But I love my mom, and I want to take care of her. And then to take that on and to do it with such gusto and with such joy and pride as it's seemingly that you took on. I mean, my goodness, you were documenting the journey along with her. All of that is so beautiful to me, and it's so inspiring. But I want to ask you, was there any moment going into this when you were trying to decide if this is something that you really wanted to do and take on, how long did it take you to have a really good attitude about walking away from all of your accomplishments to be a caregiver?

**[00:17:48.790] - Mark**

Well, the decision was very easy when I was there for those few weeks. And when she finally woke up, I realized it was what I have a chapter in a book called "A Silent Scream" as in a cry for help. She wanted some love. There was very little love in the house because the family wasn't there. It was Mom. She was kind of a prisoner in her own home. And so the decision was easy. Working out all the logistics was not so easy. So I didn't move back into our family home until near the end of the year. I did stay with her for several months, and then with hospice still on board, when they get their assignment, they're usually on for six months and the ending is usually not good. But Mom was fine, but they were still going to stay on for six months. So I felt okay about going back to LA with hospice because I didn't really care for the people who were still living in the house. And then I came back in September for her grandson's wedding. And so I came back for a few weeks again and took over all the caregiving duties, and we had a good time.

**[00:19:03.620] - Mark**

I got her all spruced up for the wedding. It was going to be her first road trip, the first time out of the house since February. So it was several months. And I got her all dolled up and she had a great time. And I just

realized that she deserves this. And so I said, do you want me to come back and make sure this level of care continues? And she said, yes. And I said, okay, I will do this, but you have to understand that I will do everything in my power to keep you healthy and happy and safe. Do you understand that? And she said, yes. And I said, do you understand that? That means that I'm in charge. And her mood shifted in an instant. I said, you must now obey me. And she puckered up for a kiss, and I wasn't sure if that was a sign of surrender or one wishing me luck, so I gave her a kiss and hoped for the best, and it worked out. And I also said to her, I said, if I take this on, you and I are going to have fun.

#### **[00:20:07.810] - Mark**

And that was my goal. So December of that year, I moved back and I didn't take over 24/7 permanently yet I was kind of supervising. We hired temporary aides to come in and do things when I couldn't be there. And then we tried to find a full time replacement. And I have a chapter in a book called the "Parade of Aids," where I was interviewing potential aides, and it's pretty funny. But the results weren't good. Then I said, you know what? I got to do it. So I moved in permanently and took over. So working that stuff out. Since I was a bachelor, I had no children. I've never been married. So my first kid was this 90-year-old grumpy woman. Not so grumpy at that point, but certainly stubborn and still a guilt tripper. So it was a learning curve. I learned a lot. I really hung out with hospice a lot when they were there for those few months and learned all the caregiving deal with changing the bedding and stuff while a patient's in bed, treating the bed sore, getting her up and out of the bed properly without hurting.

#### **[00:21:32.510] - Mark**

They're fragile. You don't grab them by the arms under the armpits and all this stuff. I added a lot of personal touches that we talk about in the book because like you said, you love your mom. And so we had a thing I called morning hug. So when I got her up and on the commode and then all cleaned up for breakfast before I put her in the wheelchair, wheel her into the kitchen, I said, morning hug time. And we would hug each other and it'd be great. It was one of the best moments, I think, for both of us. And neither of us wanted to let go. But we did that for, I guess, three and a half years. And it was lovely. Again, the decision wasn't hard. Making it all work and then being a first time parent is not easy, especially a guy in his fifties. I learned a lot of stuff. Unconditional love was certainly one of them.

#### **[00:22:30.990] - Joshua**

I talk about. That's beautiful. I often say that my experience in healthcare prepared me for the entertainment world. And people look at me like I have four heads because there's a lot of, I mean, it really did help prepare me. But I want to ask you, what did your experience in the entertainment industry? What would you say prepared you for caregiving the most? Like what skill that you adapted in that industry in Hollywood, Tinseltown, movies, film, tv. What one skill out of that prepped you most, had you most ready to be a caregiver?

#### **[00:23:11.290] - Mark**

I would say, know when you're, when you're playing, let's say, a character. You have to put yourself into their, as we say, step in their shoes, or in my mom's case, into her non-slip safety socks. She never wore shoes again. I would say empathy, and that comes through so many things. But they're not only your mother. They are still people who want love. They want to feel appreciated, and especially with the ladies, they want to feel beautiful. And that realization came to me because I would see pictures when I wasn't there. Even with my siblings, if they see this, they're not going to be happy with it. But my mother always cared about her personal appearance. She was a hand model in her early 20s, so she had beautiful nails, and that was important to her. But she treated herself. She worked full-time for the largest newspaper in New Jersey as a proofreader, the graveyard shift, for almost 30 years. So to treat herself, she would go to the beauty parlor and get a shampoo and set and get her nails done. And her nails are always natural. No acrylics or any of that kind of stuff.

**[00:24:31.640] - Mark**

And so I don't know when the last time she was at the beauty parlor. And whenever she would visit me in LA, I would take her to my friend Stan's salon in Beverly Hills to give her the movie star treatment. And it was a great treat. So when I took over, I created this thing called. I called the day of beauty, where normally I would give her a sponge bath twice a day anyway, but on the weekends, originally, we did it on Sunday, but being a good Catholic, she said, we can't do it on the Lord's day. So we had to move it to Saturday, where not only would I do the normal things, but I would also soak her feet in Epsom salt. She would get a shampoo and blow dried her hair, and I would either braid it or at that point, her hair was very long again, which was beautiful. And I would either braid her hair or definitely put it in a ponytail. I bought her a new wardrobe. These drab, shabby, tattered, old night and day dresses. I said no. And for a middle aged guy, going out for senior woman's clothing was kind of interesting.

**[00:25:40.750] - Mark**

I have more of that in the book, too. Kind of creepy. I ended up doing it online. It was much safer. But there is a fashion niche that needs to be filled. When I originally went into the stores, found nothing attractive for seniors as day dresses or night dresses, and then online, same thing. So I took off senior and said, I want this. And I said, oh, these are great. These work. So I bought her some new wardrobe. And this "Day of Beauty" thing was great. So I would shampoo, blow dry her hair, soak her feet. She got a massage, body lotion, all that stuff, and then the regular stuff, a new diaper and the new wardrobe, and then I would do her nails, and then she got her red lipstick to match her red nails. And the first day I did it. Now, I don't know the last time she looked in the mirror, but I was wheeling her from her bedroom into the kitchen for breakfast, and we had a big round mirror in the dining room, and I'm going to get emotional with this thing. I parked her wheelchair in front of that mirror and I said, who is that pretty girl?

**[00:26:59.110] - Mark**

And it was a revelation, a profound revelation. I don't know when the last time she felt beautiful or if anybody asked her how beautiful she was or even looked in the mirror. I had no idea, but she just



beamed. And I said, oh, my gosh, there's so much power in this because we don't lose wanting to feel pretty at 90. So, on Day of Beauty and all the days in between, I parked her in front of that mirror and just said, who's that pretty girl? Oh, my God. And it was great. I think it did more for me than for her. It was just amazing.

**[00:27:38.850] - Joshua**

If anyone from an assisted living center or nursing home is listening to this, take a hint. This is important. You want a good selling proposition? Create this idea. This is genius. And I've been in thousands of assisted living centers and nursing homes, and what you're saying is so true across the board. Everything from the ugly moose, as we call them, the day dresses. We call them moose.

**[00:28:04.560] - Mark**

Oh, my gosh. Yeah, that's it.

**[00:28:06.890] - Joshua**

Awful name. Because they look awful. But even just like the care and the maintenance, I don't believe for a second that people lose the desire to look approachable, to look clean, to look healthy. I don't think we lose that. But there is something. I don't know if it's deceptive marketing or what it is, but at some point, it's like this switch goes off in people's brains when they hit a certain age or they take a certain amount of medications. I don't know what the rule is, but it's like I don't care anymore. And then they just wear whatever guys wear. Socks with black socks with white sandals and everything. Tommy Bahamas. Come on. I got ugly feet and don't even do that anyway. Okay, so now you've done this in the book. I have to read the book. I don't enjoy reading enough to want to go pick up a novel like I read for purpose, typically, but this sounds like I think of like a Mitch album book. Yeah, it's that same letters from Moria and it's that same feeling. Are you going to turn this into like a Broadway musical or a play?

**[00:29:24.820] - Joshua**

Because I haven't read the book, but just hearing you describe it, it's so easy to visualize the scenes and the settings and what are you going to do with this? Because it seems like more is needed, whatever you've done.

**[00:29:41.500] - Mark**

Well, I did finish the audiobook that was released on December 20. So if you don't want to read, you want to listen to this voice for seven and a half hours.

**[00:29:53.230] - Joshua**

Great voice.

**[00:29:54.180] - Mark**

Well, I add some music because I wrote the theme song. I've done a lot of probably 140 teasers that are on my YouTube channel and been on my blog. I've been promoting this for about two years. It came out on Mother's Day last year. And it's funny because there's been a number of the reviews have been lovely. I mean, some of them are very humbling and heartwarming and stuff. But a couple people, even on Amazon reviews have said, this should be a movie. And I have my connections in Hollywood, a couple people in Hollywood who said, yes, this should be a movie. And so I don't know what's going to happen. I know how Hollywood works. I don't get worked up. I have a friend of mine who wants to produce and he was a casting director. He cast me in some projects in LA and he's retired now. He lives on the east coast. But he's already talking to people about casting and stuff. So I don't know. We'll see. I think the important thing is the message that I'm trying to get across through the book and through the blog and through the YouTube channel and all that business.

**[00:30:59.990] - Mark**

And now with the audiobook, I think is a fun thing because I add some music and some sound effects and stuff like that, and you'll hear, certainly some of the tales are a little wild. So you'll hear, I guess, my emotional interpretation of some of those. So we'll see. But it was funny because I did do a promo, one of my teasers. I said, if you enjoyed "Tuesdays with Maury," you'll enjoy every day with Genevieve. So we'll see what happens. And I sent Mitch a book, really, I don't know if he's read it or not. I sent it to his house, if it's still his house, I hope it is, because he lives just outside of Detroit, Michigan. So we'll see. Because he's originally from New Jersey, we have some things in common, but he's quite a busy gentleman. So we'll see.

**[00:31:51.220] - Joshua**

Do you miss Hollywood?

**[00:31:53.830] - Mark**

You know what? I miss very little about the US, to be honest. It's so lovely here. And maybe the wine plays something a part in. It's the largest wine growing region in the world. No, the french people are lovely. The French know how to live. They know what's important is being with people and the romance of the food and the wine and the life. It's very different. So I lived in LA for 28 years. I had a business and a home and a factory because I had a snack food company. So I had a lot of roots in LA, but no, not really. I mean, I keep in touch with my family. My siblings are still here, so we'll do Facetiming and stuff like that. But I haven't been back since 2017.

**[00:32:52.310] - Joshua**

Do you miss the business, though, even outside of LA? Because you can do the business anywhere. So do you miss the business? Are you getting back in it?

**[00:33:01.610] - Mark**

I have no interest in getting back in it other than writing. I love writing. I wrote screenplays and jokes and scenes and things like that in LA. In one short film that was a comedy parody that was pretty well received. But I like having more control over the writing and stuff like that. And even the gentleman that wants to make this a movie said, you want to play the role? I said, I have no interest in acting in this thing. First of all, I'm going to be too old by the time this thing ever gets made. And I rather produce it and write the script and have more, I guess, control over it than trying to get back into it that way. So I don't miss the business too much.

**[00:33:54.170] - Joshua**

And I can appreciate that answer. One of the things that I heard you say earlier was that, oh, come back to me thought, I love it when this happens. Oh, gosh, that is embarrassing. My brain just completely farted and it.

**[00:34:14.230] - Mark**

Was ten minutes after we end this, you're going to go, I'm going to.

**[00:34:20.070] - Joshua**

Remember it sooner than that.

**[00:34:21.570] - Mark**

It was the day of beauty, health care, Hollywood.

**[00:34:31.830] - Joshua**

It actually had to do with, no, okay, no, I'm going to ask something else and then hopefully that'll bring me back. Gosh dang it. I now know why people read from teleprompters and have their notes and all that. I love conversation but I have to factor in the fact that sometimes my brain turns off for 30 seconds at a time. So not that fond of it. Okay. Writing, writing, writing, writing, writing, writing, writing. South of France. Holy crap. I would love to edit this out, but I don't do that because if I embarrass myself, I allow myself to embarrass myself. Okay, so your grandmother. This is what this was about. Your grandmother. Because this is one of the things to me now. I know it. Thank you. Thank you for the space delay. You were talking about the message, the book and writing the book being important, and you singled out men.

**[00:35:31.050] - Mark**

Yeah.

**[00:35:32.090] - Joshua**

Okay. So this is the part. To me, there was something like, yeah, I know you singled out men, but I know that there's a deeper reason why that you wanted men to see and read this book and experience this book. Can you go into why you singled out men specifically? Because here's the thing. There's a lot of women out there that have really lousy relationships with other women in their lives, including their mother, but you singled out men. Can you talk about that?

**[00:36:04.100] - Mark**

Well, I would say the main reason is because usually the caregiving for a parent falls on the daughters.

**[00:36:11.360] - Joshua**

Fair enough.

**[00:36:12.180] - Mark**

It's still, I think, two thirds to one third, but it's growing. And I would say that the majority of the people who have read this book and have really resonated with them have been the women. There's been a number of guys, but I would say probably along those same lines, two thirds women is the audience for this book. So I think that especially with a mother now, with a father, it may be different, but with a mother, you're seeing your mother naked for the first time, and you see what the years have done to the body for me. And this might be the acting experience, too. You got to get over it and get on with it because you have a job to do. But I found joy in it. Whether or not it was being a first time parent or something, but to see the reaction from my mother and to see that she knew she was safe and trusted me and was well cared for. That was a beautiful feeling for me.

**[00:37:38.450] - Mark**

But also it was important for me to return dignity to her. I think she lost some of that with these other people being around because there wasn't a lot of love. Again, when I wasn't there, her hair wouldn't be looking very good. And she had the old drab night shirts on again and no makeup or anything like that. And I'm like, what? Are you not getting the hint here? Yeah, this is before and this is after and now this is when Mark is back in LA for a week or. And it's. I don't get it. But I'm also very sensitive out of all the kids. And so I might be a little oversensitive about things like that, but for me, that was important and I think important for mom. So if it didn't, let's say, register with them, that's okay. I wasn't being judgmental or didn't want to be judgmental. Just say, okay, this is the way I do it. And if you can do it, great. If you can't, that's okay. I'll take care of it when I'm back in.

**[00:38:46.810] - Joshua**

A lot of people have resentments with their parents, and depending on which generation you grew up in, it can be a little bit different. But like with my parents, we didn't back talk. We got the crap beat out of us. My dad would absolutely back, and then before that was probably a little bit more severe and severe. But one thing I've noticed just over the years and just throughout conversations I have, especially relating to parents, is that not only do the kids have resentments that have been never spoken about, especially to that parent, parents carry resentments also towards their kids, but they don't let them out because, well, you're my perfect little angel being, and you did nothing wrong. Even though in the back of my head or where I'm talking to my friends after a couple of glasses of wine, he was a real piece of shit sometimes. Anyway, whatever it may be, there's resentments there that don't come out. But now you're in a caregiver situation and it's 24 hours a day, you're in each other's faces, you're in each other's spaces. Were you put in a situation where you had some resentments either way, her resentments towards you or vice versa?

**[00:39:58.580] - Joshua**

Were you put into a situation where you had to resolve some past hurts or pains?

**[00:40:06.210] - Mark**

I would have to say I was very fortunate that way. No. Whether she had any with me, I don't think so. Other than the guilt tripping thing about I haven't seen you for a while because she knew. We've been through a lot of things in our lives, and I happened to be there for a lot of these events, and some of them were health crises with her, also with me as a kid, I had asthma and almost died when I was two, I was told. So there were some things that played an important role in both each other's lives. And so I have a lot of that stuff in the book. But as I mentioned in the book, there were only two times where I questioned my mother's love for us. One was when she made her tuna fish casserole and also when she pushed our cuticles when we were young. I said there were ways I could avoid the casserole while growing up, but I couldn't avoid cuticle torture. And then when the instrument was, on the other hand, when I was doing her nails, I was very tempted to inflict a little pain on her.

**[00:41:27.210] - Mark**

But of course, I resisted. Those are the only two moments I would have to say as a parent, not so much growing up with her. There were moments where she did suffer from some depression and stuff. And so she had a very stubborn. And I said, her ugly, stubborn side did rear its head once in a while. So there were some moments in our journey where she would just shut down and would not eat. That would be the main thing. She just wouldn't eat. And she needed to eat. I said, you need to keep up your strength. I'm cooking these beautiful meals for you. You have to eat them. You have to show some appreciation by eating them. And so there were a couple of moments, again, she was very good at the guilt tripping. So I'll tell you this one moment. There's others in the book. I don't want to ruin it. But again, she shut down at

dinner time, and she just for no reason just went into a deep, deep melancholy. And I got very mad at her. I shut the light off in the kitchen and went down and did laundry and took it out on the laundry and the washing machine and then came back up for round two.

**[00:42:43.240] - Mark**

Now she's been sitting in the dark for about ten minutes. I turn the light on. She's sitting at the table with her hands folded in her lap. Her knife and fork are on the plate. The plate is empty. She ate her entire meal in the dark. That's not easy at any age. She ate everything. And she sat there again, still not a word. And you have those parental moments where you say, this will hurt me more than will hurt you. Well, that one came true when I flicked that light off and I left. I said, this will hurt me. And she got me, and I just leaned in and gave her a kiss and said, thank you. So there were moments where it's like with your kid, you want to kill them, and then she finishes it off with something beautiful like that, and it's just like, again, that's the empathy. What is going on in your head to make you do this and be patient with it, and hopefully it will resolve itself whether it takes some time or not, or if you can figure another way to, I guess, come some resolution with it or.

**[00:44:07.250] - Mark**

So for me, it was those ten minutes and her eating in the dark, and it was just a beautiful thing. And I think she did that because she loved me and she made me realize deep down that, yes, I need to eat because he made this stuff for me. He gave up his life in LA. He's here. So I've got to show some appreciation. So it was beautiful.

**[00:44:31.850] - Joshua**

I know you've mentioned empathy several times, but looking back at your experience as a caregiver to your mother, what lesson or what one thing were you able to take from that that you can say made you a better man?

**[00:44:54.350] - Mark**

Well, I would say unconditional love. I mean, being a bachelor and all that stuff, you could say, oh, this guy has commitment issues. And I can kind of cop to that and say, I guess so. I got bored easily, not only with love, but with work and sports and things like that. I was involved with stuff and then got to a certain level where I got bored.

**[00:45:24.070] - Mark**

And my MO would be then try something else, move on to something else. So I was very good at certain things. I was good at a lot of things, but I wasn't, like, excellent to rise above all others. And maybe that was a fear factor or commitment thing or something. Anyway, with taking this role on, there was no walking away. So I said, I'm not leaving this until you plan on leaving. And so we're here. So,

unconditional love was definitely something that I learned because her life was literally in my hands, and my other siblings trusted me with that responsibility and so did my mother. So that was big. No matter what, how tired you are or whatever, if you hear the call or something, you've got to run down those steps and check on her to make sure everything is good.

**[00:46:22.030] - Joshua**

I would imagine that fear of missing out is something that probably popped in your head at one time or another, maybe even early on. But if that's true, if you did have that because you're caregiving for your mother, you get a phone call with an opportunity and you're having to say, no, I don't know how many of those situations you had, but I would imagine that there was opportunities that came up for you that you had to say or you chose to say, no, I'm taking care of mom. How did you fight against. Because when I have fear of missing out, it'll creep in and sometimes it can haunt me for a few days. It really rocks my world and I have a hard time shaking loose of it. A lot of people face fear of missing out for a lot of different reasons. How did you overcome that?

**[00:47:17.210] - Mark**

I probably just ignored it. When you make a decision, the universe seems to support it. At least a decision like this. I don't even remember if any of these opportunities came up.

**[00:47:34.660] - Joshua**

Wow.

**[00:47:36.290] - Mark**

Because you say, ok, this is what I'm doing. And in fact, I had a relationship that I started in LA during this and she was somebody who had mother issues and she couldn't understand why I was so committed to my mother. And we broke up because she didn't get it. And I said, this is what I'm doing. I will get to LA on occasion for maybe a week at a time, but that's it, every few months because I had to take care of my snack business and do some things. And then she had a daughter going to school in New York, so I would see her, but the rest of the time was my mother and it was tough, so it was tougher for her. For me, this is priority, you and I, or we're okay, but this is priority here. So I don't know if it, to be honest, I can't remember an opportunity that, oh, I wish I could do that thing in LA or something. No, that's interesting. The universe seemed to support what I was.

**[00:48:48.470] - Joshua**

I mean, I think the universe can support that. At the same time, I feel like the universe also will throw things at you just to test your resolve. How bad do you really mean what you say? Serious about wanting this? That happens a lot, especially with me. But I also take a lot of really not to say what you did is not a bold leap, but I kind of get excited with the thrill of jumping off a cliff with no parachute. I kind of live for it,

but with that comes on the way down, trying to build my parachute. A lot of doubt going. You could have done an easier thing. There's much easier roads to go. You sure you want to do this? But anyway, listen, Mark, I have so much respect for you and again, I've got years of seeing caregivers in action and I admire someone especially that was in a position that you were in to do this, to take this on, it's inspiring to me. It shows what life is really about. Love, family, empathy for our fellow man, fellow humans. It's just a beautiful, beautiful thing. And I just love your way of being and just the way that you show up, it's just a really special thing.

**[00:50:14.040] - Joshua**

I really am grateful for your time today. Please share with the audience any last words you have, and then also make sure you plug where people can buy the book, where they can follow your work and just support your journey.

**[00:50:27.380] - Mark**

Okay, well, I'll finish this story about what my mother was looking at in that corner.

**[00:50:34.390] - Joshua**

Please do.

**[00:50:34.910] - Mark**

Yeah, we started with that. So after she woke up and she's eating pumpkin pie, and I think she was still on the pumpkin pie, she didn't move on to the sherbet yet. My little sister was in with her alone, and she said, mom, what was up in the corner? And my mother just kind of smiled and she says, did someone talk to you? And she kind of, again, smiled, but she didn't say anything. She said, was it God? And my mother's expression changed. And my sister said, did he talk to you? And Mom nodded. What did he say? She said, "Be patient." So it was not her time. Now we don't know if it was God or my dad because it had been 14 years, and he may not be in any rush to see her yet. So he might have said, it's only been 14 years, Gen.

**[00:51:38.070] - Joshua**

Maybe take a little extra time, but that's possible, too.

**[00:51:42.420] - Mark**

Yeah.

**[00:51:45.010] - Joshua**



I'm fortunate the few times in my life that God has spoken to me or I believed that it was God or believe it was God. Those times I'm fortunate what I was told actually made sense, and I'm glad I applied it to my life and it wasn't some evil spirit or something like that. It was something at least nice and pure and had my best interest in mind. Because ultimately, those messages is how I turned my life around. I'm grateful for it. So whether I was hallucinating or not, I don't care. Thank God for it. Mark, I, again, just huge fan of you. Thank you so much for your time. Wish you smashing success with the book. I hope it turns into heck. Maybe it's a remake of the golden girls, but something better. I don't know. Whatever it is, your mom sounds like an absolute just gift, your gift.

**[00:52:45.820] - Mark**

She was. So if they google anybody googles "A Cup of Tea on the Commode," you'll see we're everywhere, and it's on Amazon, apple books and audible. So A Cup of Tea on the Commode," you'll find me and you'll have links.

**[00:53:02.820] - Joshua**

In the show notes, everyone. So you can go there. Also, you can Google, you can go to my website, click. It's all going to be there. Thank you for your time and happy New Year.

**[00:53:13.240] - Mark**

My pleasure. You too. Take care. Bye.