

Sawbones 423: Band-Aids

Published August 16, 2022

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Intro (Clint McElroy): Sawbones is a show about medical history and nothing the hosts say should be taken as medical advice or opinion. It's for fun. Can't you just have fun for an hour and not try to diagnose your mystery boil? We think you've earned it. Just sit back, relax, and enjoy a moment of distraction from that weird growth. You're worth it.

[theme music plays]

Justin: Hello, everybody, and welcome to *Sawbones*, a marital tour of misguided medicine. Me? I'm your co-host, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And we've got an exciting episode for you today. I know I always say that, but this one is really good because it's not boring. It's fun.

Sydnee: Um, okay, I know why you're saying that. It's a different episode. I know what you're about to say next.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: But I feel like the insinuation underlying it now is that when I do an episode, when I'm the one leading the episode, it is boring and it isn't fun.

Justin: Okay, interesting. Speak on that.

Sydnee: Well, because what Justin is about to tell you is that he did the episode. He researched it.

Justin: I did! Yay, Justin. Hurray!

Sydnee: It was very kind of you. I had an incredibly rough day. The day that I usually reserve to finish out and make sure my topic's all ready to go and my research is all together was a very, very rough day.

Justin: Yes. Sydnee had to see to a hit and run that happened right in front of her. She had to do doctor stuff. The person is going to be okay.

Sydnee: But it was an intense day and I did not do my work, which I think is fine, by the way. I'm going to normalize that. That's fine that I didn't get my work done.

Justin: Because, why is it okay for you, Syd? In this specific case. The network of people around you for support.

Sydnee: Yes, this is true. Yes. And we should all be able to, when we have a traumatic experience, especially like that, something sudden and unexpected, we should all be given the space and time to cope with that mentally and emotionally and not be forced to do work that we are not in a head space to be able to perform. It wouldn't have been very good. I would have suffered. It would have been bad for everyone. This will be much better.

Justin: I will now begin the episode. I shall impersonate a man.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: Come enter into my imagination and see him bony, hollow faced eyes that burn with the fire of inner vision. He conceives the strangest quest ever imagined to help his clumsy wife with her... With her fingers.

Sydnee: Did you write this down?

Justin: No. This is the introduction to Man of La Mancha.

Sydnee: Oh, okay.

Justin: But I'm, like, I'm introducing— I'm going to walk this one in in a different way. I'm going to give you a little bit of the rest of the story action.
[crosstalk]

Sydnee: I would love to know— I would love to know, by the way, how many of our listeners knew that was the intro to Man of La Mancha.

Justin: Only the cool ones. No, I wanted to introduce you to Earle Dickson. D-I-C-K-S-O-N. Would have been in the 19-teens that this happened. Earle Dickson was a cotton buyer.

Sydnee: This was not the Earl that the Dixie Chicks sang...

Justin: No, this was not. This was E-A-R-L-E.

Sydnee: So it's a different Earle. That is the only way we know for sure it's a different Earle.

Justin: It's a little different—

Sydnee: That's the one clue we have that it's not the same Earle.

Justin: Yes, it is a completely different Earle. But he had a wife. He had been newly married and to his wife, Josephine. And Josephine was a little bit accident prone and when she was cooking, she would cut herself. And in the olden days, there wasn't a good way of dealing with this in an easy way, right? Like, minor cuts.

Sydnee: We had not invented profanity, so you had to say, like, "aw, shucks."

Justin: "Aw, beans!"

Sydnee: Or, "aw, darn!"

Justin: "Zooms!"

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: No, um, [laughs]. So here's what he did. He worked for a company called Johnson & Johnson. So he and Josephine worked together with two J&J products. It was an adhesive tape that J&J made and a gauze, and they

combined these by laying out this really long strip of surgical tape and then placing a strip of gauze down the middle. And then on the other side of the adhesive, he put crinoline fabric onto it and...

Sydnee: With Tweety Bird on it.

Justin: No, [laughs] Tweety Bird was not on this one.

Sydnee: Oh, okay!

Justin: But you have sussed out that this was the creation, him and Josephine had created the Band-Aid. And what this was at this time, it was to allow you to treat minor wounds, ideally by yourself, easily and quickly, without the help of somebody having to cut...

Think about it. It's weird. We take for granted how easy it is to take care of, like, minor scrapes and cuts with Band-Aids. But before, this wasn't easy. You're going to go dig through your first aid kit and find your surgical tape and your gauze, and it's probably not a big enough cut, so you just leave it. You know what I mean?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Roll with it. But he had created Band-Aids. This cotton buyer had created Band-Aids, which were released in 1921 for the first time.

Sydnee: Now, for our friends across the pond?

Justin: Mm. A plaster.

Sydnee: Thank you.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: Now, Band-Aid is a brand...

Justin: ... of plaster in the UK. But it's a brand of bandage here.

Sydnee: Yeah, but we never say bandage.

Justin: No, we say Band-Aid.

Sydnee: If somebody asked me for a bandage, I assume they want something other than a Band-Aid.

Justin: Right.

Sydnee: Like, they don't want a Band-Aid. They want something that I would put on them. If you're asking me for a bandage, you're like— I assume you want me to, like, put some gauze and wrap it and do some stuff.

Justin: They have worked for a long time to keep the name from becoming genericized, like Kleenex or Xerox, because if you lose that, you can lose the ability to enforce that trademark if it enters into, like, the public lexicon.

Sydnee: But— Okay. And this is not— I'm not making any case that it should or shouldn't do that. But hasn't it? I mean, isn't Band-Aid synonymous with bandage?

Justin: Is this what it's like to record with me? I mean, to get derailed literally three minutes in when you've got so much information to cover? Is that what it feels like? I am so, so sorry.

Sydnee: It does, but I thought that was the appeal of our show.

Justin: It is the appeal of our show. I'm kidding. I didn't research it that much.

Sydnee: That's why I let it slide. No, well, I know you didn't research that question. I guess it's more of a hypothetical. I feel, to me, Band-Aid is— That is what that is. It is just a Band-Aid.

Justin: The first Band-Aid was released in 1921. They were made by hand, okay? They were three inches wide, if you can imagine. I know you're not big on measurements. Like, three inches wide, about like this.

Sydnee: Justin's holding his fingers up to show me what three inches looks like.

Justin: And 18 inches long, right?

Sydnee: [laughs] That's a big Band-Aid.

Justin: Well, the idea was you would cut what you needed off of this. So if you imagine three inches long, right? You cut a one inch strip, and now you have a three by one Band-Aid as—

Sydnee: Well, but is gauze just in the middle?

Justin: Gauze is just a strip in the middle. So you're cutting—

Sydnee: But does it go the whole length of it?

Justin: It does, but you're cutting lengthwise, right?

Sydnee: Oh! I gotcha, I understand now.

Justin: So it creates the Band Aid that we—

Sydnee: I understand. I was imagining a square of gauze in the middle, like a giant fun size Band-Aid. Like, yeah.

Justin: But that— So it was just a big strip of Band-Aids. Basically, you would cut off the size that you needed and roll with it. They weren't a very big hit at first. \$3,000 were sold the first year because people weren't sure what it was.

Sydnee: But how would you package that? Because if it's sticky, you can't roll it up. Did they have the little, like, paper that they put on it now, you know? Okay.

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: To keep it from sticking to itself?

Justin: I guess, yeah, you peel the paper off? I'm not exactly sure, but Margaret Gurowitz is who I owe a lot to for this episode. She's the chief historian of Johnson & Johnson. She said that only 3000 were sold the first year because we weren't sure how to use them.

The company started hiring traveling salesmen to go demonstrate it to people like doctors, retail pharmacists, and interestingly butchers who they thought would get a lot of use out of it. Right? You see people using it. This was also a similar factor for the Boy Scouts of America. The BSA troops were sent free, unlimited supplies of Band-Aids. And Band-Aids became, like, a standard that they would put into, like, their first aid kits.

Sydnee: Sure.

Justin: That the Boy Scouts of America get, and that's still a standard today. But they basically, like, flooded them with Band-Aids to get the word out, to let people see. By 1924, just three years later, they were made by machine and they abandoned that whole, like, needing scissors to just have individual Band-Aids.

And they also started using and I don't remember this, but I assume some of the listeners will. But there was a red string in each package that you would pull the red string and that would tear them open. Do you remember that?

Sydnee: I remember that.

Justin: Really?

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Yeah. And that was before we had the peel apart paper or whatever. But you would pull the red string and make it so you could take the Band-Aid out.

Sydnee: Which is a very satisfying package now, Band-Aids.

Justin: It is.

Sydnee: It's all very satisfying to open.

Justin: Yeah. So they started spreading these around and they need to spread the word of Band-Aid, right? So they're telling people about it. They're getting the word out in an effect that I believe we have seen several times, and I've heard about many more times than that.

Like, I know, I think Hershey's would probably be in this category where the celebrity, the popularity was really cemented when they were shipped overseas during World War II. And they were kind of a standard issue over there. And they were used by a lot of soldiers in the early 40s, um, and that helped it so when they got back, they knew about Band-Aids and the soldiers were like, hey, we need some of these. That helped it to propagate.

Sydnee: That's interesting. It's interesting too, because I wouldn't think, I've never been on like a physician in that setting, but you wouldn't think Band-Aids would play a huge role.

Justin: Well, probably if they can take care of smaller stuff on their own and not get infections or help to keep it protected, at least, it's probably...

Sydnee: I can see that.

Justin: Good little bit of triage.

Sydnee: That's interesting.

Justin: The next sort of like big watermark for Band-Aid. And I'll ask you to slip on your headphones right now because, you know, when I do these, I like to do...

Sydnee: You like sound effects.

Justin: I like to do a little, like, multimedia. So, um...

Commercial Speaker: Look! Here is the new Band Aid plastic strip with new super stick. It sticks better than any other bandage. The proof? Take a dry egg at room temperature. Touch the egg with any other bandage. Brand X. Brand Y. Brand Z. Not one sticks, but a Band-Aid plastic strip with new superstick sticks tight instantly. Watch it again in slow motion. No pressure, yet we can lift the egg, even boil it, and the Band-Aid plastic strip never comes loose.

Commercial Speaker 2: Maybe you don't want to boil eggs this way, but you do want the extra protection of Band-Aid plastic strips. They take better care of little cuts and scratches. They stay put.

Commercial Speaker: Yes, even in hot soapy dishwater. Neat, flesh colored, almost invisible. Band-Aid plastic strips with new superstick stick better than any other bandage. Made only by Johnson & Johnson, the most trusted name in surgical dressings. Be sure you get Band-Aid plastic strips.

Justin: So I like that the lady says that you may not want to cook an egg like this. Imagine...

Sydnee: But you may!

Justin: Imagine you come home and your dad is like dunking eggs into hot water that they're attached to Band-Aids. Like, "how else do you cook them, kids? What are you talking about?"

Sydnee: I was sitting there thinking, this is such a wild commercial because I'm watching people essentially stroke an egg with Band-Aids.

Justin: Yes, basically stroking an egg with Band-Aids.

Sydnee: They're stroking an egg with Band-Aids. But the thing is, like, it was very effective because I will never forget the image of someone stroking an egg with a Band-Aid now.

Justin: Mm-hmm. It's locked in your memory. And that was a very popular commercial.

Sydnee: Also, I think we have to call attention to the very subtle racism there. Flesh colored?

Justin: Well, hold on. Yes, that is an excellent point Sydnee and it is one that we will discuss at length. So fear not about that. But that was one of the first big, I guess you'd say the first big wins for them. I do... [laughs] I want to talk about another really successful marketing campaign and it's one that I think is diabolical in its nature and we are going to do that. But first we're going to take a brief trip to the billing department.

Sydnee: Let's go.

[theme music plays]

[ad break]

[Max Fun ad]

Ella: Hi everyone, I'm Ella McLeod.

Alexis: And I'm Alexis B. Preston.

Ella: And we host a show called Comfort Creatures. The show for every animal lover, be it a creature of scales, six legs, fur, feathers, or fiction, Comfort Creatures is a show for people who prefer their friends to have paws instead of hands.

Alexis: Unless they are raccoon hands. That is okay.

Ella: That is absolutely okay, yeah.

Alexis: Yes. Every Thursday we will be talking to guests about their pets, learning about pets in history, art, and even fiction. Plus, we'll discover differences between pet ownership across the pond. It's going to be a hoot on Maximum Fun.

[ad break ends]

Justin: Sydnee, I want you to meet Doctor Dan, the bandage man.

Sydnee: Doctor Dan the bandage man.

Justin: Doctor Dan the bandage man. It is a Little Golden Book from—
Does that ring a bell for you?

Sydnee: I've seen this book!

Justin: You've seen—

Sydnee: I was sitting there thinking, I feel like there was a Little Golden Book with Doctor Dan. I don't remember the bandage man, but I remember Doctor Dan in a Little Golden Book.

Justin: Okay, so Doctor Dan the Bandage Man. This is 1950, so it actually predates our egg a little bit.

Sydnee: This would make sense because I have some of the Little Golden Books that my dad had as a kid.

Justin: Oh, right.

Sydnee: Those are hidden among the other gold books.

Justin: Well, it has been in circulation since then and it's still made.

Sydnee: Still made?!

Justin: Yeah!

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: So, here's the story. It's about a little boy who scratches his finger while he's playing, goes to his mom. He says, "Mom, I got cut on my hand." And she's like, "Oh, there's nothing I can do about that." And then she's like, "Wait a minute, that's not true. I have Band-Aids."

So she gets a Band-Aid. Not a bandage. A Band-Aid brand Band-Aid in this book, right? Washes the wound, put the Band-Aid brand bandage on. And for the rest of the book, Doctor Dan, anytime anything goes wrong with somebody, he's like, "Don't even sweat it. I have Band-Aids for you." Introducing this idea of play and Band-Aids the book came with, and it may still, I think, come with six Band-Aids, like, packed in.

Sydnee: Oh, my goodness.

Justin: So you can get home and, like, go wild.

Sydnee: In the book, I know I've seen this book, but in the book, I don't remember the contents. Does Band-Aid have the little TM on it? Is it obvious that this is an advertising thing? You know what I mean?

Justin: If you look at the book, you actually can see, like, everything looks sort of, like, stylized. And then you look at the packages of Band-Aids, and they look exactly like Band-Aid packages because they're just like...

Sydnee: Did they make it clear this is a brand partnership we're doing? This is an ad. This is a Band-Aid ad that you just bought your kid.

Justin: You just bought your kid—

Sydnee: Because, like, back then I don't think we have very clear rules on that, right? Like, nowadays, you can't just make something that's an ad and pretend it's not an ad. You have to say it's an ad.

Justin: No. And this was one of the first times ever to have this idea of co-packaging, like packaging in something like this to help sell units.

Sydnee: And I hate that because the result is what we all know. Kids just want to put on Band-Aids all the time.

Justin: It's— Yes. That's why you have to hide the Band-Aids, because kids love to play with Band-Aids.

Sydnee: We literally have to put our Band-Aids on a shelf that is unreachable by our children, because if they get to the Band-Aids, they will cover themselves in all the Band-Aids and we'll be out of Band-Aids.

Justin: Everybody gets a Band-Aid in Doctor Dan the Bandage Man. It was printed— The first printing was 1.75 million copies, which is the largest printing of any Little Golden Book ever to this point. And then this is— The wildest thing about Doctor Dan the Band-Aid man, other than, like, saying it is so fun.

The wildest thing about it is that it was not Johnson & Johnson's idea. It was Little Golden Books. Little Golden— Here's a letter...

Sydnee: Did they get money or something?

Justin: Here's the letter that was written.

Sydnee: Well, they sold Golden Books. That's what they got.

Justin: Yeah. Here's the letter that was written at the beginning of the book. Okay. "For a long time, the publishers have been ardent admirers of Band-Aid adhesive bandages. Not only for themselves, publishers seem to cut themselves more than other people, but because of their effect on children. We've noted that Band Aid adhesive bandages not only cheer and comfort small boys and girls who bang themselves up, but that they make wonderful playthings as well."

"No one quite knows how many millions of dolls and stuffed toys have been patched up in this manner. Consequently, when the idea for this book came to us, we promptly went to Johnson & Johnson and asked them if they would be willing to help us. They were very nice about it. And asked that we point out, that Band-Aid is Johnson & Johnson's trademark for its brand of adhesive bandages and for several other products in its line." Yeah, I—

Sydnee: I bet they said that.

Justin: Yeah, I bet they were very nice about it. For this free—

Sydnee: "Oh, you would like to create a book that will market our product to children so that they'll demand their parents buy it? I guess we'll let you do that."

Justin: "I guess we can work that out."

Sydnee: "I guess we'll let you do that."

Justin: "I guess we can figure out some sort of deal."

Sydnee: And it's funny because it worked. I was thinking, like, these would have probably just been plain colored Band-Aids. They wouldn't have had designs or something on them, right? They would have just been a solid color.

So you wouldn't have necessarily a character or something on them which like, our kids prefer those. But they will still just cover themselves in any Band-Aid. Any Band-Aid that comes along, they will, like... I can see where it still would have worked.

Justin: Doctor Dan the Bandage Man was so popular that it was reprinted in 2004, is still in print today, and does still come with Band-Aid brand adhesive bandages packed in.

Sydnee: Are they in fun colors or characters or something I wonder?

Justin: That's a good question. I don't know. I would think they want to be more—

Sydnee: Can you imagine if they are also doing like various property partnerships?

Justin: Cobranded, yeah—

Sydnee: Cobranded with like Frozen or whatever, you know.

Justin: Um, it is also featured in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian as a piece of American culture. Doctor Dan the Bandage Man.

Sydnee: I will say I think what they're playing on, and maybe you're going to talk about this more, but I dress wounds a lot nowadays in my practice.

Justin: Humble brag. Go on.

Sydnee: No, I just mean like that's a big— [laughs] It's a big part of what I do. And that isn't typical— I will say I'm distinguishing that because as a family doctor, you don't necessarily spend a ton of time bandaging wounds, you know?

Justin: You don't go to the doctor to get a Band-Aid level wound addressed.

Sydnee: Right. But I do that in my particular practice. So I spend a lot of time dressing wounds. And when I'm dressing even larger wounds, there's something... There's something very— There's a deep level of human connection that occurs when someone is injured and you are physically caring for the injury.

And with a Band-Aid, you are giving the ability to literally everyone to do that. It's such a— I don't know. There's something very— It's this deep moment of connection that it's in the deepest part of our brain.

Justin: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know what I mean? I always feel so connected to a patient when I'm caring for their wound.

Justin: It's kind of intimate in a way.

Sydnee: Yeah, it's very intimate. And you can do with a Band-Aid, anyone can do it. Like some of the stuff I'm doing, I know because of my training, nobody has to be trained to use Band-Aid.

Justin: You just use it. Um, Band-Aids continued their sort of, like, triumphant march to success. In the mid— Let's see. In '68, Band-Aids

orbited the moon with Apollo 8, and they were part of the kit that landed on the moon with the Apollo 11 mission.

Now, we don't know for sure if old Buzz and Neil had any minor nicks or cuts, but it's possible, it's not impossible that they had Band-Aids on their bodies when they were walking on the moon. So I don't know, maybe they've been to the moon. I don't know. I feel like Johnson & Johnson would have heard about that and only talked about that forever and ever.

Sydnee: Yeah. You think that it would happen, like, our Band-Aids are on the moon.

Justin: Doctor Dan 2: the Band-Aid Spaceman out there across the cosmos giving Band-Aids to people.

Sydnee: Do you think before they went to the moon, there were a lot of brands for various products that, like, approached them and were like, we just really want to say our underwear were on the moon, or whatever, you know?

And they had to turn down people because it's like, "We can only have so many things on us on the moon. We don't really know. The moon might be made of cheese. We're still not clear on that. We don't know what we're walking into. So I can't promise you that, like, I'll wear your socks on the moon or whatever. You know what I mean?"

Justin: Right. [laughs]

Sydnee: Because I was thinking, like, that would have been such an easy thing to do. Just like, "Please have a Band-Aid on your body when you're on the moon."

Justin: "Just promise me."

Sydnee: "Anywhere. I don't care if you have a cut or a scrape, put a Band-Aid on you and then we can say our Band-Aids were on the moon." But how many requests like that before you're like, "Okay, I'm covered in things."

Justin: It's that thing of, like, you know the president uses, like, eleven different pens when he signs a big piece of legislation so he can hand out the pens—

Sydnee: Yeah—

Justin: "These are the 14 pens I used to sign—"

Sydnee: "These are the 3000 different products that I had on my person when I was on the moon."

Justin: Yeah, "When I got hungry on the moon, I ate lasagna by Stoffer's. How did I heat it? Don't worry about it. The check cleared."

Sydnee: "And then I had a Push-up."

Justin: Yeah. [laughs] Delicious space Push-up. And a Moonpie!

Sydnee: Get it?

Justin: Get it? I got another commercial for you. Put your headphones back on. This is a jingle that you're sure to recognize.

Commercial: I am stuck on Band-Aid brand 'cause Band-Aid's stuck on me! I am stuck on Band-Aid 'cause Band-Aid's stuck on me! 'Cause they really stick to your fingers and they stick on bended knees! Remember, only Johnson & Johnson makes Band-Aid brand adhesive bandages with a unique SuperStick adhesive. Depend on the protection of America's number one bandage. I am stuck on Band-Aid 'cause Band-Aid's stuck on me!

Justin: Yeah, John Travolta just randomly pops up at the end of that ad. It's bizarre.

Sydnee: They're all naked in a shower.

Justin: Yeah. John Travolta is just like, there, getting his paycheck. It's wild.

Sydnee: You don't see groups of people naked in a shower on TV, like, in commercials as much anymore.

Justin: Certainly not for Band-Aid. That jingle, which is, like, very famous. They still use, I think. Did you notice how, first off, the lyrics say, not, I'm stuck on Band-Aids.

Sydnee: "I'm stuck on Band-Aid brand."

Justin: The second time they do say Band-Aid, but the first time they clarify Band-Aid brand bandages.

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: Okay. Don't get it messed up. That jingle was written by Barry Manilow.

Sydnee: Oh!

Justin: Yeah, I know, right?

Sydnee: Good job, Barry Manilow.

Justin: Good job, Barry Manilow. That was the original name of this podcast. Then we changed it to Sawbones. Now Syd, you did—

Sydnee: Next year for the Max Fun Drive, we're going to have to do a podcast called Good Job, Barry Manilow.

Justin: Good job, Barry Manilow.

Sydnee: That has to be our special episode.

Justin: Um, the uh, you touched on something after we watched that first ad and you noticed that they labeled these as flesh colored.

Sydnee: Yes. And that wasn't— I will say that wasn't a problem unique to Band-Aids. I think Crayons used to have things like that on them, like flesh

or skin or things. And they are assuming that there is one color that is flesh colored or one color that is skin colored, when obviously that is racist and wrong.

Justin: The Atlantic did a really interesting story on this. They interviewed a woman named Randu Johnson, who's 66 at that time, African American woman living in Harlem, and she remembered that she would tell her, she said, "The bandages would say flesh color. And I explained to my kids, well, that's not your flesh."

Even, you remember, in 1956 we had the first printed Band-Aid. It was stars and stripes. Now, I have seen reports that say that the first came out 1951 and it was Mickey Mouse. But that's not according to the official Gurowitz report from J & J historian. And I'm going to trust her because that's her whole thing.

Sydnee: I also feel like you would know, as a Disney aficionado, you would know if Mickey was on the first printed Band-Aid.

Justin: I'm more of a parks guy, but I understand what you're saying.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: Um, but yeah. This was an absolute issue. They had these colorful printed Band-Aids with all these different characters on them, all these different prints, and not one that was created for people of color. So this is also from that Atlantic story. Los Angeles based marketing consultant Harry Webber, he was the one responsible for J&J accounts at that time. He said that he promoted it between, I guess, '63 and '68, where this would have been in the mid-sixties there.

So the product's flesh color was, quote, "a non-issue." And he said, "Johnson & Johnson's consideration was a mass market product. And as a mass market product, you look at what is the largest faction of that market and you create the product for that faction. So for non-whites," which people who are not white love being referred to that way.

Sydnee: Sure, yeah.

Justin: So, "For nonwhites, at the time being between 12% and 15% of the total population, there was no way anybody was considering making a Band-Aid branded adhesive bandage to match the color of skin that is the complete spectrum from pink to ebony." So that was the corporate line.

Sydnee: This was his— He's not going to say we decided to change all that. Like, this is just it?

Justin: This is just— I mean, worth noting. He was in charge of Band-Aid in the mid 60s. So why didn't they do it in the mid-60s? It's very— I mean, I'm obviously not apologizing for Johnson & Johnson, but it is like that is capitalism. Like, that it is, like, you know.

Sydnee: Well, but that's also a wild— Like, by today's standards, to issue a public statement like that?

Justin: I know, right? I don't know the context of this, I don't know if—

Sydnee: It makes me like, ooh, hah. I want to hide under the desk listening to it.

Justin: I know. Now, the first product to actually address this was not released until the late 90s, if you can believe it. And it was created by a guy named Michael Panayiotis. He was from Cyprus and he created Ebon-Aide, a product designed to fill the gap. He was a father or two. Realized that there was this space in the market. He said, I think he told the Atlantic this as well.

"We found out with our market research that between the African American market and the Hispanic market, we would capture about 25% to 28% of the market. We wanted to do the first products in all black. They were marketed as the first bandage designed for people of color. They came in shade called black licorice, coffee brown, cinnamon, and honey beige."

All very pleasant to hear and to say, I will say. It seemed like it was going to go really well. The Walmart and Rite Aid both agreed to carry— Remember Rite Aid?

Sydnee: I do. I remember Rite Aid very well. Used to be one near our house. We went there all the time. That's much more pleasant, by the way, than flesh.

Justin: Eugh. Flesh.

Sydnee: Right? Flesh is just like that's— Ew.

Justin: Yeah. Walmart and Rite Aid agreed to carry them, but this was not going to be a success story because the Band-Aids— Sorry, the Ebon-Aides were kept in sections of these stores where the products were specific to people of color. So if you look at, like, I mean, I know we still do this with hair care, right? Where it's like this is the section for black hair. This is the section for—

Sydnee: Right.

Justin: This sort of, like, division of the products. So if you needed a Band-Aid and you weren't aware that Ebon-Aide existed, you would go to the Band-Aid section...

Sydnee: And they wouldn't be there.

Justin: And they wouldn't be there.

Sydnee: Gotcha.

Justin: So by late 2002, out of an original 1 million boxes of Ebon-Aids, he had sold only around 20,000. He lost a \$2 million investment, \$600,000 to manufacture it, and the company folded.

Sydnee: What a shame. He stored the inventory in a 10,000 square foot warehouse, just kind of donating them to anybody who had an interest and eventually selling the remainder to a company in Miami. He is now 65 and he moved on to run an IT service company.

Sydnee: Now, I know today and, are you going to address fact like there are multiple shades of Band-Aid today?

Justin: I did want to touch on Our Tone, is the product line you are referring to.

Sydnee: Okay.

Justin: There are obviously other products that are servicing this. But we've been following Band Aid. So here we are.

Sydnee: Does he get any credit? Like, I'm assuming that— Was there any sort of IP that anybody, that he got paid for?

Justin: Well, he got to be on a podcast. This one.

Sydnee: I know, but that's not money. I just feel like it was his idea, you know?

Justin: Yeah, that's true.

Sydnee: So he should have, you know. It was his idea.

Justin: I cannot right this injustice. I'm sorry. I have given him his credit, though.

Sydnee: I know. Well, that's why I'm asking. Was it ever righted or is it still an injustice that stands?

Justin: Well, here's what is interesting. Our Tone is a line of products for people of color created by Band-Aid in 2020, right? And they were created...

Sydnee: That's an embarrassment.

Justin: ... and they make reference to this. They were created very quickly, like way faster than other Band-Aid products. They said normally it takes like 18 months to get a product to market. This took 6-9.

Sydnee: So this was just in reaction to all the events of 2020.

Justin: Exactly. 100%. And they, like, said it in the article. They're like, listen, "Stuff's wild right now, and we are just going to get out in front of this thing and say, like, this is the quote on their website. They have this whole story of, like, Our Tone line. This is a quote from Joe Anthony, chief executive officer of Hero Collective, which is a black owned, culture driven collective and digital agency that Johnson & Johnson engaged to help shape the launch of Our Tone.

He said, "It's no secret that the current climate is extremely polarizing and as a result, certain people left out of the conversation. Now more than ever, it's important that brands like Johnson & Johnson take a leadership role in demonstrating the importance of diversity." So, like, good intent, probably a little late. [laughs] In the grand scheme of things.

Sydnee: Well, it just feels like, "Well, you made us." I mean, I know it's not...

Justin: Everybody was so mad. And I do think, I'm not sure about the timeline, so this is like, take this for what it is, but I know we've seen products like this on shows like, I would swear there's one on Shark Tank.

Sydnee: I 100% had the same feeling that we have seen this before.

Justin: You know what? In fact...

Sydnee: I don't remember. [crosstalk]

Justin: Shark... tank... bandages. Maybe we'll have Shark Tank— Okay. Browndages is the...

Sydnee: Rings a bell.

Justin: It's a good name. I mean, let's just call it as it is. It's a good name.

Sydnee: And it was the same intent, right?

Justin: Yeah, same intent.

Sydnee: "Let's make Band-Aids for everybody."

Justin: Yeah. So they got a deal, actually, with looks like Mark Cuban. So good job, Browndage folks. So that is the Our Tone line that they kind of, like, they wanted to get into the market. They were there. They do make these in a variety of skin colors now. I think we've seen Crayola do, I wonder if it's, like, it's probably the same date that Crayola was like—

Sydnee: I don't think they do the flesh— I really do think there was one that said something like skin or flesh or in somehow insinuated this is the color of skin.

Justin: They have colors of the world. Colors of the world line that has, like, it's all skin tones, but there's 24 different skin tones.

Sydnee: Yes. Our kids have these crayons.

Justin: Yes.

Sydnee: As you're saying this, mom bought these crayons for our children recently.

Justin: Other just, like, Band-Aid related stuff? As long as we're, like, in discussions here. In 2017, they launched a line called Skin Flex. Can you guess, 2017, can you guess what the advancement of those is?

Sydnee: Skin Flex?

Justin: Mm-hmm.

Sydnee: As in, like, F-L-E-X, like flexing?

Justin: The hint is not in the name.

Sydnee: Okay. No, I don't know.

Justin: It is made so you can use a touchscreen through them. They're conductive.

Sydnee: Interesting.

Justin: Yeah. So if you have a booboo on your finger or your thumb, you can still use your still use your iPhone.

Sydnee: I like the waterproof ones. Those are big. I use those a lot. And I like the big boy ones, the big ole ones. I always need more of those. If you ever want to give me something I need I need giant Band-Aids to hand out to people.

Justin: Band-Aids are marketed as healing cuts twice as fast, which is a line I remember seeing a lot. The data for that has not been publicly released. I think it was done internally. According to an article in the Conversation, Johnson & Johnson says that data is aging.

Sydnee: Aging?

Justin: And is currently being phased out. So you will probably not see that line.

Sydnee: Do you know how old that line is? I'm just curious if it was, like, I mean, because these came out pre-antibiotics.

Justin: Yeah. Band-Aid has sold over 100 million units. They're in one out of seven homes. Now, that sounds low, but if you think about, like, Band-Aid brand Band-Aids, it's a lot.

Sydnee: It is and I would say while no other brand that I can think of would spring to mind like Band-Aids, if you go to most, like, supermarkets or pharmacies or whatever, you're going to have a generic, like whatever the pharmacy or store brand is right next to it that's usually less expensive. So I can see why they would— You know what I mean? It's like they're not being outcompeted on a marketing standpoint. They're being outcompeted by, "That's cheaper, and it's the same thing."

Justin: Now what's the future of bandages, Sydnee? Well, we might have a hint from UW Madison, which is working on a bandage that uses the body's own electrical energy to speed wound healing. They are electrical bandages that they've been testing on animals. Basically, it has a tiny generator in it called a nano generator.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Justin: And it takes energy from small movements, like breathing and twitching. You're creating energy by doing that, and it converts that energy into a mild electric pulse sent to an electrode in the bandage, which then creates an electrical field around the wound, which is something the body does already. Did you know that?

Sydnee: Yes, I did know that.

Justin: That's wild!

Sydnee: But I'm trying to figure out, like, for a major wound, I could see the utility. For a scratch or a cut, that for most of us...

Justin: I mean, you're not going to slap an electrical bandage if you just get a little papercut, Syd.

Sydnee: I'm wondering who they're marketing these to. Like, would this be for hospital or medical use or would this be for selling on the shelves? You know what I mean?

Justin: [overlapping] The future, Syd! The future!

Sydnee: That's what I'm trying to figure out. Because most of the time, I mean, we put Band-Aids on a lot of stuff that our kids get that really don't need anything. But a Band-Aid has now, they've done a good job of this, becomes anonymous with like, this will get better now.

I put a Band-Aid on it, now it will get better. Also, then they don't have to look at it. Kids really like that, I've found. They just don't have to know it's there. I can pretend it's not there.

Justin: Um, they— Listen to this. They tested it on wounded human skin that they grafted onto a mouse. The wound healed completely in seven days compared to the typical 30 days using a standard dressing. That's wild.

Sydnee: That is wild. And with a bigger wound, I can see the utility in that. And certainly if they had these, I would want them, you know, for what I do.

Justin: But apparently these things are surprisingly cheap to make.

Sydnee: Interesting.

Justin: Yeah. And apparently this could be something coming down the pipe in the near future. But that is my story of Band-Aids. I hope you have enjoyed it. Thank you, Sydnee, for being such a delight.

Sydnee: Oh, well, thank you, Justin, for doing all this research and sharing all of this knowledge with me and everyone else.

Justin: Thank you to the Taxpayers for using their song Medicines as the intro and outro of our program. Thanks to you for listening. That's going to do it for us, so until next time, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin: And as always, don't fill a hole your head.

[theme music plays]

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