

Sawbones 178: The Incredible Dr. James Berry

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Clint: 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. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy. I really appreciated that you like, gestured to yourself with like some—

Justin:

Yeah. I just gave myself like, big Peter Pan thumb there.

Sydnee:

I'm—

Justin:

This guy. He's Justin McElroy. It's MaxFunDrive week.

Sydnee:

That's why we're feeling so silly.

Justin:

We're feeling so giddy 'cause people are helping us to fund our podcast network. If you don't know, I'm gonna give you the 30 second version.

Sydnee:

Okay. The 30 second version comes early.

Justin:

You're—

Sydnee:

We'll give you more details later.

Justin:

... wasting my time. Now—

Sydnee:

Sorry.

Justin:

I'm at 23 seconds.

Sydnee:

Ready? Set, go.

Justin:

Okay. The 32nd version is this. Uh, we are on a podcast network called Maximum Fun, and uh, there's a lot—

Sydnee:

'Cause that's what you're gonna have.

Justin:

There's, okay, 27 seconds. You're just killing me right here, Sydnee.

Sydnee:

You're filling up.

Justin:

Um, we're on a network of a lot of podcasts. And once a year, we come to you hat in hand and say, "Hey, if you wanna help us fund these shows, um, it would really mean the world to us." And this is the time for you to do that. So what we're asking is, uh, that was 30 seconds.

You head over to maximumfun.org/donate, or maximumfun.org and click the donate button. Either one works and then you pledge an amount that you can give us, um, to help fund all the great shows on the network. \$5 a month is the minimum. And if you could do that, it would be amazing, but more would be amazing too. We've got a lot of great, um, gifts to thank you, but um, I, we wanna go ahead and get that outta the way right now upfront.

Sydnee:

And this goes for you lovely people who are already donating to our network as well. If this, if you wanna upgrade, if you've been thinking about it, if you're in a position to do so, this is a great time to do it—

Justin:

A lot of great—

Sydnee:

... 'cause those gifts are for you too.

Justin:

A lot of great prizes. Um, and because this is MaxFunDrive week, we wanted to do a topic that a lot of people have asked us to do and we haven't gotten around to yet. And, and then, then we're doing it now.

Sydnee:

Now. Let's go. That's right. We wanna talk about James Berry, Dr. James Berry. Now I briefly mentioned Dr. James Berry before. Do you remember the episode Justin? Go.

Justin:

Well said. It was the one more—

Sydnee:

Right. I knew you don't.

Justin:

... Justin edit in, hold on, make a click noise. That's me reminding myself right there to edit in me giving a great answer to that question.

Sydnee:

That's right, Justin. C-sections. I'm so glad you remembered that that was the episode that we talked about James, but very briefly, very briefly. And, and that's a crime, 'cause there's a lot more to say. There's a lot more, uh, to this story. And a lot of our listeners have been asking to hear that. Thank you, Andrew and Oliver and Megan and Sarah and Erin and JC for recommending this topic as well as, uh, whatever Facebook video has been showing up endlessly on my feed recently—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... about James Berry. I don't know, just to like remind like, "Sydnee, you've been meaning to—

Justin:

"Sydnee—"

Sydnee:

... do this.

Justin:

... don't forget."

Sydnee:

It's in everybody's mind now. You should do it." Uh, so Margaret M. Barkley—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... was born in Cork. That's in Ireland.

Justin:

We went there for our honeymoon, Syd, do you remember?

Sydnee:

We did go there for a honeymoon. It was amazing.

Justin:

It's lovely.

Sydnee:

It was a lovely, lovely time.

Justin:

Lovely country over there.

Sydnee:

Lovely place. Uh, so Margaret was born in Cork around 1789, although there's... It was around 1789, probably in that time. This was the time when your birth year was just like about that, you know?

Justin:

Well, you know, day of week it was most of the time.

Sydnee:

[laughs] The birth it's about, about 1789. Uh, Margaret's parents were Maryanne and Jeremiah and Maryanne, Margaret's mom was the sister of James Berry, who was an Irish artist and a professor at London's Royal Academy and of summer now. So a famous artist was her uncle. Jeremiah was a merchant, uh, but his career and his position suffered, uh, law in part due to anti-Catholic discrimination—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... and then in part just, I, I think he was maybe a bit of a shady character is what I've gleaned from a lot of the things that I've read.

Justin:

Okay. So—

Sydnee:

Um—

Justin:

... so, uh, kind of a rabble-rouser?

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

And, um, I, I, I don't know what all he did, but one way or another, he ended up in jail—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... and then kind of vanishes from the story.

Justin:

I know that you're hypersensitive to it as a Catholic, but you know, if someone does crimes and shady things and then goes to jail, that's not really what anti-Catholic discrimination means. Right?

Sydnee:

I think that, I think that in part—

Justin:

Oh, there we go.

Sydnee:

... he had difficulties—

Justin:

Fair enough.

Sydnee:

... due to anti-Catholic discrimination.

Justin:

Okay, fine. But also, the other—

Sydnee:

I think as a Protestant, Justin—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... you should stay out of this conversation. [laughs].

Justin:

All right. Fair enough.

Sydnee:

Uh, either way he ended up out of the picture in jail and then kind of leaving the family behind, which left Maryanne, his wife and their two children, John and Margaret, to more or less fend for themselves.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

They really didn't have means to support themselves. John actually like is older, ends up like having a family and a job on his own, but he really does, isn't in a position to support Margaret and his mom.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And on top of this, there's a third child, Juliana, who was born at some point in this,

Justin:

That seems a touch irresponsible, given what you've told me so far, but—

Sydnee:

Well, Justin, I would withhold all judgments on that issue.

Justin:

Okay. Deal.

Sydnee:

Until, until we get into this story a little bit more.

Justin:

Deal.

Sydnee:

Uh, 'cause there is definitely more to Juliana.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So from this dilemma came a scheme. It often does. Uh, Margaret was initially in school to be a governess. She was, she was clever, she was bright, uh, she was working hard. Her, her mother Maryanne had her in school. Um, but being a governess did not necessarily come with a lot of money. And it was also felt that Margaret was displaying talents and intellect that would leave her capable of many other careers. Um, in particular, careers that maybe weren't open to Margaret because she was a woman.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, so at this point in history, this was kind of the best thing to do with her clever mind. Whereas maybe there were other options if, you know, if her brother had wanted to do them. So some of her uncle, James Berry's, liberal friends, uh, because at this point actually during this period of her life, her uncle actually passes away.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

But they're still very close. These friends that of his, they were kind of this like, uh, I always imagine that like, they're this cool group of like, they hang out in cafes and they smoke cigarettes, which is bad, and you shouldn't smoke cause smoking hurts you, but like in a cool way.

Justin:

Sure, sure, sure.

Sydnee:

[laughing] You know what I mean?

Justin:

Yeah. I heard this was a cool way.

Sydnee:

Everybody's, everybody's very cool. Like I keep picturing, like, I don't know.

Justin:

Like the breakfast club?

Sydnee:

No, not like the breakfast club, like everybody from Moulin Rouge.

Justin:

Le breakfast club.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I, I picture they were very cool and they were very liberal, and they think, you know what, we should, we should get this, this clever Margaret into medical school.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Because, uh, Mar—I don't know that Margaret really desired to be a doctor. Uh, as much as Margaret actually wrote that we have letters that say, "If I wasn't a girl, I would be a soldier." So there was definitely this desire to be a soldier. I don't know if a doctor in the army was her goal, but one way or, or another, they hatched a plan to try to get her into medical school by pretending she was a man.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So the plan was that she would go to medical school in Edinburgh, and then after she had attained her medical degree, initially they thought that she would go to Venezuela with general Francisco de Miranda, who was a friend of her uncle's and part of this group. Uh, after her training and, and women were actually allowed to practice medicine in Venezuela at the time.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

So that was the kind of the original thought process. That's promise—

Justin:

Pretend to be a man long enough to get her training and then—

Sydnee:

And then go to Venezuela, live as Margaret, the doctor—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

That was the original plan. Um, however, this plan would eventually fail, because General Miranda was in jail by the time she finished her studies and died soon thereafter.

Justin:

Oh—

Sydnee:

So that kind of—

Justin:

That's rough.

Sydnee:

... ended that part of the plan. So she was tutored and prepped, and on November 30th, 1809, Margaret and her mother went to set sail for Edinburgh. However, the two who boarded the ship were Maryanne, the mother, her mother, and James Berry. This is the point in the story where Margaret assumes the dress and the name and the presentation of James Berry.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Now I think that this is a good moment to take kind of a side note.

Justin:

Right. Um, we've talked about this a little bit because we wanna figure out how to sort of handle it.

Sydnee:

This... Part, part of what still remains kind of a mystery to this day about Dr. James Berry is, did Margaret Bulkley, uh, was Margaret Bulkley a, a

transgender man who presented as James Berry? Because that was the gender with which Dr. Berry identified, uh, as man. Or was Margaret Bulkley, uh, would she identify as a woman who presented as James Berry simply because of the opportunities that that afforded Margaret at that point in history—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... because, because a woman would not have been allowed to go to medical school? So was this an elaborate scheme, or was this Margaret presenting herself as the gender that truly he identified as? I don't know. I don't know the answer and I, there are many biographies about James Berry and you can read and research and theorize. We have letters that we can peruse of, of Dr. Berry's to try to find an answer to this and, and, uh, accounts from the time period, from various people who, who were in the doctor's life, but nobody really knows for sure. And Dr. Berry isn't here for me to ask the question, which is what I would do if I weren't sure of this answer, I would ask the question.

Justin:

If you're someone who would love to count, uh, James Berry, as sort of a, a pioneer in the, as someone who was like a, a very early transgender person involved in medicine, I can completely understand the impulse, and that—

Sydnee:

Would've been the first, if that is the case.

Justin:

Would've been the first.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

And that may very well be the case, but it may very well not be the case and we don't wanna be in the position of misidentifying anybody.

Sydnee:

Okay. And that's the case, that's the, that's the fact. Either way you cut it, James Berry was a revolutionary, 'cause whether this was in fact, this is in fact, the story of the first transgender man to complete medical training and

practice medicine, Dr. Berry was the first. Or the story of the first woman to complete medical training in, you know, the UK and practice medicine, then Dr. Berry was first.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So either way, Dr. Berry is a revolutionary, an amazing character, certainly worthy of many books and much discussion and much, much higher minded discussion than I would dare to say, I am capable of on Sawbones.

Justin:

Right. And, and because—

Sydnee:

More than worthy of a Sawbones episode is what—

Justin:

Right. And—

Sydnee:

... I'm saying.

Justin:

... and because this is such a sensitive issue, there's a temptation to say, "Well, we just won't, we just won't fool with that one, 'cause we don't wanna do wrong by anybody." But Sydnee felt on and, uh, I, I think that it, it, it's an important story and it's one that, that we shouldn't ignore just because, um, it's, it's complex. So that is our... So here's how we're going to handle the question of identifying, uh, James Berry's gender.

Sydnee:

At this point, uh, it, in the story Dr. James Berry presented as a, as a man. And by all accounts was taken as a man by everyone who met him and interacted with him, and never at least openly contradicted that statement.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So the best that I can for, from what I have read and what I understand and what I think is, is the right thing to do, I'm referring to Dr. James Berry at this point as a man, 'cause that is the way that the doctor presented.

Justin:

I would—

Sydnee:

For the remainder, I'm kind of, little spoiler for the remainder of his life, by the way.

Justin:

Wow. Okay.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... do you wanna know what happens next?

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

Arriving at the university, Dr. Berry... Well, James, he's not Dr. Berry yet. He's gotta finish, gotta actually go to the university—

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

... first. He was accepted into the medical class and he began taking courses in 1809. Now, obviously James looked smaller and had a higher voice than a lot of his other classmates, uh, and no hair on his chin. And so this actually led not to questions, uh, of gender, but to questions of age. Uh—

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

... which James, actually, he, he would tell people, "Well, I'm..." He, that's where the, some of the confusion about what year was James Berry born comes from, is that he lied about his age to account for the fact that he looked, I mean, um, you would've expected—

Justin:

So how old would he have been? Let me run the math. 180... I mean, he would've been 20. Right?

Sydnee:

Yeah. But he looked like, uh, many people assumed he was a prepubescent boy. He was actually—

Justin:

Why was he lying about his age though if he was 20?

Sydnee:

So he told people that he was like 15 or 16.

Justin:

Oh, okay. [laughing] Okay. That makes sense that, all right. He lied about... Okay.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So, so because, because they would've expected if he were a 20 year old man that he would be taller and his voice would be deeper.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

It sounded like his voice hadn't changed. It sounded like, I mean—

Justin:

So he just like—

Sydnee:

... he didn't have any hair on his chin.

Justin:

He just like decided to pretend he was Doogie Howser.

Sydnee:

Exactly.

Justin:

Exactly. Yeah. Okay. That's, that's his color.

Sydnee:

So he just pretended he was younger, but he did, but that actually caused problems because they thought he was lying and that he was even younger than that. They thought maybe he was 12.

Justin:

Okay. [laughing]

Sydnee:

And they didn't wanna let a 12 year old finish medical school. So there was a lot of, a lot of arguing and it took, uh, more influential friends to help get him to actually set for his finals, which of course he passed.

Justin:

There's an easy test. Just ask him who PewDiePie is. If he's a able to answer instantly, then, um, then he's 12 or under.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, but he did, he did pass his tests and he earned an MD in 1812. Uh, he continued his training in London at St. Thomas's Hospital. He passed the exam for the Royal College of Surgeons in 1813 and he joined the British army as a hospitalist assistant soon thereafter. Um, from there, because he has joined the military at this point, his course kind of follows wherever he was assigned next.

So first, he was assigned to Chelsea and then Plymouth, and then soon thereafter to Cape town, South Africa. And that's where we start to get some of the, um, kind of unique and exciting things that Dr. Berry did in his career. So, uh, first of all, he had a pretty important job. He was medical inspector for the colony and he was also in, in, in Cape town and he was also assigned to work personally for, uh, the governor Lord Charles Henry Somerset.

Uh, he even was credited with saving Lord Somerset's daughter's life.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So he spent 10 years working there, and while he was there, he actually, he did some things that at this point in history, would've been pretty revolutionary for a doctor to do. Such as... improved sanitation. [laughs] He believed in things like clean water, uh, being an important factor in general health and wellbeing. Uh, he was not afraid to challenge incorrect medical views held among the community, especially, um, things like patent medicines, uh, people who were selling fake tonics that had, you know, opium or, um, whatever alcohol in them, things that, that were dangerous, that we know were, were everywhere in rampant at this point in history.

Justin:

Right, right. Yeah. People were lousy with them.

Sydnee:

Yeah. He was not afraid to speak out against them, which, which was very strange at this time in history. Uh, he advised things like a healthy diet and exercise, which again, I noticed—

Justin:

Wow, it's crazy that that was like, progressive. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] This was progressive. Uh, I mean he was, and he himself believed in, uh, healthy diet. He actually was a vegetarian—

Justin:

Oh, cool.

Sydnee:

... his whole life. Uh, and, uh, he was, he was known to be very loud and outspoken about all these views. And this is one of the things you see repeated, uh, in accounts of Dr. Berry, is that he was not afraid to challenge people and to get in very heated arguments and to speak up when he thought people were doing something wrong.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, he was, he was known to be kind of loud mouth and kind of brash.

Justin:

I love that. I love the cockiness of like somebody who is hiding something, but also is not gonna shut their mouth, but they're gonna... [laughing]

Sydnee:

No, if they're right, they're gonna say it.

Justin:

Yeah. Right. He's not gonna play it close to the best.

Sydnee:

So, uh, he, now this is the reason that we we've spoken about him on the show before. He performed the first successful C-section in Africa by a British physician on a kitchen table. That's where he performed this procedure, on a kitchen table, and successful meaning both mom and the son survived.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

And a little cool side note. The, the child that he delivered, uh, was named after him, by the way.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

And later became prime minister of South Africa from 1924 to 1939.

Justin:

[laughing] Okay. Wow. Really?

Sydnee:

Just bee tee dubs. Yeah.

Justin:

Hatchi matchi.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Uh, he was... Now one thing that did plague his time in Cape Town is that he was rumored to have had a very close relationship with Lord Somerset. And this is where, uh, we start to leave the realm of stated historical fact into, uh, supposition and, and trying to draw conclusions based on, you know—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... letters and hearsay and that kind of thing.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Uh, the pair were very close. He was, he was Lord Somerset's personal physician. As I mentioned, even had, I, I think he stayed there frequently as well. Uh, and the, the two were actually accused, uh, of having a sexual relationship. There was like a, a note posted somewhere on a bridge by someone like anonymously like, "I saw these two having sex." And which at the time would have been—

Justin:

Sydnee, I, we cannot start entering bridge graffiti—

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

... into evidence for Sawbones. Okay? I know we're not professional researchers, but come on, someone wrote on a bridge that this was the case. So perhaps—

Sydnee:

Well, it led to charges of libel. I mean, it was a big deal—

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... because, because at the time the two being accused of having a sexual relationship would've been a big deal—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... uh, you know, Lord, and the officer in British army.

Justin:

I forgot that in the time history when, when everybody just didn't say whatever came to mind— [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... in any given moment.

Sydnee:

Um, they were, they were acquitted of this. People didn't buy it. They didn't think that they were actually having a, a sexual relationship. I, I have no idea if they did or not. They were very close.

Justin:

Do you... We're in an era of medicine where specialization is big. Do you miss, do you, you pine for, for a living in this era where doctors kind of like, we're much more general purpose adventurers, apparently?

Sydnee:

You know, I think I did when I was like probably a medical student when I was younger. I, I thought that the idea of, um, I would call those, those kinds of physicians, like cow people, cowboys, cowgirls, cow women, whatever you wanna call 'em. Nowadays, people who are able to go work in like rural settings and do a lot, a lot more. Whereas now, you know, I work in a big academic center where there are a lot of specialists. Um, so I'm, I don't know, I'm a little more sheltered.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And the idea of taking on all that stuff would make me anxious, I think.

Justin:

Yeah. I see that.

Sydnee:

Um, when I was younger, I, I would've thought, I would've answered you, "Absolutely. I wish I could do that." But now I'm kind of glad that I have people who really know what they're doing all the time.

Justin:

All right. I didn't mean to derail you.

Sydnee:

Sorry. Um, so in addition, he got into an argument while he was in Cape town that ended in a duel—

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

... with the fellow soldier.

Justin:

This is an exciting life.

Sydnee:

It was a very exciting. He, he got in the dual, the, uh, the other officer, the other soldier shot him in the thigh, uh, but he hit the other guy in the head, except for, it was kind of in like the top, like in his cap.

Justin:

Mm-hmm?

Sydnee:

So it didn't actually strike his, his head. It hit him in the cap. And so—

Justin:

William Tell action.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So both of them were fine. I mean, while he got shot in the thigh, he ne—By the way—

Justin:

Not, not fine, that's a pretty lose interpretation of fine.

Sydnee:

Well, he cared for it himself.

Justin:

Not bad.

Sydnee:

He took care of it by himself.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

I do... Now that I'm all about.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I think that's awesome.

Justin:

That you're into.

Sydnee:

So he took care of it by himself and the other guy survived. And that was kind of the end of that. Um, in general, as I've kind of mentioned, he was often remembered as macho, brash, arrogant, tactless. Uh, despite the fact that people would always say, "But he is a really good doctor." And his patients tended to like him for the most part. There was the odd account of him yelling at patients. But for the most part, he was known to have a good bedside manner and to be excellent at his, at his craft. Um, also, he was kind of eccentric. He slept every night with a black poodle that he owned named Psych.

Justin:

Psych. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

Okay. Sure.

Sydnee:

And everywhere he traveled, I told you he was a healthy guy, he took a goat with him for milk, 'cause he thought goat milk was the healthiest. So he had his own goat that he took everywhere so he could drink goat milk.

Justin:

[laughs] Uh, I... Oh, sorry.

Sydnee:

Also, as a side note, he did have a man servant, a personal servant that spent 50 years of his life with him. And I have no... I do not know if they, if this man was ever aware of the history of James Berry, of his history.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I don't know. I just think it's interesting. They spent 50 years together.

Justin:

Um, I gotta know more. Well, what happened next?

Sydnee:

Well, I'm gonna tell you, Justin.

Justin:

This is normally where we go to the billing department, but not this time, Syd.

Sydnee:

No, this isn't billing department.

Justin:

No. This is MaxFunDrive. Every year, we—

Sydnee:

The fun department.

Justin:

The fun department—

Sydnee:

No—

Justin:

... this party, um—

Sydnee:

Party department, department—

Justin:

The party department.

Sydnee:

Departy-ment?

Justin:

It sounds like where you get like, like cheap Wonder Woman costumes at value prices?

Sydnee:

A lot, a lot [laughing] of streamers?

Justin:

Welcome to the party department. My name is Phillip. Let me show you to...

Sydnee:

They're actually not allowed to call it a Wonder Woman costume.

Justin:

This is Action Lady.

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

We were latent action lady costumes. Now, Maximum Fun Drive. Okay. So we're on this a Maximum Fun. Uh, we've got a ton of great shows like this one, which you already enjoy, but there's a lot of others. Uh, uh, Stop Podcasting Yourself. Jordan Jesse Go, Judge John Hodgeman, Still Buffering, Tights and Fights, Lady to Lady—

Sydnee:

My Brother, My Brother and Me.

Justin:

There's a ton of, and, and um, that the shows are funded. The people who make their shows are paid and their equipment purchased and bandwidth and marketing and everything, all that stuff, uh, is paid by the listeners like you. And the way that works is, every year we come to you, the listeners and say, "Hey, can you, um, pledge a certain amount of money, uh, to the network to help it grow?"

Um, that could range from \$5 all the way up to \$200 a month. Um, whatever you can do. It, it, it absolutely means, um, the, the world to us. Um, even if it's just \$5 a month, that really still does help a lot. Uh, and we have gifts at each level. So for \$5 a month, uh, you're gonna get exclusive bonus content. And that is a lot of exclusive bonus content. There's—

Sydnee:

Yeah. That's all the bonus content from every show in the network for as long as we've been making bonus content?

Justin:

There's uh, like something like five new episodes of Sawbones on there you've never heard. Um, there's a bunch of episodes of My Brother, My Brother and Me, there's bonus episodes of Still Buffering. Um, there's, there's a ton of really cool stuff.

At \$10, you get all that exclusive bonus content plus a pin. Um, the, the, for each show, there's a special pin that you can order, um, that, that you get as a gift at just \$10 a month. And then, uh, if you can do \$20 a month, which is just a huge help, you get the keep in touch kit where there's rocket shape note cards and a rocket pin and a rocket stamp and a rocket candle, all kind of Max Fun themed. Um, and plus you get the pin and you get all the bonus content.

Um, and the, the cool thing about max fun, one of the cool things about the MaxFunDrive is when you pledge or when you upgrade your pledge, make sure you don't miss this 'cause you, you want to do it. Um, you say what shows you listen to, um, and your money is split between the shows that you say that you listen to. You're directly supporting those shows.

Um, so when you upgrade, there's a little checkbox that says, "I wanna update my listening habits." And you can say, if you start listening to new shows, uh, and, and you can update that and your money goes straight to those shows. There's a, a, a portion for Max Fun, and the rest goes directly to those shows. So, uh, you really are helping to make cool stuff in the world.

Sydnee:

Absolutely. And there are gifts. Uh, Justin, you mentioned, I think up to the \$200. Also, at \$35 a month, if you can pledge that you can get the, uh, Max Fun beer mugs—

Justin:

Cool.

Sydnee:

... to rocket and gray, which are super cool. And they're also levels at \$100 and \$200 a month—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... if you can do it.

Justin:

Now, if, uh, if you're interested, if you can help us out, don't wait, don't hesitate. Don't playrate. [laughs] I just wanted another rhyme. Go to maximumfund.org/donate. There's my rhyme is right there.

Sydnee:

Donate. Yeah.

Justin:

Donate.

Sydnee:

Or go to Maximum Fun and click on donate.

Justin:

Yes. Either one of those.

Sydnee:

That would also rhyme. Either way, donate rhymes.

Justin:

Donate still rhymes, no matter where you put it.

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

Uh, so please go do this. We need you and we need you to, to like now more than ever, if you, if, if our show means something to you, if the other shows in the network means something to you, um, please help to keep them going. And it's, it's easy to do and it means the world and—

Sydnee:

Yeah, we really appreciate it. If you're already a member, thank you. Thank you—

Justin:

Thank you.

Sydnee:

... so much for being one. Um, like I said, if you're interested in upgrading, this is a great time to do it, and it's super easy. If you, if you are joining for the first time, uh, once you, uh, go to maximumfun.org, click on donate, you give them your credit card information. Justin said, the shows you listen to, and then your donation processes automatically each month.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

So unless you cancel it, there's nothing else—

Justin:

You need to work on.

Sydnee:

... you gotta do. So that's super easy. So do it now while it's on your mind—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... while you're thinking about it.

Justin:

Maximumfun.org/donate. Okay. Sydster, I wanna—

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

... I wanna hear more. I'm desperate for more James Berry information.

Sydnee:

Like I said, Dr. Berry moved around, uh, a lot because of his career in the military. Um, and all the while, he was improving conditions, uh, among, among largely troops. I mean, he was in the military.

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

Everywhere he went, especially sanitary conditions and, and health related matters, uh, and also getting into trouble. In St. Helena in 1836, he was arrested and court martialed on charges of conduct unbecoming of the character of an officer and a gentleman.

Justin:

Mmm!

Sydnee:

But he was found not guilty.

Justin:

Ahh!

Sydnee:

So no big deal. Uh, in 1840, he worked to improve conditions for British troops in the west Indies while almost dying of yellow fever.

Justin:

Unbelievable.

Sydnee:

But yellow fever could not stop James Berry because in 1846, he was in Malta fighting cholera and also getting into kind of a, a big, a big tiff with local clergy, because he sat in one of the clergy men's seats in church—

Justin:

[laughing]

Sydnee:

... and didn't move. It was, I mean, it was really something like that. Like the—

Justin:

That's amazing.

Sydnee:

He just, he was new, he sat in the wrong seat and then wouldn't move. You know?

Justin:

That's amazing. I mean, I keep waiting to make a joke, but I can't, 'cause James Berry just rules. Um, and he just does a bunch of cool stuff. Like there's, he didn't really mess up medicine at all. This is kind of out of character for us.

Sydnee:

This is, this is... I, I thought about that, the fact that typically on our show, we talk about all the times we got it wrong. And I, I felt like this was especially, we kind of like try to do something a little unique during MaxFunDrive. This was an opportunity to celebrate, uh, kind of a

biographical episode about a unique character in medicine, uh, with a kind of a cool, um, House-like personality.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

I like to think about him like that, like a little bit of House-like—

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... personality but uh, really clever and obviously—

Justin:

By the way, if House had had James Berry's backstory, that show would've been, uh, infinitely more interesting. [laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

All that stuff and also—

Sydnee:

Also.

Justin:

... there's this one other thing.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Uh, now here's a weird interaction. He met Florence Nightingale in Crimea in the 1850s. And the two got in an argument. [laughs]

Justin:

Oh man, fighting with Florence Nightingale, that's rough. That's—

Sydnee:

There's actually, I think there's a play out there somewhere that somebody wrote imagining this.

Justin:

Really?

Sydnee:

Like just this interaction, like the day that they were like crossing the square. Well, actually I have a quote from, directly from Florence Nightingale, the lady of the lamp herself, about the interaction. And what she said was, "I never had such a blaggered rating in all my life. I, who have had more than any woman, then from this Berry sitting on his horse while I was crossing the hospital square with only my cap on in the sun. He kept me standing in the midst of quite a crowd of soldiers, camisiro, servants, followers, et cetera, et cetera. Every one of whom behaved like a gentleman during the scolding I received while he behaved like a brute. And after he was dead, I was told that Berry was a woman. I should say that Berry was the most hardened creature I ever met."

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

So, Flo was not a fan. [laughs].

Justin:

Uh, I, no, I, I, I, I think I hear a twinkle in there. I detect a twinkle of, uh, of, uh, res—maybe not respect, fondness?

Sydnee:

It really had to do with as far as I could tell, cause I kept trying to find more detail about this argument and it really had to do with her not wearing enough, like, protection out in the sun?

Justin:

That was, that was—

Sydnee:

She was only wearing her cap out in the sun.

Justin:

Florence Nightingale. It's your problem?

Sydnee:

I don't know. Maybe she was just worried about like, sun exposure.

Justin:

Yeah. It's a, it's a problem.

Sydnee:

Would've been the hardest time. [laughing]

Justin:

Yeah. That's a, it's a big problem.

Sydnee:

But uh, on the bright side, while he was there, Berry also had the highest recovery rate of wounded soldiers in the whole war.

Justin:

Unstoppable.

Sydnee:

... due to—

Justin:

Unstoppable.

Sydnee:

... probably in part to a lot of these like sanitation measures that he implemented and the way that he devised of, um, helping wounds heal and caring for, for wounds as, as they were healing. In 1857, he ended up in Canada as inspector general of, I mean, basically all the hospitals.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

It's like a big, important position. And he worked to improve situations among all the troops and their families as well. And he also did a lot for people who weren't necessarily in the military among like, uh, the local prison population.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, he, he worked to help improve their, again, their conditions, food and, and, um, you know, clean water and things like that, and cleanliness in general. And also, with a lot of people who had leprosy and, you know, this was a time where you would've had, uh, like leper colonies, like areas where they were designated for people who had leprosy to live. And he did a lot to improve their conditions as well.

So worked really hard, had a lot of power and did a lot of good with it. Um, and I think he would've kept going, but he had some health issues, I think a couple bouts of bronchitis and just in general was not in the best of health. And so in 1864, he, he just couldn't keep going. He was forced to retire.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And I don't know for s—

Justin:

He would've been 75, boy. Does that sound about right?

Sydnee:

That sounds about right.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

So he was, he was forced to retire just due to health conditions. Um, and unfortunately a year later he died of dysentery in 1865. This, now, like I said, up to the day he died, there, there was never any question. I mean, well, after he died, some people said they had questions, but up until this point, we don't have documented evidence that people knew anything other than what Dr. James Berry told everyone. Uh, but, um, Dr. Berry specifically requested that he be buried in the clothes in which he died—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... and that there not be any sort of like autopsy or anything after he died.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Uh, probably to continue to, to conceal this part of his history. Um, however, Sophia Bishop, uh, who was a, a maid, uh, char woman, a woman who just felt like that was wrong. You know, you don't... He was sick. He was probably not in the best, his body wasn't the best condition. And they just felt like out of respect for this renowned officer and doctor, you shouldn't let him be buried in these clothes in which he died. And so she did what was the standard at the time and prepared his body for burial, removing his clothing in order to dress him probably in his, in his, uh, uniform—

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

... to be buried. However, when she laid out his body for burial, she discovered in addition to the fact that by the way, his hair was dyed red, I noticed that, [laughing], that little side note here. He used to dye his hair red.

Justin:

That's odd. Okay.

Sydnee:

... really like that side note—

Justin:

Sure. Fair enough.

Sydnee:

... that he was a 75 year old man who was dyeing his hair.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

Um, uh, that he, uh, had a vagina and breasts as well as what the char woman was certain were stretch marks on Dr. Berry's abdomen that would've been indicative of a history of childbirth.

Justin:

What?

Sydnee:

Do you remember the sister Juliana that appeared suddenly in the middle of all of the financial troubles?

Justin:

Are you sure?

Sydnee:

Historically, it is, it is, it is believed, this is not, this is not just conjecture. It is pretty, I mean, the, it is almost certainly thought that Juliana was actually—

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

... the daughter of Dr. Berry.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

Um, yeah, but the, from when, from when, uh, Margaret Bulkley would've been very young.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So, uh, and, and, and they asked... Um, she, she went to the doctor, the doctor who had been taking care of Dr. Berry right before he died, his friend and doctor who had taken care of him many times when he had been ill, um, who never, according to him, suspected anything else. And, uh, and she kind of attempted to blackmail him and said, "Look what I just found. Look what I just figured out."

Uh, she, she was also the one who brought the stretch marks to the attention and said, and that's, and he actually challenged her on that and said, "How in the world could you know from that, that this, you know, that this person ever gave birth?" And she basically said, "I've had nine kids. I think I know." It was kind of her argument.

Uh, but she tried to blackmail him and, and the doctor basically said, "Listen, his family has long since passed away. Nobody's gonna believe you. You go say whatever you need to say, but nobody's gonna listen to you. I don't care. I'm not..."

Justin:

She sounds like, she sounds like a creep to me.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

That's where I'm at. That's why I think about Sophia Bishop. But I think she was a grade A creep.

Sydnee:

The doctor was pretty cool about it because after this, of course, some word began to spread. And uh, one of the military officials, one of the officers in the military actually wrote this doctor a letter and said, "Hey, I heard a rumor—"

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

"... and could this possibly be true?" And he wrote back and he was honest. The doctor wrote back and said, "This is exactly what was said to me. This, this woman, Sophia Bishop, the charwoman came to, she said this. I observed these things." And he kind of, at this point throws on this caveat that like, because that, what, what the charwoman said to him was, "Oh, well, you're a pretty doctor. So how many times did you examine this patient's chest and you've never noticed this basically?"

Justin:

Okay. That one might be fair. [laughs].

Sydnee:

[laughs]. Because he, because it was documented that Dr. Berry multiple bouts of bronchitis and pneumonia, I think things that you would've thought he would've—

Justin:

Can I say that, Can I say though, if, I mean, doctor-patient confidentiality, like, I know that wasn't a well-established idea at this time, but I could certainly see—

Sydnee:

Actually it was.

Justin:

Yeah. Well, I mean—

Sydnee:

Yeah. You weren't on the episode where I explained to my dad that it was.

Justin:

Oh, that's, that's true. I'm an idiot about doctor-patient confidentiality.

Sydnee:

That's an old idea.

Justin:

But like, that's completely plausible to me. Like, I, I could completely see, especially two doctors, like—

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... "Listen, we could take a seat—"

Sydnee:

Or maybe not—

Justin:

[laughs] "... before we get started."

Sydnee:

Or maybe not even mentioned. Like known, but not even said. Just, just a quiet knowledge. And the doctor actually in the letter back to the, to the military official says, "I thought personally that Dr. Berry was likely the intersex."

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So he was not, he, he doesn't say, he says basically, like, "I didn't know what kind of genitalia Dr. Berry had. But I assumed for other aspects of his, um, like his stature—"

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

"... and other physical characteristics that he was, he was probably intersex." And, but, uh, but basically he says, "But it doesn't matter because either way, my job was to identify this as the body of the inspector general of the hospitals. You know, basically of this super were important, very impressive, talented, and, and intelligent military officer. And that is exactly who this person is."

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So he kind of puts it to rest and says, "It doesn't matter." Uh, which I think is a li—is kind of cool for the time saying—

Justin:

Yeah, for sure.

Sydnee:

... like, "Let's just remember how amazing this person was and not get lost in, you know—"

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

"... what we perceive as this, as this, whatever." You know? Anyway, there were people who spoke up at that point, because again, word spread, rumors do, people who spoke up and said they knew it all along.

Justin:

Oh, sure. You did.

Sydnee:

Um, that said that they always suspected it.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

They always thought something, right?

Justin:

Yeah. Right.

Sydnee:

Um, but, but whether or not anyone did, there were people who said, "I would've said something, but I don't know if you knew Dr. Berry, but he had quite a temper." And there was once a fellow officer who suggested that Dr. Berry may have looked like a woman and James struck him with a horse whip. [laughs]

Justin:

All right. [laughs]

Sydnee:

So—

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

... that would discourage a lot of people—

Justin:

Get the hell from my business. Sure.

Sydnee:

... from questioning that. Um, and then others said, "There's no way. There's no way. He was very flirtatious." He was known as a, as a ladies' man. That, that he was, he, he liked women a lot. And he was always, he was always flirting with them and taught talking with them. And women, women loved him. And, um, either way, everybody did agree he was a very good dancer. I don't know what that's evidence for either way.

Uh, they did discover again, as they were kind of at this point, trying to look for other clues, they did discover that there was inside the lid of his trunk, there was a collage that he created of women's fashions. So I don't know, some historians have looked at that as like a sign that maybe, maybe Dr. Berry wished that he could present as a woman still, but couldn't. I don't know. Or, or—

Justin:

We don't know.

Sydnee:

... or maybe just wished he could wear a dress—

Justin:

Who knows?

Sydnee:

... that doesn't even necessarily mean it, maybe just like the dresses, who knows? But like, that's been noted as like, "What does this mean? Who knows? What does it..." I mean, you know, you look for clues after somebody's gone, we all do things. And I would, I would hate for anybody to read too much into some of the, some of the things—

Justin:

Yeah, I got some things—

Sydnee:

... I do.

Justin:

... in my closet.

Sydnee:

Into like maybe my internet search history or anything.

Justin:

Yeah. This guy has a Totino sweatsuit and a—

Sydnee:

[laughs].

Justin:

... wizard hat. Like, I don't know what to make of this cat.

Sydnee:

Why does she have an amethyst wig in her—

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... in her closet? Uh, in addition, um, just some other, just some other notes that were like brought to light afterwards, he always did wear stacked heels with three inch insoles to try to make him look taller.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, and one thing that was discovered later is that part of his, the reason I mentioned that he had a man servant is that part of his man servant's job was every morning to lay out six thin towels along with his clothes that, uh, Dr. Berry had learned to strategically place in certain places around his body to make his shoulders look broader, to give him, you know, more of a, like a masculine shoulder and, uh, to cover his breasts and to reduce his, the curvature at his hips. And to give him more of a, of a masculine shape.

Justin:

Yeah. And he—

Sydnee:

Every day.

Justin:

And he worked—

Sydnee:

Every day.

Justin:

... in some areas of the world where that would be much less pleasant.

Sydnee:

Exactly. Every day, he did this. Every single day. Uh, the British army decided, "Look, we don't, we don't know quite what to do with this." And this is before a time where anybody was ready to deal with, with any of this information. So they basically just sealed up all of his records for 100 years. [laughs]

Justin:

Perfect.

Sydnee:

And said, "Nobody can know anything about this for the next 100 years."

Justin:

We'll—

Sydnee:

"We're not going to talk about it."

Justin:

We'll all be dead. Agreed. Agreed. Agreed. Okay. Great. Done.

Sydnee:

I love that, I love that British stiff upper lip. Like, "Let's just not, let's not talk—"

Justin:

For 100 years. Why not?

Sydnee:

And it was, it was like 140, actually. It was like 2008 when a lot of this, a lot of the letters that actually solved this mystery because this rumor went around for a long... I mean, you gotta understand for years and years, this story I just told you was, was as much folklore as it was true. Nobody knew if that was true. Well, we now know that everything I've just told you is true.

For sure, the facts are true. Margaret Bulkley was James Berry. James Berry was Margaret Bulkley. We know that these two people were the same.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, but we, again, we didn't know this until around 2008, when we found some letters from James Berry and others. Uh, there is a town named after him in South Africa, Berry Dale. I like that, Berry Dale.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, and he's been, like I said, the subject of books and plays and biographies and debate, and, uh, even Dickens wrote about Berry, so fascinated by, by this figure in medicine. And, and that's the thing, like Justin mentioned, I, I hesitated at first because I thought, I don't know, I don't know if Dr. Berry were here and I were to ask, "Please help me, you know, understand your story. You know, were you, were you a transgender man and this is, this is the story of your life? Or were you a woman who presented as a man simply so that you could pursue this career that you..." 'Cause you will, 'cause she wrote as a little girl, uh, "If I were not a girl, I would be a soldier."

So was that your story?" I don't know. I don't think it matters though. And the reason I think this is worthy of a Sawbones episode is that obviously it does matter, but it doesn't matter in the sense of, should we address this person and talk about their history and celebrate them as an amazing, clever, cool, funny, somewhat hot tempered figure in medical history?

Uh, just because, you know, we're not sure of all the facts doesn't mean we shouldn't celebrate their life. So I didn't want to discourage that. Um, 'cause Dr. Berry still saved the life of what a future prime minister of South Africa.

Justin:

Amazing.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Um, you too can be an awesome person. Maybe not automatically as awesome as James Berry, but, uh, pretty good if you donate to the Maximum—

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... Fun Drive. Um, maximumfun.org/donate is the, the place to do that. Wanted to alert you to a couple of other things that are, um, uh, uh, going on. The 28th is Max Fun day. Uh, there's gonna be a bunch of community gatherings going on all around. If you go to maximumfun.org/meetups 2017, 7:00 PM, local time, Tuesday, March 28th. Um, they're gonna have meetups. Uh, I'm looking at the list now and that is pretty much all over. There is a... roughly a cajillion of them.

Sydnee:

You can go and you can celebrate Max Fun, have a meetup, and also celebrate my birthday a day late.

Justin:

Yeah. Perfect.

Sydnee:

So why don't you do that too?

Justin:

Uh, do both of those. Um, and, and also the main thing is the, the donation and, and helping to keep this network going. Um, we've expanded shows in 2017 again, um, and added shows. Still Buffering was, was last year, but still was, was added, um, uh, recently.

Sydnee:

Yeah, the reason we're able to keep making more shows, new shows and hopefully better quality of our old, our old shows is, uh, because of your donations. So, uh, and you listening and supporting, and even if, even if you're not in a position to donate right now, um, we still love you. First of all, we still are thrilled that you listen to our show.

Tweet about the drive, uh, share it with your friends, you know, get it out there. That really helps us out too. Um, just to get the word out that, that we love doing this for you and every, every dollar you can give helps us to keep doing it and hopefully do it better.

Justin:

Um, we mentioned the \$5 level. There's, uh, the \$10 get, see the pins, the \$5 is all the great content. Um, a lot this year, ours is a, uh, we just get way down into Goop.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle website Goop.

Justin:

You wanna hear that? Uh, then, then donate five bucks a month and you can hear that. Um, \$10 a month, you get a pin and the content. \$35 a month, there's that the great keep in touch kit and the pin and the content. And it just goes on from there. 35 bucks, you get the cool mugs and the keep in touch kit and the pin and the bud content. But mainly you get the feeling of being a member of this, of this network.

Sydnee:

Yeah. And every time you listen to our shows, you get to know you were part of this.

Justin:

Um, we love doing the show, but honestly, um, we, we have a, a kid. Um, and—

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

... one of the reasons that, uh, we are able to keep doing this as regularly as we do it, um, is because it is part of how we feed said child—[laughs]

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

... and, and, and keep her clothed and what have you. So we—

Sydnee:

[laughing]

Justin:

... really appreciate that.

Sydnee:

You are, you are keeping her in princess costumes and mac and cheese. So thank you.

Justin:

Right. So thank you. Um, anyway, maximumfund.org/donate, uh, please go there right now and give what you can. If you can't give, I get it. You keep listening. We love you still. No matter what.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

So, um, that's gonna do it for us this week. Maximumfun.org/donate. Go do it. Um, oh, there's a big Max Fun extravaganza also, March 31st. It's gonna be close with the drive, kicks off at 7:00 PM PT, 10:00 PM, ET, maximumfun.org. Maximumfun.org, for more information about that.

Sydnee:

Also, thank you to The Taxpayers for our theme song, Medicines.

Justin:

Thank you, Sydnee.

Sydnee:

I got it—

Justin:

Correct.

Sydnee:

... this time.

Justin:

All right. That's gonna do it for us folks. Until next week, my name is Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

And as always, don't drill a hole in your head.

[theme music plays]

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