

Sawbones 84: Heroes of Patent Medicine, Vol 3.

Published April 23, 2015

Listen here on themcelroy.family

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]

Audience:

[Cheers]

Justin:

Oh, no! You're a taller man than me.

Sydnee:

You can say this is flattery, but no.

Justin:

Yeah. You can just angle it down, sweetheart. Hi, everybody. Welcome to Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine. I'm your cohost, Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Audience:

[Cheers]

Justin:

That's happened at every show we've done, and I can't tell if people are like, "No, no, no. Wait, wait, wait. I wanna give the chubby guy a complex."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"Cheer for his much more attractive, much smarter wife. Hold on. Now. This is the moment." Hey, everybody. Uh, what...

Sydnee:

It's fine with me, uh, thank you.

Justin:

Yeah. Hi, Chicago!

Audience:

[Cheers]

Justin:

It's easy.

Sydnee:

Just keep doing that, that works.

Justin:

Cubs. Sammy Sosa. I don't know how we feel about Sammy Sosa right now. He may have been disgraced late in his career. My mom was a big Sammy Sosa fan, that's all I know about Sammy Sosa. Also, um, uh, Al Capone from Chicago. Uh, here...

Sydnee:

This is our show now. Justin names everything he knows about Chicago.

Justin:

Everything I know about Chicago. Here's my favorite Al Capone fact for you. My, uh, I had friends growing up. Uh, uh, who went to school.

Sydnee:

He actually had friends [laughs].

Justin:

That's not the fact. I had friends growing up who went to school with a young man named, I'm not making this up, D'Alcapone Jones. That was his legal name. Uh, I am happy, however, speaking of Al Capone, that prohibition has ended because the show would be much less funny, about 30, uh, about 30% less funny. The blend is different every episode.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Um, and also, I'm not the sort of guy that would know where speakeasies are. Like, do you think, do you think I'm the sort of guy who's like, "Oh, yeah. Justin knows the good speakeasies."

Sydnee:

I don't know, I mean, you're pretty cool. You might know.

Justin:

[laughs] Thank you. That's the most charitable thing you've ever said to me.

Sydnee:

I might know. I mean, I'd tell you.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I would take you with me.

Justin:

But, yes. Hooray with prohibition ending.

Sydnee:

Yeah. You know, there were other ways to get around prohibition if you didn't, like you, didn't know where to go to the local speakeasy.

Justin:

That would absolutely be up my alley. So, help me in case I'm ever in a time warp scenario.

Sydnee:

Well, tonight we can, we're ending, we're concluding our trilogy of...

Justin:

Yes, our three-part segment.

Sydnee:

Yes, on patent medicines. So...

Justin:

Not just patent medicines, the heroes of patent medicine.

Sydnee:

Uh, we've talked about patent medicines before on one of our shows and we just kind of, we've barely scratched the surface. And what we wanted to get into is, there were so many crazy colorful characters in this era in American history, which we're gonna tell you about, uh, who tried to sell people fake medicine, mainly by putting a lot of booze in it, um, that we thought we'd share those stories with you because they're really funny.

Justin:

All right. Well, who do we, uh, who do we have on the show today? In this rogues' gallery.

Sydnee:

Well, first of all, first of all, let, let's refresh. What are patent medicines?

Justin:

Well, Sydnee, let me tell you. Patent medicines are like medicine, but they're full of garbage and they don't work.

Sydnee:

That's right.

Justin:

They don't, they don't have patents because they would have to reveal, uh, the ingredients, which included but were not limited to, garbage and alcohol...

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

And nonsense.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

But, the alcohol is key for this because some, uh, patent medicines would have as much as 50% alcohol. So, if you're wondering why they were such a big hit, uh, especially during the prohibition era, now you know.

Sydnee:

Yeah. This was a great way to skirt prohibition because you could just sell them at the local pharmacy. And they would literally sell some of them by the shot glass or have them on like tap. They'd be like, "Oh, it's medicine. It's cool. Don't worry. Not alcohol."

Um, so, during this time period, this was like the 1800s, early 1900s, in American history, there were tons of guys who would just make a living going around and trying to sell you something. And they would, they'd always have like a, like a hook. Uh, they wanted something that would convince you that the medicine that they made is real and won't just get you drunk, or high, or whatever. Although that probably would have, they probably could have just told you that, like...

Justin:

"It gets you drunk!"

Sydnee:

This doesn't work, but it will get you so turnt.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

That's, that's the word, right?

Justin:

Yeah. You nailed it, babe.

Sydnee:

Did I get it right?

Justin:

Turnt.

Sydnee:

Turnt.

Justin:

That's how you do it.

Sydnee:

That... [laughs].

Justin:

We're parents. We're still cool.

Audience:

[Laughs]

Justin:

You don't have to laugh that hard.

Sydnee:

I know what turnt means.

Justin:

No, I'm serious, the baby's asleep. Please don't laugh that hard.

Sydnee:

My 14-year-old sister had to explain to me what Turn Down For What meant [laughs]. And I said, "So, is it like, it's sort of like asking a question like, for what should I turn down?" Like, like that.

Justin:

Yeah. That's, that's exactly how.

Sydnee:

Like, I had the... I don't know. Anyway...

Justin:

So, so, what was the hook of the folks we're talking about today?

Sydnee:

So, today we're gonna talk about the, uh, Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show.

Justin:

You ever heard, uh, Li'l Abner? The Kickapoo Joy Juice in Li'l Abner? Yeah.

Sydnee:

You know, Li'l Abner, everybody's favorite musical, Li'l Abner.

Justin:

Some Abner heads in the crowd? Uh, any Andy Capp fans?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

As long as we're— Lockhorns, let me hear you!

Sydnee:

Um, so, the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show... I'm gonna say Indian a lot...

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

... because they were called the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show. I realized that it should have been Kickapoo Native American Medicine Show, but they didn't know. So, we're just gonna [crosstalk]...

Justin:

Indian as we're using it is actually like a shorthand that was used. I mean, it didn't mean Native American then either.

Sydnee:

No.

Justin:

It was, like, an idealized, like their version of what Indian meant. So, it actually, it actually helped, it's a helpful way of distinguishing between actual Native Americans and actually, uh, were real and didn't sell people garbage and alcohol.

Sydnee:

There was this perceived notion at the time that the Native Americans were, the Indians, had this connection with the land that made them more in tune with, like, what would be good in your body. What kind of herbs and what kind of roots. And so, if you could convince people that the recipes you were using were originally Native American recipes, then people were more likely to buy them. And that's exactly what the two...

Justin:

It's basically the Calgon play, right? Remember the ancient Chinese secret? Remember that ad? Like...

Sydnee:

Mm-hmm.

Justin:

... the exact same, the exact same proposition.

Sydnee:

Yeah. That's pretty much it.

Justin:

It's not a joke, but nobody remembers the Calgon ad I'm referring to. Myself, I only, uh, know of it because of Wayne's World, so...

Sydnee:

[laughs] This is two Wayne's World references...

Justin:

Two Wayne's World...

Sydnee:

... two nights in a row.

Justin:

We did a show in Milwaukee last night and recited the entire Alice Cooper bit where...

Sydnee:

We just couldn't, we couldn't help ourselves.

Justin:

... he goes, "Mill-e-wah-que, the good land." You can hear it later.

Sydnee:

Anyway...

Justin:

They really dug it, or pretended to.

Sydnee:

So, the two guys who ran the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show... John Healy, who was, uh, as far as I know, the only career he had before this was that he was a drummer boy in the Union Army.

Justin:

Somebody had to do it.

Sydnee:

It's like a weird fact that we know. Like, I don't know if he put that on his resume, like, "I was in the military. I was a drummer boy."

Justin:

"I served. I served my country."

Sydnee:

As a result...

Justin:

"My half of the country."

Sydnee:

As a result, he sometimes [laughs]... He sometimes went by Colonel Healy, because of that.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

I don't think... I'm not in the military. [crosstalk] I don't think that's a title you get for being a drummer boy.

Justin:

Presumably you could, you could be promoted though, right? "That was a heck of a drum out there, man. You really... I was like turn the beat around, I'm promoting that kid. He's great."

Sydnee:

Uh, he converted that to Doc Healy, because why not?

Justin:

Sure.

Sydnee:

When he started, um, as a young man selling medicines that other people made. So, one of the first medicines that he started selling, was actually one, King of Pain was what it was called.

Justin:

Excellent.

Sydnee:

What we talked about last night...

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Who, another, The Diamond King, was the patent medicine salesman who was selling King of Pain. And at first, John Healy was like, "Well, I'll just start selling this stuff and see if I can get anywhere with it." It contained a ton of whiskey so it was popular. Um, but after a while, he really wanted to, you know, branch out on his own. Like, he had the entrepreneurial spirit.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

He wanted to make his own fake medicine. And he found his ticket when he ran into Texas Charlie Bigelow.

Justin:

Was he from Texas?

Sydnee:

Who cares? [laughs]

Justin:

Sure, okay.

Sydnee:

Probably not.

Justin:

Probably not.

Sydnee:

But, it sounded good.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

He wore a big hat, and boots, and like he...

Justin:

A sombrero.

Sydnee:

... tried to sell the whole thing.

Justin:

A sombrero?

Sydnee:

No, like a cowboy hat.

Justin:

Oh, like a cowboy hat. Okay. There was a guy last night who wore a sombrero, sorry.

Sydnee:

Yeah. No, this is Texas Charlie. Charlie wore a cowboy hat.

Justin:

Texas Charlie with his cowboy hat.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

Um, he was already selling so-called Indian cures to people, but he really wasn't making a big name for himself yet. It was, it was like the magic of these two. Healy and Bigelow got together. They sat in a hotel room one night and said, "You know what?" And they were probably really drunk, we can assume, "We could, we could..."

Justin:

[crosstalk]

Sydnee:

"We could, we could use your skills as a drummer boy and with my 10 gallon hat..."

Justin:

"... my big hat. We've got something here. We're the Lennon-McCartney of selling people garbage that gets them drunk."

Sydnee:

[laughs] They started out just trying to sell, everybody liked to sell liver pads, I talked about this last night too. Everybody liked to sell these things that would rejuvenate your liver. And they were basically like scraps of cloth with, like, glue and cayenne pepper on them. So, it would make your skin tingle. And they started off with that and they weren't having much success, so they said, "You know what? We need a back story. That's the problem. We need this whole, like, myth that surrounds our products."

Justin:

Mm-hmm.

Sydnee:

So, they decided that they were gonna go with the Kickapoo Indian tribe, which really was, there really was a Kickapoo tribe. Now, the Native Americans that they would eventually recruit to their show and the products they made had nothing to do with the real Kickapoo Indians, they just thought it was a catchy name. So, they were like, "Yeah."

Justin:

And it is to this day.

Sydnee:

So, they put together their own tribe to work for them. So, they started paying Native Americans. And they, some of them really were, some of them were members of, like, the Iroquois tribe, the Mohawk, the Sioux tribes. Others were just non-Native Americans who maybe could pull it off.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

And then there were guys who were definitely white guys, but were like really, "I'll do whatever. I need to make some money." And so, they would, like, hire them too and say, like, "These are Indian fighters who keep them in line."

Justin:

You laugh, but Iron Eyes Cody was an Italian guy...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... from the, uh, you know the ad where the Native American man is crying on the side of the road because you threw trash? Italian guy. I'm not making that up, don't laugh. We were doing this trick in the 70s. Like, don't get all snooty. Some of you were alive then.

Sydnee:

They really were. And they really, I think it's just a lot of people didn't know what all Native Americans necessarily looked like. Like, a lot of people could pass themselves off and go, "No, I'm just from a different tribe." And there wasn't the internet, so like you couldn't, you know, you couldn't figure out they were lying. So, they were really like Irish guys who were like, "No, I'm totally..."

Justin:

Oh, yeah.

Sydnee:

"... part of the Kickapoos."

Justin:

"I've been here for forever. Woo, I could tell you some stories about America."

Sydnee:

So, in order to start selling the medicines, Bigelow made up this whole back story about how he once got lost in the woods and he injured himself and he got really sick. And he was stuck and he was on the brink of death and an Indian chief from the Kickapoo tribe found him and gave him this stuff that was called Sagwa. And this Kickapoo Indian Sagwa saved his life. And so, now he wants to sell it to you. So, what's in the Sagwa, you may want to know?

Justin:

I don't have a list. Do you have a list?

Sydnee:

No, I do. I'm gonna tell you.

Justin:

Oh, thank goodness. That was a scary few seconds for me.

Sydnee:

Okay, you can't look.

Justin:

Okay, I won't look.

Sydnee:

Recite it.

Justin:

Alcohol and garbage...

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

... and maybe spearmint?

Sydnee:

[laughs] I mean, close. There's some, there's some stuff, you know, there's some like liquorice root. There's some aloe. There's some dandelion root. There's lots of roots.

Justin:

A big thing with patent [crosstalk] medicine ingredients, is that, uh, you wanted them to be, have some effect. So, like the liver pads would put the cayenne. Um, the most common, though, is that they would make you poop.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

So, you would know like, [fart noise] it's something.

Sydnee:

So, senna, which is a laxative, was a major ingredient in Kickapoo Indian Sagwa.

Justin:

Something's working in there...

Sydnee:

So, yeah.

Justin:

... because the bad stuff is gone. I'm, something is happening to me. Something is working.

Sydnee:

And it also had a lot of alcohol, so you wouldn't care. So, it's like, "I've been in the bathroom all day!"

Justin:

And also, you're... And also, you'd be in for a messy night.

Sydnee:

[laughs] So, this was their biggest seller, which is, you'd think that the first time that somebody took it and they were like, "No, seriously, don't. I've almost pooped myself to death. Don't take that stuff."

Justin:

"And I was hungover the next day. It was the pits."

Sydnee:

But, it took off. Everybody wanted some of it. And so, they expanded that to other products. There was a Kickapoo Buffalo Salve. There was a Kickapoo Indian Worm Killer. Um, again, a lot of these things just contained some various roots, and some oils, and then a whole bunch of either a laxative or some alcohol. Either way, I guess, you were, you were lucky if you got the alcohol in the...

Justin:

Oh, that's the good one.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

That's the one that works for me.

Sydnee:

And initially they were selling these out of... They set up, like, a tent at a train station in Boston. They thought it would be a high-traffic area and so they started selling them out of this tent. And they would have all the Native Americans they hired, that was why they were so successful, is because they would hang around there and so they would go, "Oh, look, they're selling that stuff and there's an Indian. They must be real."

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Um, and that was... they took off, they made so much money, they decided to build what they would call their Principal Wigwam.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

[laughs] The Principal Wigwam was actually just this huge warehouse that they rented. And they set it up like, um, like this really insulting Native American Disney World kind of thing. Like, you'd walk in and there were teepees everywhere inside the building.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

And all of the, all of...

Justin:

Somewhat unawares of the purpose of the wigwam, right? It's not like, it's not like Native American people walk into a large room and they're like, "This is just too big."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"I feel really exposed right now. I need a smaller structure within this structure to protect me." All Native Americans are agoraphobic. You heard it here first.

Sydnee:

[laughs] That's not true.

Justin:

It's not true.

Sydnee:

Don't tell people. No.

Justin:

Don't tell, uh, no. It's not true.

[theme song plays]

[ad break]

Justin:

Did you think that's true?

Sydnee:

Um, so, they would... They had their teepees set up. They would have, like, campfires. They would have big pots where they were pretending to mix up the cures that they were making so that...

Justin:

You say it's kind of like Walt Disney World— It is exactly like Epcot.

Sydnee:

[laughs] Yes, it is.

Justin:

Like, that is— Like, "Oh, yo. Mexico. Yeah." There's margaritas at every stand, they cost \$8.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

And there's a log flume that goes down an Aztec temple. Um, that's Mexico for you, in a nutshell.

Sydnee:

Uh, so, this was America. This will essentially be...

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

... America Land.

Justin:

And i— they, was there a gift shop?

Sydnee:

Yeah, of course there was a gift shop. Obviously.

Justin:

Oh, because... I'm sorry. Silly me.

Sydnee:

That would be the place where you could buy the medicines that you were watching them brew in front of you. And then just all kinds of like Native American trinkets and knick knacks and things. And none of this was real stuff...

Justin:

No.

Sydnee:

... because they're, you know, there were very few actual Native Americans working for them. And the ones who were, were probably not invested in, like, "Oh, I really wanna share my culture with you..."

Justin:

Right. I wanna...

Sydnee:

"... because you're lying about who I am and..."

Justin:

Right. "I wanna help you really nail the mythos of my people."

Sydnee:

"You're just, you're just doing this to sell people laxatives, so I'm not gonna put a lot of effort into it." Um, and, but they would, they would draw more crowds because this was a place where all the tourists could come. So, they would draw more crowds by... They would put the, put their Native American, uh, salespeople in full dress and put them on horses. And they would just ride around town and then people would follow them, I guess.

Justin:

How boring was the town? How— uh, "Oh, man. That's the coolest thing I've seen all day. I am totally gonna follow that guy. I don't know where he's going, but I'm into it. It's gotta be better than what I'm doing. I'm playing that stupid stick-hoop game."

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

"I'm going with that guy. Wait for me!"

Sydnee:

It's gotta be more fun than, "I've just been pooping non-stop for the last three days."

Justin:

[laughs] "I've been drunk pooping for two days and Pedialyte won't be invented for a 100 years, to say nothing of Gatorade."

Sydnee:

[laughs] Um, for their female customers, they had a mascot that they developed that was specifically aimed at them. Her name was Little Bright Eyes. She was an Indian princess...

Justin:

Who did really sad indie music. Very mopey. Nothing for Iron Eyes Cody, but Bright Eyes, yeah. Love that guy.

Sydnee:

Uh, but Little Bright Eyes had lots of pamphlets and special medicines for your female complaints. So, don't worry, ladies, she's got your back.

Justin:

She's got your back.

Sydnee:

Again, mainly just like with laxatives and stuff.

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

But...

Justin:

It's laxatives and alcohol, but still.

Sydnee:

... feminine laxatives.

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

They come in like pink boxes.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

Because that's what we like. Um, they also had all kinds of, like, magazines they would sell. They had like children's books and like, I guess, what at the time would have been like a coffee table book. I don't know, was this before coffee tables? [laughs]

Justin:

It's a medical history show. I can't keep up with furniture too.

Sydnee:

So, they had, like, big picture books like the life and scenes among the Kickapoo Indians, which was all fake. Like, all these pictures were, they were probably taken in the warehouse.

Justin:

Right.

Sydnee:

They would sell them to people so you could have pictures of fake Indians on your coffee table, or whatever table. And they had like a Kickapoo Indian dream book with like all of these mystical stories that were told by the Kickapoo Indians that you could lull your children to sleep with.

Justin:

I bet if the real Kickapoo Indian dream book was published, it would basically just be, "Today I dreamed of that white guy dying in the most horrific way imaginable. Sincerely, Jebediah O'Leary." Because he's a, he was an Irish guy pretending to be, yeah.

Sydnee:

Right. Exactly. Yeah.

Justin:

It was a rich fiction.

Sydnee:

Jebediah O'Leary?

Justin:

Jebediah O'Leary.

Sydnee:

This got so big that at one point they had, uh, the number that I saw was 880 Native Americans, or "Native Americans", in their employ.

Justin:

Wow.

Sydnee:

So, it was huge. Um, and then they...

Justin:

Hey, job creation though, you can't knock that.

Sydnee:

And in addition to... [laughs]

Justin:

I guess?

Sydnee:

In addition to their medicine shows, they also franchised the name because a lot of people, a lot of... And that was really common at the time period. Other patent medicine salesmen would see something taking off, and wanna like, "Well, I wanna do the same thing, but I don't wanna get in trouble." So, they would just like, for instance, Sagwa was spelt S-A-G-W-A, and somebody would add like an H in there somewhere and say like, "No, it's cool. This is mine, it's different."

Justin:

You know when you start seeing Cronuts but with five Os. It's like, "Ah, right. I get it." Same thing.

Sydnee:

Those are just the same things?

Justin:

It's the same thing.

Sydnee:

Aw.

Justin:

Aw, I know.

Sydnee:

I thought it was special.

Justin:

You thought that Cronut I got you at Dunkin Donuts was the real deal, but no.

Sydnee:

Crooonuts.

Justin:

See, it...

Sydnee:

[laughs] That was a really good one.

Justin:

It was really cute. Go ahead.

Sydnee:

So, they franchised their name because they were like, "People are going to try to rip us off anyway, um, we're gonna make them pay upfront." And it

was a really small fee, but a lot of people latched onto it. And then they were selling more of their own product anyway, so they kept getting, you know, what- I don't know what kind of deal they worked out, if it was like a percentage of the franchise fee...

Justin:

Something.

Sydnee:

... or something...

Justin:

Some free bottles of alcohol and garbage.

Sydnee:

... off the, each sale. I don't know. Anyway, so they made more money. And that actually spread, not just to the US, but to Europe and Australia, there were Kickapoo Indian Medicine Shows there too, which is crazy. Um, in addition, at the local pharmacy they would sell all this stuff. So, they would take their medicine show into a town and they would sell all of their goods at the pharmacy. And usually, the way they would do that, is they would go to the pharmacist and say, "Hey, take all that other fake stuff off the shelf, put our fake stuff on the shelf."

Justin:

"Our real fake stuff." Right.

Sydnee:

Yeah, "And we will give you some money." And the pharmacist was like, "Whatever, I don't know, none of this works anyway."

Justin:

"None of this works. It's all lies."

Sydnee:

"I just went into this because, you know, we can't sell alcohol right now and this is a really easy way to have access to it."

Justin:

"This isn't even a real register. It's made of cardboard."

Sydnee:

When they did do their, because we've talked a lot about their medicine shows, and I think most people from... If you listen to our show, you've probably heard us talk about medicine shows before, but if you haven't... So, these medicine shows were really like traveling circuses or carnivals. They would come into town and it would be the huge event, like...

Justin:

It would be the biggest entertainment thing going on for weeks.

Sydnee:

Yeah. Months, years, sometimes. I mean, it— They were huge events. Everybody would come, you know, the adults, the kids, because there was entertainment for everyone. So, there would be, you know, movies which a lot of people hadn't seen movies. So, there'd be a movie and you could go see it. There'd be people singing and dancing. They would do all kinds of, again probably really insulting, like traditional Kickapoo Indian-like dances and, uh, they would perform like wedding ceremonies for the fake Indians to get fake married.

Justin:

[laughs] It seems like a bridge too far.

Sydnee:

Occasionally they would have one of the, one of the Native Americans who actually was some, from some tribe, you know, wasn't Irish, was actually a Native American, stand up and give a speech in their native language. And then one of the white guys would interpret it for everyone and just, of course, make it up completely. And it would always be like, "Oh, and he says that the medicine will heal the wounds from the animals [crosstalk] of the earth." Yeah, I don't know [crosstalk].

Justin:

I bet, you know, they were just saying, "I wanna kill this white guy."

Sydnee:

Well, that was the thing, is that what they, what they wrote about, because a lot of the ways we know about this stuff is because the guys like Healy and Bigelow who ran the shows, wrote these histories of it, of themselves. Those are the kind of guys they were. And they noted that the other Native Americans would all kind of chuckle because, you know, you know that guy, that's what he was saying was like, "This white guy is an idiot. He's a complete fool."

Justin:

There was one...

Sydnee:

"I'm really embarrassed."

Justin:

You know there's one guy, like one super educated guy in the back of the crowd, like, "What? This is, this is an out— My mother what? What? This is an outrage!"

Sydnee:

One of the guys who worked for their medicine show, who wasn't one of their fake Kickapoo Indians but another one of their salesmen, I feel like we should, we should talk about just for a second.

Justin:

Okay.

Sydnee:

His name was Nevada Ned. That could be enough right there. But Nevada Ned was already selling patent medicines and then he got hooked up with Healy and Bigelow because he liked their style, he liked their hat.

Justin:

He liked their poison garbage alcohol.

Sydnee:

And his specialty was, he said, you know, "I wanna help you sell this stuff and I've already kind of got my own line. I'll just, if you don't mind, I'll use some of the Kickapoo name and, like, we'll pretend like they were also made by your fake Indians." And they all have cocaine in them so they sold really well.

Justin:

Super well.

Sydnee:

Yeah. So, he sold medicines just filled with cocaine. Uh, he wore...

Justin:

[laughs]

Sydnee:

... at all times, he wore...

Justin:

"I can't get anymore cocaine in this vial. I tried, trust me. It's filled to the brim. State maximum cocaine in here."

Sydnee:

At all times, Nevada Ned would wear \$3000 worth of diamonds on his person somewhere.

Justin:

That's cool.

Sydnee:

He carried two, uh, gold mounted mother of pearl handed revolvers. Always.

Justin:

Cool. Good luck.

Sydnee:

Um, and he used \$10 gold pieces as buttons.

Justin:

Excellent.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Like his style.

Sydnee:

In his spare time, which I'm guessing he had a lot of because he probably did a lot of cocaine so he didn't waste it sleeping...

Justin:

Not a lot of sleep. Right.

Sydnee:

... uh, he wrote crime fiction.

Justin:

Most of it, I'm assuming, autobiographical, "You'll never believe who I ripped off today."

Sydnee:

So, Nevada Ned didn't last very long in the whole patent medicine biz because he got really hooked on his own medicines.

Justin:

No!

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

He got into— Wait, cocaine's addictive?

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Why didn't you warn me before I did all that cocaine backstage?

Sydnee:

Not with our daughter here. So, anyway... [laughs]

Justin:

Got a little too real there for a second, guys, I'm sorry. Woof, the road's tough. It's all I'm saying. We've done, gosh, it seems like three shows now in the past three days and the road's tough. It takes a toll. I destroyed backstage. They didn't have the Gummy Bears I requested. I flipped out.

Sydnee:

We really wanted, on our ride over we said, we need as many of these little Crunchies, which are these little cheese puffs for babies, we need as many as you can carry. And there were none. And—

Justin:

The baby loves them. And I also asked them for stage two prunes, nothing.

Sydnee:

[laughs] We're kidding. They've been very nice to us. So nice.

Justin:

They've been very nice.

Sydnee:

Yeah.

Justin:

Uh, that—

Sydnee:

No, but...

Justin:

What?

Sydnee:

One thing...

Justin:

Yes.

Sydnee:

... before we finish. You're probably wondering... [laughs] You're probably wondering, did these guys ever get in trouble?

Justin:

Yeah.

Sydnee:

I mean, because they were selling people, you know, alcohol-like laxatives and cocaine, and all of it was made up. And eventually, all of the patent medicine guys got in trouble because the FDA was created and they were like, "Listen, you can't just... This is... No. You're killing people and you're making them poop themselves to death and we've got to stop you." And there were laws and they started putting ingredients on packaging and blah, blah, blah.

But, the Kickapoo guys got out of it pretty much scot-free. They got in trouble one time. They made a Kickapoo cough syrup and, uh, this was one of the last new products they came out with and it was around the time they started actually, like, chemists were looking at what was in this stuff and then printing, you know, "This is what you're taking in your body. Stop."

And it was analyzed and then there, they, like the American Medical Association, looked at it and said, basically, this was their quote, "It did not possess properties recognized by the medical profession as necessary for the proper treatment of the lungs in any way." So, at that point, they were fined— They finally got in trouble and they were fined \$25.

Justin:

That'll put a stop to those crooks. Uh, thank you so much, Chicago, for having us here to your lovely city. Uh, it's beautiful. Thank you to the

Athenaeum. Everyone here has been super nice. They got the right Gummy Bears, I was just kidding, they nailed it.

Sydnee:

[laughs]

Justin:

Uh, there are posters, by the way. Make sure you, uh, buy some posters because they're just for this show, specific for this show. Uh, Syd, is there anything else you want me to say? Thank you to our daughter, Charlie, if you're listening to this in the future, for being so chill for the past three days. We really appreciate that.

Sydnee:

I hope she's still chill, I don't know.

Justin:

Thank you to Harry the Bunny, and Peek-a-boo, and the Color Crew, for helping keep our daughter entertained. Uh, we really appreciate that. Thank you to you, Sydnee, for being so understanding and nursing our baby in a lot of weird rooms over the past few days. I do appreciate that.

Uh, once again, thank you so much for, uh, we hope you like these live shows. Uh, we know we've had some spotty quality in live shows before in terms of audio quality, not these.

Sydnee:

I think these were pretty darn good.

Justin:

They were pretty darn good. Hope you liked them. We'll be back next week with another, uh, normal episode. Until then, take care.

And, uh, that's gonna do it for us, folks. Until next time we have a medicine issue to talk about. I'm Justin McElroy.

Sydnee:

I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Justin:

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

Audience:

[Cheers]

[theme music plays]

MaximumFun.org

Comedy and culture.

Artist owned.

Listener supported.