Sawbones 26: Royal Rife's Cancer-Curing Death Ray

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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 song plays]

Justin:

Hello everybody, and welcome to Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine. I'm your co-host Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

And I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

Happy Tuesday, Sydnee. It's a new day.

Sydnee:

It's a brand new era for Sawbones.

Justin:

A brand new era of Sawbones where we launch on Tuesday.

Sydnee:

So that we can getcha through hump day. That's the next day.

Justin:

Hump day. Save it for hump day, or just burn it now. It's okay. Whatever you wanna do. It's...

Sydnee:

Either way.

Justin:

It's completely fine by us.

Sydnee:

We're filling your... Filling your podcast void on Tuesday.

Justin:

Alright, Sydnee. I'm ready. Educate me. Help me expand my horizons.

Sydnee:

Uh, well Justin, I'm really excited about this week's episode because I think I learned a really important lesson while I was researching this. So, we're gonna talk about um, a guy. We're gonna talk about some... A famous name in medicine.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

A Royal Raymond Rife. Which is a great name by the way.

Justin:

It's a good start.

Sydnee:

Royal Rife, uh, and um, before I tell you about him, let me just say that uh, I really, you know... Researching Royal Rife was a real testament to what a great resource the Internet is. Um, you know, it's, like, the thing I like about it the most is that everything on the Internet is true. And it's completely reliable. I mean it's this giant electronic encyclopedia that you know is well researched, you know it's cross referenced.

Justin:

Well— Well, well... Well, let me stop you there, Syd. Uh...

Sydnee:

What?

Justin:

I'm somebody who works in the Internet. Uh, "works." I'm doing air quotes for those of you at home. I work on the Internet and you... It's not exactly as you've imagined it here. It's a... There's a little more to it than that.

Sydnee:

Well, but, I mean... I found, I mean on Royal Rife, like, I found just pages and pages of information that, I mean, clearly it's all true, right? Why else would all these people be writing this stuff if it, if it wasn't...

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

You know, factual?

Justin:

Tell ya what. Let's apply a critical eye here. Why don't you pop open a couple of the web pages you've used as reference for your research before we uh, get started? Uh, go ahead and open that one up.

Sydnee:

Okay, well I'll just, I'll pick one here at random 'cause there's a lot. Like, really, I was kinda planning on doing like a 15 part series.

Justin:

M'kay, 15 parts sounds a little excessive, but...

Sydnee:

So, here's one of my favorites.

Justin:

Let me look. Okay. See, right away I'm seeing the problems here. Do you see on the side of the page here this giant banner ad for the Illuminati and the dangers of the Illuminati?

Sydnee:

Well, I mean, I try not to pay attention to advertising.

Justin:

Okay, see [crosstalk] that is gonna be... That's gonna be a big tip off that the information has uh, some problems to it. Let me look at this other tab that you got open here.

Sydnee:

Yeah, this one's better.

Justin:

This is better. Do you see how one of the links though is about a guy who can shape clouds with his mind?

Sydnee:

Is that a problem?

Justin:

That is a problem. Here's what I need you to do, Syd. I need you to... Let's take a break. A quick break. Uh, you dive back into your research, uh, of your 15 part planned series on Royal Raymond Rife, uh, which don't get me wrong, very excited about the possibilities of a 15 part uh, Sawbones episode.

Sydnee:

I mean, it's gonna be great.

Justin:

Yeah. Why don't you take a critical eye at your research with the understanding that maybe some things on the Internet aren't true in the classical sense. And then, and then we'll come back okay?

Sydnee:

Is it really easy to tell? I mean do—

Justin:

Yeah, just look for ads for Scientology.

Sydnee:

Uh-huh.

Justin:

Uh, and some of, uh, like a banner ad for the Illuminati. Not great. Cloud shaping.

Sydnee:

Oh.

Justin:

Some real big tip-offs. Other real obvious lies that are there. Okay?

Sydnee:

Right. So like that, that one right there with the picture of like, the aliens building the Pyramids?

Justin:

Yeah, that's uh, that's not a good... Not a good sign.

Sydnee:

That's probably bad, right? It's not...

Justin:

Take another... Take another crack at it and we'll be right back.

Sydnee:

Okay.

[musical beat]

Justin:

Well, how'd it go?

Sydnee:

Okay, so maybe not 15 parts.

Justin:

Yep.

Sydnee:

Maybe just the one part.

Justin:

Just the one part, right.

Sydnee:

Just... Maybe just the one.

Justin:

There's a lotta lies.

Sydnee:

There's a lot of stuff out there that isn't true.

Justin:

Yeah, I mean—

Sydnee:

And I'm just sayin' like, is nobody editing this? Is there nobody looking out for us?

Justin:

No, no.

Sydnee:

People who are trying to research and find out the truth?

Justin:

No, I'm sorry Sydnee, it's a vast wasteland out there.

Sydnee:

Alright, well as it turns out, we're... Here's our one part series on Royal Rife.

Justin:

On the stuff...

Sydnee:

It's not even a series now.

Justin:

On the stuff that is probably true about Royal Raymond Rife.

Sydnee:

The stuff that I could actually find. You know what's interesting is that...

Justin:

The topic I should point out, before we get to deep, suggested by Matt, so thank you so much, Matt.

Sydnee:

Yeah, thank you, Matt. This turned out to be a great topic. Because what was very interesting is that there were literally probably two sources that I could 100% rely on outside of things like Wikipedia which is even questionable there, um, for information about Royal Rife. So I had to do a lot of digging but I think I've uncovered what is basically true about this guy.

Justin:

Okay, give me— I know nothing about him, so just start me at the beginning.

Sydnee:

So, he is an American inventor. He uh, was born in 1888 and lived until 1971. Um he...

Justin:

It's a good run, it's a good run.

Sydnee:

Yeah, yeah. Good long run. Um, he was born in Nebraska. Uh, he came from a household... His dad was a... Dad was a clever guy, a mechanical engineer.

Um, and it was a, it was a German speaking household. This is actually... This is not a fact that we know about him, this is based on his accent we guessed this.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Very little is...

Justin:

Already into the suspect information. I like it.

Sydnee:

Very little is known about his raising, his childhood, uh, exactly where or when he studied. We know at some point he probably studied at Johns Hopkins. Um, and then he moved to Germany.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

He worked for an optical company, Zeiss Optical Company there, where he made microscopes, which is gonna be a theme as we move forward.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

So he was there until uh, World War I started. Um, he got married and he started traveling Europe, got out of Germany. Um, interestingly he developed some other, some other kind of hobbies. He played guitar and French horn. And as you're gonna learn, he was quite the inventor. He also built a hundred string guitar.

Justin:

Okay. See that's a pretty crazy start. I was a little worried about this topic until just now. Um, that's not a that's not somethin' that I could... I mean,

I'm barely... I've been playin' for 10 years, I'm barely hangin' in there with six strings.

Sydnee:

So are you... See, I don't know 'cause I'm not a musician. So do you think like, a hundred string guitar would be challenging?

Justin:

I don't think you need to be a musician to know that a hundred string guitar would probably be a little difficult.

Sydnee:

He also, I thought this was great. He held the um, high-powered motorboat speed record until his death.

Justin:

Nice! Okay, I like this guy.

Sydnee:

A Renaissance man.

Justin:

Yeah. So the predecessor of the most interesting man in the world.

Sydnee:

Um...

Justin:

A little bit of everything.

Sydnee:

And when he came back to the U.S., uh, he got really interesting. So... At this point, I'm not sure—

Justin:

I'm already pretty interested, I have to say.

Sydnee:

I'm not sure what he actually had degrees in. Um, it's listed that he studied myriad fields. I know that he got a couple honorary degrees. I don't know if he got any actual degrees, but I know he got an honorary degree in parasitology from the University of Heidelberg and he later got a Doctor of Science degree, again, honorary, from the University of Southern California although he actually never wrote them back.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

They wrote him and said that he could have it and then he never answered and that was kind of the end of it, but I mean I guess [crosstalk]...

Justin:

"If I get it down there, I'll swing by and pick it up. Just leave it in the Registrar's office or something. No big."

Sydnee:

So with whatever kind of background he had, we certainly know that he worked at a microscope company. Um, his initial work that his foray into medicine was that he was inventing microscopes.

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee: He was creating new microscopes with the uh, intention that he wanted us to be able to observe even smaller organisms than we already could.

Justin:

And he wanted to be able to see all the strings on his guitar.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So he could play it.

Justin:

So he could play it.

Sydnee:

Ostensibly...

Justin:

You have to wear... Later he just sized it back so he just wore a jeweler's ring and that allowed him to hit most of the strings.

Sydnee:

It would take him, it was take him at least three days to play the first verse of any song, but it was worth the wait.

Justin:

You should hear his Stairway, though.

Sydnee:

Gorgeous.

Justin:

Get comfortable.

Sydnee:

It's still happening.

Justin:

Get a... Actually get a hotel room while I'm thinking about it 'cause you're gonna be there for a while.

Sydnee:

Still echoing throughout the universe. Um, at the time, and I know this isn't gonna mean much, but just to give you an idea, we could only see um, things that were about 200 nanometers. So what that excluded is that we couldn't see things like viruses.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Okay? So, basically his thought was "I think that I'm really good with microscopes and I could make one that could see things that are even smaller." Um...

Justin:

Noble goal.

Sydnee:

He created five different microscopes, like five different but not in— You know, I think he probably made more than five. But five different types of microscopes that were just called the Rife 1 through 5. Um, each one hopefully improving upon the last one. But what made him the most famous was his Rife 3, which was called the Universal Microscope. And the reason that this was such a big deal is that he said that he could not only view viruses with this microscope, which wouldn't be possible until later with the invention of the electron microscope, which is how we usually view viruses today, um, but he said not only could he already see viruses, he could see living viruses.

Justin:

Okay. Uh, so, well, could he?

Sydnee:

Well, I'm not so sure about that.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

The thing about the electron microscope is, in order to see the viruses we actually have to kill them first before we can slice them down really small and take a look at them.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

He thought that what his microscope could do through the use of um, basically every kind of technique of microscopy at the time. And I am not a microscopist.

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

I have a passing familiarity with microscopes as much physicians do, but um, I don't know all the ins and outs.

Justin:

An amateur microscopist.

Sydnee:

[laughs] I just, I, you know um, dabble in microscopy.

Justin:

That's the word. Dabble.

Sydnee:

Uh, but he, he used different types of, like, microscope technique. Like, there was the basic like, light microscope and then there was like, um, uh, dark field microscopy and you know, all these different techniques. And he said that he could see the viruses moving and living because if you could make the light you were emitting vibrate at a certain frequency, and that frequency reached the same frequency that the organism naturally vibrates...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Because he believed that all organisms vibrated at a certain frequency.

Justin:

That's very Matthew McConaughey of him.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That, at that moment, it would emit a certain spectrum of light that you could, you know, see. That you could visualize. And then you could distinguish different particles based on what spectrum of light you were seeing under the microscope.

Justin:

That sounds very... This is all very confusing, Sydnee. I just need you to tell me if it's true or not.

Sydnee:

As far as I can tell, this isn't true.

Justin:

Okay. Phew. Good.

Sydnee:

I... And it... It... See, here's what scary. You know how long it took me to figure that out?

Justin:

Awhile.

Sydnee:

Because...

Justin:

Because I'm still piecing it together.

Sydnee:

At first, as I was reading I thought well maybe he really did invent a microscope that could see live viruses and here we're all taking crap about this guy. But I'm pretty sure he didn't.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um, now, it's hard to say for sure though. Because the problem is that, um, none of these microscopes in like, their original form exist today.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

There is some like, blueprints. One of the— The Rife 5 microscopes may still exist in London somewhere. Like at the um, Institute for Tropical Diseases maybe—

Justin:

This is so odd though, why would that be?

Sydnee:

Or Tropical Medicine [crosstalk].

Justin:

Why would that be? Why would so few be extant?

Sydnee:

Uh, a lot of it was that he could take them apart, the older ones, and use them to try to build his newer ones.

Justin:

Okay, well I can see that.

Sydnee:

So that was part of it. And then he was also giving them... He was, he was making... Not giving them, he was selling them to people. And people would get them and then try to take them apart so that they could figure out how they worked.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And so... And they were very complex. I mean, if you... There are some pictures that you can find on the Internet of these microscopes and even if you don't know anything about microscopes, you could probably look at these and understand what I'm saying. They were just there huge metal systems of lenses and condensers and all these lights and all these different stages. And some of them were super tall and some of them were very wide and they, uh, look incredibly cumbersome.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

Um...

Justin:

Not a... Not a centerpiece. Not something you'd wanna leave around.

Sydnee:

No. No.

Justin:

"This is getting bulky. I'm gonna take it apart and throw it away."

Sydnee:

And plus he guarded them uh, very, you know... He was very secretive about them.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

He didn't want people to know all about them. And very few people ever got to even take a look at them. Um, in 1978, you know, after he died, one of them at that point was still in existence and uh, you know, there was some... One scientist who was allowed to take a look at it and kind of dissect it, take it apart and try to figure out if it worked or not. Um, again I don't think this was the famous number 3 universal microscope 'cause that's what everybody wanted to look at. Um, and his assessment of the whole thing

was that, and this is a quote, that it, "seems to have been constructed in such a way as to make the work of microscopy tedious and cumbersome."

Justin:

[laughs] To make— Just when you thought that, uh, that never ending thrill ride of using a microscope could not get anymore boring, here comes Royal Raymond Rife to make it even worse than it already is.

Sydnee:

Even worse than it was, and what was interesting is that they started analyzing... He took some photographs with a microscope, they're called a photomicrograph, if you take a, you know, photograph through the lens... You've probably seen them in science textbooks. And he uh, most of the ones he took were probably either faked or not necessarily maliciously faked, they were just artifacts from like light shining on the lens and stuff.

Justin:

"Look at that there. That there's... See, it's a germ! I told you it's a—"

"That looks like, uh, I think that's mustard."

Sydnee:

"Is that your eyelash?"

Justin:

"You left some mustard in an eyelash on your microscope, I'm pretty sure."

"It's a germ! I've done it!"

Sydnee:

So at this point you're probably wondering when we're gonna start talking about medicine and stop talking about microscopes. Um, but it seems natural that if, you know, Raymond... If Royal Rife thought that he could you know, see things like viruses, you know, germs that cause disease that other people couldn't see and that he understood something about them that other people didn't. This, this rate that they vibrate or frequency that they oscillate, whatever.

Justin:

You got a God complex, right?

Sydnee:

Well, that... He thought that maybe he could beat them.

Justin:

Oh, okay.

Sydnee:

So he based some of his theories, it's kind of interesting, on um...

Justin:

It is really interesting though?

Sydnee:

I think it's interesting.

Justin:

Just to nerds?

Sydnee:

He just... He, he started grasping at other weird theories that were around at the time. One was that uh, germs don't cause disease, but if you have an imbalance in your own body chemicals, then a bacteria that also is imbalanced can come into contact and then you can become even further imbalanced. And that basically if you can just get your body in balance you can never become ill no matter what you become in— What you come in contact with.

He believed that and he also believed that there were only actually a handful of germs like bacteria and viruses and they shifted from thing to thing throughout their life to cause different diseases. So maybe the same thing that causes herpes at this point in its life causes tuberculosis later in its life.

Justin:

So sorta like uh, David Bruce Banner in the Incredible Hulk television series. Just sadly moping on from body to body seeing what new adventures await.

Sydnee:

That's... That's what viruses basically do.

Justin:

[humming Lonely Man from the Hulk] Okay.

Sydnee:

And that's what he thought they did.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

He was wrong.

Justin:

He was wrong.

Sydnee:

That's not true.

Justin:

Yeah, even I know that.

Sydnee:

Um, but what it all came down to is that these organisms had a mortal oscillatory rate which we talked about, the frequency they vibrate, and what he thought was that, just like you could make them light up when you viewed them, um, with light, you know, of the same frequency, you could also vibrate them at that frequency to kill them.

Justin:

So...

Sydnee:

Like with electricity.

Justin:

So sweet, and what better indicator is there of the nature of man than the progression of "hey I can see it now" to "I'm gonna kill it." Look at that.

Sydnee:

[laughs] "I bet if I can see it, I can kill it."

Justin:

"I can see it." I just, I mean, think about it, it's just logic.

Sydnee:

The whites of their little germy eyes.

Justin:

"I can see it. I can see it, so I'm gonna try to kill it."

Sydnee:

And it... At that point it was very easy...

Justin:

That's why we can't see wind, did you know that? That's why God made it so we can't see wind.

Sydnee:

'Cause then we'd kill it?

Justin:

We'd try to kill wind.

Sydnee:

That...

Justin:

Would we?

Sydnee:

That's why we can't see oxygen.

Justin:

That's why you can't see oxygen, then we'd kill all the oxygen...

Sydnee:

And then we'd die.

Justin:

...and we all die. Oops, who won? No one.

Sydnee:

Thanks, humans.

Justin:

Thanks, humans, you killed all the air.

Sydnee:

Thanks, Royal Rife. Um, so at that point it seemed pretty easy, like how do you proceed? Well, you just start figuring out the frequency of different diseases. So he figured out the frequency of herpes and polio and meningitis and tetanus and flu and—

Justin:

This is all so busted though because even though he could... Okay, so he had to know the frequency of the thing to see the thing, right?

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

Okay, but how on earth is he figuring out the frequency of the thing other than just like, turning a knob until it pops up? Is that what he...

Sydnee:

Yep.

Justin:

Did he think, did he mistake frequency with the focus knob? Is that maybe what's going on here?

Sydnee:

Maybe, because the thing about his images is that when they, when they used... In some of the reports, you can read, there were, like I said, there are a handful of things out there that you can read where they actually, like, studied his microscopes and tried to figure out for real if they worked.

I mean, people wanted them to work at the time. And there were, there were people who thought he was a genius. Now, not many. But people wanted them to work and they would investigate them and they did find that while they probably could see things slightly smaller because of how many lenses and condensers and whatnot, than they could with other light microscopes, just slightly smaller, not viruses, that he lost so much in resolution with all these series of lenses, that it actually...

You got a lot of artifact, a lot of extra, like halos around things and light and you know. He had like a prism that he'd put in a certain part of the scope and it created these kind of light artifactual things that drifted around and um, you lost a lot of resolution with it.

Justin:

No good. I like HD science.

Sydnee:

So, but the difference is— So yeah, he figured out the frequency with the light but then he invented... The microscope wasn't made to kill the cells. The microscope could just see them. The beam ray could kill them.

Justin:

[laughs] Yes. Are you serious?

Sydnee:

Yes.

Justin:

He made a beam ray?

Sydnee:

He made a beam ray.

Justin:

Oh, this is so sweet. So you're telling me there's a guy... This guy... There's a guy somewhere in the annals of history who is uh, on a sweet speed boat that is going faster than anybody has ever gone before and will ever again until he dies, and on top he's straddling like a throne playing a sweet 100 string guitar solo, and his... In his third hand that he has because he's using two on the guitar, he has a death ray.

Sydnee:

He's got a beam ray.

Justin:

Oh my God, maybe he probably had it mounted on the boat. I don't know what I'm saying I'm sorry.

Sydnee:

I bet he has it mounted... Of course he's got it mounted on the boat.

Justin:

It's mounted. Of course it's mounted on the boat. Duh.

Sydnee:

Now, now what was this beam ray? I'm gonna tell you what it was later made of because it was recreated in later years. Uh, the originals again, we... They don't exist as far as we can tell. Um, if they do maybe somebody's got 'em but we don't know where they are. So it was some kind of tube with light in it, some kind of plasma light thing that shot a concentrated beam of light or something.

Justin:

Kinda like a black light you use...

Sydnee:

It was a black light.

Justin:

It is a black light.

Sydnee:

It was pretty groovy. Um...

Justin:

"Nothing's dead, but check this sweet Grateful Dead poster."

Sydnee:

He— The crazy thing is he started talking about this and there were like a handful of other MDs who were like, "Yeah, okay."

Justin:

"Alright."

Sydnee:

"I got this, this makes sense." And so they even help him... Helped him, like, open a clinic and they would use his device on cancer patients. That's where this really came into play, so we could figure out the frequency of all these infectious things. But at that point we had other methods that we were investigating of treating infectious things.

Cancer then, as is true today, is the thing that we don't know how to beat. So, why not try it on cancer? If it can... Figure out the, you know, the frequency that any cell vibrates, why not a cancer cell?

Justin:

Yeah, that's where I would start. Don't kill— Don't learn how to kill skin cells.

Sydnee:

Well...

Justin:

What's the point of that?

Sydnee:

No, that's probably a waste of time.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And he also... He believed that there was a virus that caused all cancer, too. Which is part of why he thought that this would work. Um, so he opened this clinic, uh, there are no records really of how people did and it depends on what you read. Um, they probably—

Justin:

I'd imagine if you're runnin' a sweet clinic where the main focus is death rays you probably don't want a lot of extensive documentation...

Sydnee:

Well—

Justin:

"Uh, uh, excuse me Dr. Rife, should we uh, should we uh write this case down?"

"No, I tried to use a death ray on it and uh, and he, and he just died."

Sydnee:

"And he died."

Justin:

"He died so let's just keep this one on the DL between you and me, my man."

Sydnee:

I mean, there were definitely like, isolated records of people who didn't do well and got sent to other facilities for further treatment and um...

Justin:

Well, let's be honest... "For treatment."

Sydnee:

Yeah, well for—

Justin:

Not for like, a different... For like, a real treatment.

Sydnee:

For actual treatment. I think that the clearest indication that it wasn't successful is that there aren't records of it. If you invented a cure for cancer ray, wouldn't you wanna write it down and publish it?

Justin:

Yeah, after I finish like, building a statue to myself and having people, like, give me a bajillion dollars. Maybe he was really secretive about it.

Sydnee:

What was great is that it didn't... He didn't do very well at this clinic, but as a result, more people jumped on board and built him a larger clinic in Pasadena and a lab underneath where he could continue to, you know, perfect his beam ray.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

And he kept treating it at this place, not just cancer patients, but all kinds of patients with diseases with this ray.

Justin:

At some point in this story James Bond does step in to stop him, right? Before he gets full world domination mode?

Sydnee:

I love that it's Ray's ray. His middle name is Raymond.

Justin:

[laughs] Okay.

Sydnee:

Sorry.

Justin:

Yeah, I mean...

Sydnee:

I'm just sayin'.

Justin:

Totally. I can't believe I missed that.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Uh, what was even better is that uh, he... With the success or whatever he was having...

Justin:

Or whatever you call this.

Sydnee:

Whatever you call this, he joined the Beam Ray Company.

Justin:

The what?

Sydnee:

There was a Beam Ray Company. I think it already existed before he, like— It was other beam rays. Other types of beam rays and maybe rays that did not cure cancer, unlike his ray.

Justin:

[laughs] "Listen uh, uh... Board of Directors, I'm gonna be straight with you, it's been another tough year for the Beam Ray Company. This strong downward trend uh, you can see is our profits. I think we can source it back to what the problem has always been. The lack of existence of a beam ray. That is really putting a crunch on us. Uh, anyway, don't forget to sign up for softball with uh, Vickie. And uh, I'll see you next year."

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, at this point with the Beam Ray Company, his devices started to be, um, they... I don't wanna say mass produced because that's really an overstatement. More were made. They were sold to patients in different places and then the legal battles began.

It started with um, one of his own partners that one of the other doctors who initially worked with him suing him in 1939 and it just continued from then on. Um, most people felt like that the beam ray didn't work. Uh, they thought the um, microscopes were suspect.

He was still making and sending microscopes to people and they were incomplete and they didn't work and people couldn't replicate his results. Um, the AMA got involved and basically said, "This is all bunk." You know, "None of this is— None of this is true." Um, he just thought it was some kind of vast conspiracy...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

...and kept on, you know, fighting. He moved to Utah for a while. He found some limited support. He actually got a little bit of support from the Church of Latter-day Saints there from some isolated groups but then uh, but then they kind of let go of that too. Um, so he basically kind of ran out of people who believed in him. Um, and he was spending all of his time in court and, uh, he just kind of quit at that point. So in the 60s he kind of gave up, started drinking a lot, joined the Bahai faith, and then he died in 1971 probably of alcoholism as much as old age.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, and this sounds like a really sad story although, I mean, he did make a fake cure for cancer so I don't know.

Justin:

Yeah, and I'm sure he charged people money for it, so like.

Sydnee:

He did, I... His main interest was in the science of it. He was a very um... He paid a lot of attention to detail, you know. He liked the idea of building these giant, meticulous, um, microscopes. And I don't know where he got lost in this whole science thing...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Cancer thing.

Justin:

Just the being right and the proof part.

Sydnee:

But, this would just be like an interesting little footnote in history. A guy made a crazy ray, he... Obviously it didn't work and then he died penniless and drunk. But, in the 80s a book came out called The Cancer Cure that Worked. And included in this book was Royal Rife's beam ray. The lost cure for cancer that the AMA suppressed that the insurance companies and Big Pharma don't want you to know about.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

And at that point interest in what became known as the Rife Device um, was really revived. Uh, and so a lot of people started to believe that if we could recreate this Rife Device we could cure cancer. Um, and so they started marketing their own kind of knockoffs based on this information under his name, although none of them were probably anything like the original beam ray. Um...

Justin:

This is sort of like the uh, the time machine that Napoleon Dynamite's brother buys in that, in that movie, right? I mean that sort of thing, you buy it on the Internet, assemble with parts you have at home, that sort of deal.

Sydnee:

Exactly. Exactly. If you... If you send in enough box tops you get one.

Justin:

You get your own hovercraft made from garbage bags and cardboard boxes.

Sydnee:

Most of the ones that started to be created in the 80s and then into the 90s were um, okay, were basically constructed of nine volt batteries, a switch, a timer, and then two kind of like copper tubes that you could put on the person.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

And they did produce a very, very minor current. And that was pretty much it.

Justin:

They were also helpful for uh, seeking out troublesome thatens. That uh, were keeping him from ascending up to OT-2.

Sydnee:

This sounds kind of similar.

Justin:

Yeah, I— The device you just described is very close to, to an e-meter. Save for, you know uh, the little dial that tell you...

Sydnee:

Maybe that's why I can't find out much information about Royal Rife.

Justin:

Oh, my God, it's a plot of Xenu.

Sydnee:

I'm just saying.

Justin:

He's sending out secret messages from the volcano he's buried under and he's keeping the Rife Device suppressed. Classic.

Sydnee:

Well, and to continue this narrative, in the 90s they became involved in what was basically a giant pyramid marketing scheme, so. There you go. And, uh, there were a lot of, um, advertisements that it could, again, cure cancer. It could fight HIV was a big narrative they tried to sell.

Um, but most of the people, you know, as we move into the 90s who sold this were eventually convicted of fraud, um, people were charged with the death of cancer patients who, you know, used that instead of actual treatments for cancer and uh, um, and it kind of... It began to fall out of favor, so...

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

Um, today this is still something, you know... I should say in 2006 there was a conference held in Seattle for Rife Devices and 300 people went and they sold devices, illegally, I should add. You can't, you can't sell these medical devices because they're not medical devices, but they did sell them as medical devices.

Justin:

They're just boxes that shock you.

Sydnee:

Just nine volt batteries, which...

Justin:

"Sure, I'll give you $200."

Sydnee:

I think what's more impressive is that in 2006 they were able to find that many nine volt batteries.

Justin:

Yeah, absolutely. When was the last time you saw one of those on the shelf?

Sydnee:

Um, again, today none of the scopes exist in entirety. Maybe a Rife 5 in London, I'm not sure on that again. Everything's pretty sketchy.

Justin:

Seriously, don't write us in with corrections on this stuff because whatever sources you're reading is just as likely to be fake as the one that Sydnee has found.

Sydnee:

Well, and this is the thing. You have to know, and I found, as frustrated as I was, as I spent hours pouring over all of the Internet looking for information about this guy, um, I found someone who echoed my sentiment which is that for every, you know, one piece of information that you find that is true about Royal Rife, you're gonna find, like, 100 different webpages and articles and testimonies that are just patently false.

That are people claiming that this was a secret cure for cancer that was, you know, um, eliminated by the government and by the AMA and by the insurance companies and Big Pharma and blah blah blah, and that we don't want you to have the cure from cancer so it has been hidden from you. Which, of course, is ridiculous.

Justin:

No, because it could make a lot of money and no one would keep that a secret.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

Someone would be selling it to you, guaranteed.

Sydnee:

See, it would make a lot of money.

Justin:

And his name wouldn't be like, Cancer Battler 971, top EBay user rating of 338. Like, it's not gonna be that guy who's profiting off of it, I can guarantee you.

Sydnee:

And, and to be fair, if I could inject just a little bit of earnestness into this cynical conversation, you know, the AMA, the American Medical Association, though I am not a member, is made up of physicians... I am one as well, and I'd like to believe that there are some of us who actually want to help people as much as maybe people don't believe that anymore, there are a lot of us who are in it for, you know...

Justin:

Who probably would've let it slip at a cocktail party perhaps.

Sydnee:

Just making people better. Trust me guys, if I had the cure for cancer, I'd tell you.

Justin:

"Cancer? Why do you still have cancer? I..."

Sydnee:

"Oh."

Justin:

"I've said too much."

Sydnee:

"Ooh, I didn't say that."

Justin:

"I didn't say it. Don't tell. They're gonna kick me out."

Sydnee:

But there's the, there's the truth guys. At this point there aren't that many bad people in the world and at this point if there was a cure for cancer, somebody would've let it out.

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So, I don't think the Rife Device was it.

Justin:

Sadly.

Sydnee:

I don't think it hurt anybody.

Justin:

I mean, except for the shock and for the people who didn't seek treatment for their cancer because they thought they had it with this death ray.

Sydnee:

[laughs] But, well, that's a fair point.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, so, so there you go. That's the story of Royal Rife. Again, if you wanna do a more exhaustive search of the Internet and find even more information, please be my guest.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

There's a lot out there.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I have read some of the craziest things I have ever read in my life in search of information. So if you want a good laugh, I would also um, advise that.

Justin:

And if you uh, come upon a Rife Device in your travels, you can send that to P.O. Box 54 Huntington, West Virginia, 25706. Sawbones.

Sydnee:

Yeah, and if you find a, a Rife uh, microscope, I'd love to see one of those too. Don't... Still, not clear. Maybe one in London. If you got it London, let me know.

Justin:

Possibly. If you're in London, swing by all the museums and see if you see it around. Anyway, that's gonna do it for us on uh, this new episode of Sawbones. Thank you so much for listening and thank you for joining us on our new time slot on a Tuesday.

We assume some people will still be a little bit confused so uh, please, please uh, tweet about this episode, especially. Uh, you're always tweeting about it, but this week especially it'd really mean a lot. Just tweet out a link to the show. You can just use sawbonesshow.com or link to our iTunes page, whatever you wanna do.

Thanks to people tweeting about the show like Deanna Poppe and Sean Poppe. I think Pop or Pop-ey. I don't know. But they're gonna listen to this show during dinner so, enjoy. Uh, Jeremy Frank, Allie Stahlbrand, Allie C., Bri Hughes, Allie C. again, she tricked me, uh, Brian, Theresa Gallagher, Joe Smith, Prohibition Bakery, Megan Lynn, Joey Welser, Allie Burnham, uh, Jordan, Beth Gilmore, Kat, Sarah Perry.

Thank you so much for tweeting about the show. Um, please follow in these fine people's footsteps and help us spread the word.

Sydnee:

And you can tweet at us @JustinMcElroy.

Justin:

She's @SydneeMcElroy, S-Y-D-N-E-E.

Sydnee:

And of course @Sawbones

Justin:

@Sawbones is our uh, other thing. You can also uh, visit us on our home, MaximumFun.org. That's where Sawbones show goes, just to our page there on Maximum Fun. Uh, and uh, you can listen to all the other great programs there like Jordan, Jesse GO! New shows like the Goose Down and the reborn International Waters. Uh, Judge John Hodgman, Stop Podcasting Yourself...

Sydnee:

My Brother, My Brother and Me.

Justin:

Ah, thank you so much. And so may others so make sure you listen to those shows and make sure you join us again next Tuesday for another episode of Sawbones. Until then, I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

[theme music plays]