

## **Sawbones 164: Vaseline**

Published on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016

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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—I'm in fine voice today. I d—until I felt the room filled with that energy, I didn't realize. My name is Justin [laughs]—

**Sydnee:**

Do you wanna finish the intro there?

**Justin:**

I'm your cohost Justin McElroy.

**Sydnee:**

And I'm Sydnee McElroy. I'm sorry, and I'm Sydnee McElroy!

**Justin:**

That's good.

**Sydnee:**

Is that better?

**Justin:**

That's a good instrument.

**Sydnee:**

Is that what I should—

**Justin:**

That's a good instrument.

**Sydnee:**

You like that better?

**Justin:**

You know what? I'm surprised I'm in such good voice today because I'm in pretty dire straits. My lips are chapped.

**Sydnee:**

Oh no, your lips are chapped?

**Justin:**

Mr. Frost is coming around, and that can only mean one thing. Santa's on his way, but also my lips are chapped.

**Sydnee:**

Well, thank you for doing the show anyway. I mean, a star of such caliber I would assume wouldn't, you know, be willing to perform unless he was in tip top shape, so.

**Justin:**

Sydnee, people rely on this, and the least I can do is push through this incredible pain.

**Sydnee:**

Do we not have an intern or someone to bring us some—

**Justin:**

Kevin!

**Sydnee:**

... some Chapstick?

**Justin:**

Kevin!

**Sydnee:**

Some lip balm.

**Justin:**

Something.

**Sydnee:**

Some Vaseline perhaps.

**Justin:**

Uh, Vaseline, that would work, yeah. Chapstick or Vaseline, whatever.

**Sydnee:**

Whatever, okay. We'll—

**Justin:**

What is Vaseline? I think Vaseline's a little goopy for my purposes.

**Sydnee:**

Vaseline is goopy?

**Justin:**

For my purposes.

**Sydnee:**

Well, do you wanna know more about Vaseline?

**Justin:**

Uh, yeah, obviously. I'm pretty in the dark about it.

**Sydnee:**

That's good. I have a lot of information about Vaseline I'd like to share with you.

**Justin:**

Just at your fingertips? That's strange.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. I just... I know a lot about Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Don't ask too many questions, I know a lot about Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Okay, fine. Well, I'll listen to you talk about Vaseline then.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Uh, thank you Bridget, for suggesting this topic of Vaseline, uh, on Facebook. I saw it, and I screenshotted it and said, "This is great, don't forget. Don't forget Bridget, she suggested this, and it was a great idea." Um, because I wanna tell you the story of the guy who invented Vaseline.

**Justin:**

All right, Mr. Vaseline his name was.

**Sydnee:**

No. Nope, that's not his name. Definitely. He's a... he was a chemist, and he was named Robert Chesebrough. Chesebrough. Do you wanna say Cheesebrow?

**Justin:**

Let's say Cheesebrow, that's funnier.

**Sydnee:**

Chesebrough. Cheesebrow. Rob. Rob invented Vaseline. He was born in London, he was raised in New York City, and he was originally working on refining kerosene from the oil of sperm whales.

**Justin:**

Weird, okay.

**Sydnee:**

Yes, that was his original kind of goal as a chemist, and then kinda petroleum came along and it was taking over that corner of the market, and he was interested in what other things you could do with petroleum. And so in 1859, at the age of 22, he visited an oil field in Titusville, Pennsylvania, and while he was there observing and discussing with the various oil guys and gals.

**Justin:**

The—the oil fellas.

**Sydnee:**

The oil folks.

**Justin:**

Yep.

**Sydnee:**

The oil people.

**Justin:**

The oil people.

**Sydnee:**

Drillers? I don't know, whatever.

**Justin:**

That's fine, that's good.

**Sydnee:**

The oil workers. He learned about rod wax.

**Justin:**

Hello.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

I'm Rod Wax, welcome to the Texaco Suspense Hour. Stay tuned.

**Sydnee:**

That sounds like an adult film star.

**Justin:**

No, it sounds like an adult film tool.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Either way. This is not gonna be that kind of episode, don't make it that kind of episode. Uh, rod wax was the stuff that accumulated... [laughs]

**Justin:**

I'm... Listen, I was a 13 year old boy, you do not need to tell me what rod wax is.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] Uh, it's the stuff that accumulated on the pumps, the oil pumps over time and would make them not work as well, and so that it would have to be removed. It was this, like, thick, I think, like, originally, like, black gunky kind of stuff. And, uh, they were talking about for... from a work—

from a working perspective, it was a bad thing, right? Because you had to clean it off, and it slowed production down.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

But, the actual oil drillers really liked it because they said that the stuff was really good to put on, like, minor cuts or burns or abrasions. It would help heal their hands faster, or wherever on their skin but mainly their hands would often get kind of banged up—

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... in production. And he was intrigued by this substance and though, "Maybe there's something I could do to make it look better and cleaner and sell it to people for this sort of medical purpose." So, he took it back to his lab and refined it down to... distilled it down to what we know as petroleum jelly.

**Justin:**

What is with, like, I guess there has to be one. There always has to be one person who's willing to just, like, give stuff a shot, but what on Earth would compel you to get a minor burn or cut and you're like, "I gotta put something on it. Maybe the goop I scooped off the rod." Like, what is wrong with people?

**Sydnee:**

I have to assume it was an accident, that they were cleaning it off, you know, the equipment, and it got on their hands and their ha—somebody's hand was already cut or burnt, and then—

**Justin:**

Yeah, yeah, I guess that makes sense.

**Sydnee:**

And then they thought, "Oh, that seemed to make it feel better."

**Justin:**

Something? I don't know.

**Sydnee:**

I don't... Who knows? It took him about 10 years to really get the product that he was looking for.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

So, I mean, he really put a lot of work into this, and in the process, he did a ton of self-testing. He... As in, like, he cut himself and he burned himself and injured himself in myriad ways and then smeared various iterations of his product on it.

**Justin:**

That's wild.

**Sydnee:**

And eventually, what came out was what he called Wonder Jelly.

**Justin:**

[laughs]

**Sydnee:**

This is just full... this episode is just full of them.

**Justin:**

Great terms.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, it was not immediately clear to everyone what it was for. Even though he said, like, "Look, I cut myself and I burned myself and I put Wonder Jelly on it, and it worked great." And he went around shopping it to, like, pharmacies and drug stores and druggists and saying, "You should stock this on your shelves and sell it to people for their, you know, wounds." And nobody was buying it.

**Justin:**

Well, yeah, 'cause it's, like, bizarre. You can't just call it Wonder Jelly and... although I guess a lot of patent medicine people did crap like that.

**Sydnee:**

Back then, this was pretty common.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

But what do you do if your patent medicine just can't... it can't get legs and you need to get it out there to the people?

**Justin:**

Uh, take it on tour?

**Sydnee:**

Take it on tour.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. So in a medicine show of sorts, I mean, it's the closest thing you could say, it was his own private, one man medicine show...

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

He started touring the country.

**Justin:**

His one man medicine show. That's a thing.

**Sydnee:**

His one... [laughs] He started touring the country, uh, demonstrating to crowds his Wonder Jelly. And what he would do is he would burn himself or cut himself, he used, like, open flames or acid or whatever, something very dramatic, and then apply this stuff all over it. Now obviously, it wasn't healing before their eyes in public, but he would say, "Oh, I feel so much better. And also, look at all these other scars I have from past wounds, magically healed by Wonder Jelly." The key to this is that at the end of his presentation, he gave out lots of free samples.

**Justin:**



That's... yeah, that's good.

**Sydnee:**

Everybody took home their free samples. He would also specifically target doctors in— in like smaller rural communities.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

And then housewives because back then a lot of, you know, kind of first aid and basic medical care was being provided by women who ran households.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

So, moms or whoever. So, he would give out these free samples. It caught on, they liked using it, people enjoyed it. So then they would go to the pharmacies and say, "Hey, I want more of that Wonder Jelly," forcing the pharmacists to—

**Justin:**

Hear people say that out loud.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Poor [laughs] poor guys.

**Sydnee:**

And then contact Rob and say, "Hey, I guess I am gonna have to buy some of your Wonder Jelly because all the people are asking for it and I don't have any, so get it to me." Uh, at this point, he realized he had something on his hands, so he patented the process and he opened his first factory in 1870, and this is when we first hear the term Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Now, where'd that come from?

**Sydnee:**

This comes from the German word wasser for water and the Greek word for olive oil, oleum.

**Justin:**

Okay water—

**Sydnee:**

Wasoleum.

**Justin:**

Oil water, something.

**Sydnee:**

Oil and water, yeah.

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Which aren't supposed to mix.

**Justin:**

Supposed to mix, but this time they do. That's what makes it wonderful jelly.

**Sydnee:**

It's great 'cause in his patent, he says, like, the first line is, like, "I, Robert Chesebrough, have invented a new and useful product from petroleum, which I have named Vaseline."

**Justin:**

That's—that's good. You gotta market yourself.

**Sydnee:**

I like that.

**Justin:**

Good branding.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, by 1874 he was selling 1,400 jars a day.

**Justin:**

Dang.

**Sydnee:**

That's a lot of Vaseline. And he founded the Chesebrough Manufacturing Company in 1875. It won all kinds of, like, scientific awards throughout the 1870s and it was finally even endorsed by the Lancet, which was a medical journal—

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... still around today, been around a long time, uh, in 1876. Um, now it came in three different colors, and depending on the color, there were... it was, like, a different line of products.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So... And it was based on how refined it was. The more he distilled it, the more refined the product was, the, um, the lighter it appeared.

**Justin:**

Oh, okay.

**Sydnee:**

So, like, the stuff that wasn't as refined would be, like, red, and then as he would distill it down more, it would look more like blondish yellowish, and then the most refined stuff looked kind of white-ish.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, and so the—the white stuff, he was advising for more, like, medical uses because it was supposed to be the cleanest product. Um, for hair, for skin, uh, different kinds of, um, cosmetic uses, and then for medical stuff. The red stuff was for veterinary use and leather care.

Uh, medicinal products that were derived from Vaseline and sold by the company were things like Vaseline oil, there was camphorated Vaseline, which was for rheumatism.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

There was Vaseline cerate and Vaseline confections.

**Justin:**

Oh, delicious.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, which were for all different kinds of throat and lung problems. There was a capsicum Vaseline that you were supposed to apply to your skin, uh, for like a sore throat or a chest cold, like someone would've a mustard plaster.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Except it didn't, you know, mustard plasters would blister the skin when they used them. Vaseline would not.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, there was a carbolated Vaseline, that they sold, uh, to, um, to use for dressings, wound dressings, to try to, like, kill bacteria. Well, they didn't know that but, you know, keep things clean. Um, mentholated Vaseline, which you could use for headaches or nerve pain. Uh, you could use white Vaseline for colds and sore throats, and this was actually recommended to take internally.

**Justin:**

Oh, gross!

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, you ate spoonfuls of Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Oh, no!

**Sydnee:**

Uh, and they advertised that children take it more readily than other medicines.

**Justin:**

Ew, dirty children. Weird children.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know where those kids were who were like, "Mommy..."

**Justin:**

Mommy.

**Sydnee:**

"... can I have some more Vaseline, please?"

**Justin:**

Please, Mommy. But, like, back then that was probably, like, cotton candy to them 'cause everything sucked.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

Like, they didn't know what good things were, you know what I mean?

**Sydnee:**

So they ate Vaseline?

**Justin:**

So they ate Vaseline, 'cause they're like, "I guess this is candy," 'cause they didn't know anything.

**Sydnee:**

Is this good?

**Justin:**

Is this good? We eat horehound. Horehound or this.

**Sydnee:**

My mom loves horehound.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Go on.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, there was Vaseline camphor ice, which was great for chapped hands and chapped lips.

**Justin:**

This is, like, a lot of brand diversification.

**Sydnee:**

Mm-hmm.

**Justin:**

I tend to think of that as, like, a more modern thing. Like, but this is, like, the Gatorade of its time. [laughs] There's a lot of, like, this is, uh, Vaseline bitter mountain rush.

**Sydnee:**

There really was. There was a lip ice specifically for lips in addition to the camphor ice, which you could use on hands or lips. Um, and then there was one borated petroleum jelly, which you were supposed to put on your baby's eyes.

**Justin:**

Why?

**Sydnee:**

Just to soothe them, if they would get irritated.

**Justin:**

I... That...

**Sydnee:**

They were all just different form... And, right now, please keep in mind, I am just telling you about the medical uses. I could read you equally long lists of cosmetic products, of various, like, cleaning things, lubricants for, like, you

know, your machines, like, mechanical uses. I mean, there were endless uses for Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

These are just some of the medical applications.

**Justin:**

That's wi—that's a... I can see why it caught on so hard.

**Sydnee:**

Yes, it was everywhere.

**Justin:**

So, but, you said you were gonna tell me about the guy who made it. So, I wanna hear more about him.

**Sydnee:**

Okay, well there's a little more to his story. But before we get to that, why don't we go to the billing department?

**Justin:**

Let's go!

[ad break]

**Justin:**

So, Vaseline fever was sweeping the nation.

**Sydnee:**

That's right. Because of how many different products were being marketed and how many different uses, you know, there were for Vaseline in its various forms, everybody was buying it. So, it became the standard for diaper rash, for instance. It was... every nursery was gonna have a tub of Vaseline to, you know, smear on their little baby bottoms.

Um, they used it, of course, for dry, chapped skin. So, everybody would have a tub in the winter for their lips, for their hands. Um, anything that you can think of, people were using Vaseline for. In addition to that, it was widely used in the cosmetic industry, as I alluded to. Not just the medical

industry was wild about Vaseline. So, it was commonly used for, like, hair tonic, uh, pomade. If you wanted to, you know, give your hair, like, a swoopy doo.

**Justin:**

Yeah, like, kind of a swoopy doo.

**Sydnee:**

Kind of a swoopy doo.

**Justin:**

Kind of that cool spit curl look.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly. Use Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm. Or you wanted to look like a total creep, you could just use a lot of it.

**Sydnee:**

Just use a lot of Vaseline?

**Justin:**

It's exac—it's like indirectly proportionate to, no directly proportionate to how much you wanna look like a creep is how much Vaseline you put on.

**Sydnee:**

You want to look like a slick guy.

**Justin:**

Like a slick—

**Sydnee:**

Smooth operator.

**Justin:**

Zoot suit riot.

**Sydnee:**



[laughs] Use some Vaseline. Uh, it was used for even hair coloring. Like, they would put coloring in it, and you could just kind of smear it over your hair and it would... it's like painting your hair different colors.

**Justin:**

Great.

**Sydnee:**

Uh—

**Justin:**

I think I saw, uh, Ron Popeil do something like that.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] There was, um, eyelash coloring, eyebrow coloring, nail and cuticle cream, cold cream, shampoos made out of Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Come on! That's not... that's... it li— it like, that's not... It's water resistant. That doesn't make sense.

**Sydnee:**

It was—it was marketed as, like, soapless shampoo. [laughs]

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Because that's what everybody's looking for is, like, my shampoo makes my hair too clean.

**Justin:**

It's... Look at these suds. Disgusting.

**Sydnee:**

Imitators popped up because of this and because it... While his process was, you know, patented, um, you could go get the rod wax if you really wanted it. It was really cheap stuff. That was part of why he started this to begin with, it was really cheap stuff on the front end to just, I mean, they were getting rid of it, just take it. So, a lot of imitators popped up, and that's when, in the 1880s, we see the introduction of that blue seal on Vaseline.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

That's why, because that was iconic. That is Vaseline. You knew you were getting the authentic, triple distilled, that was how he marketed it, he triple distilled it, meaning it was the cleanest stuff you could buy, Vaseline, uh, from other competitors because of that blue seal.

**Justin:**

Although, I imagine enough time has passed now that it's... the patent is gone, right? Like, it's probably a... if you buy generic petroleum jelly...

**Sydnee:**

Petroleum jelly, sure.

**Justin:**

... you'd be getting the same stuff.

**Sydnee:**

Exactly. I'm sure you're getting the same stuff, but the name Vaseline, I think, has become so intrinsically linked with the product.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

You know, it's one of those names that you almost don't think of it as a brand name, even though it is. Um, in 1883, Queen Victoria actually knighted him. Knighted—

**Justin:**

Wow.

**Sydnee:**

... Chesebrough for this, for his discovery, and then kind of endorsed it, saying she liked to use it for her dry skin as well.

**Justin:**

[laughs] Well, from the top to the bottom. Everybody's crazy about Vaseline.

**Sydnee:**

It was taken to the North Pole by Commander Robert Perry on his expedition there in 1909.

**Justin:**

Seems smart.

**Sydnee:**

Yeah. For his dry, chapped skin.

**Justin:**

And for his hair.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

You know—you know, he didn't know, maybe there were ice ladies up there.

**Sydnee:**

And he needed a swoopy doo to impress the ice ladies.

**Justin:**

A swoopy cool doo.

**Sydnee:**

In World War I, US soldiers used it for cuts and burns, um, and we also talked about this in the sunscreen episode. Remember Red Vet Pet, Red Veterinarian Petroleum Jelly?

**Justin:**

No.

**Sydnee:**

We talked about it.

**Justin:**

Oh, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

Anyway.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

It was a kind of sunscreen.

**Justin:**

We talk about a lot of things, Sydnee.

**Sydnee:**

It was derived from the red form of the petroleum jelly. It was used as, like, a sun block, so you could cover yourself in Red Vet Pet and not get sun burnt. Uh, medics would have it in their bags on the front lines. Soldiers would write home and ask for, you know, loved ones, like, "Please send cookies and petroleum jelly, you know, Vaseline." Uh, they would... they actually used it to barter with British soldiers commonly.

**Justin:**

Oh, wow.

**Sydnee:**

I don't— I don't know what they were bartering it for.

**Justin:**

More petroleum jelly.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs] They were just trading back and forth—

**Justin:**

Yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... Vaseline.

**Justin:**

They just wanted something to do. [laughs]

**Sydnee:**

Uh, in 1913, the chemist T.L. Williams added coal dust to Vaseline, which was the first mascara.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Coal dust and Vaseline. Put that on your eyes!

**Justin:**

Hey ladies.

**Sydnee:**

You know where this would go go—well? On your eyes.

**Justin:**

They e—

**Sydnee:**

It's got coal dust.

**Justin:**

I'm not sure that's a good product though 'cause like they could jus—ladies could just say like, "I have coal dust."

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

It's the early 1900s, I have coal dust, my friend.

**Sydnee:**

We are all coated in coal dust.

**Justin:**

Yeah, we got it, my dude. Where will I ever find coal dust for my Vaseline? Oh, that's right, it's everywhere.

**Sydnee:**

So—

**Justin:**

I have a son made of coal dust, he's named Gerald.

**Sydnee:**

That's gonna be—that's gonna be on somebody's Pinterest board now, like, DIY mascara.

**Justin:**

DIY mascara.

**Sydnee:**

Take some coal dust.

**Justin:**

But we don't have coal du—I couldn't get coal dust now if I wanted to. I have no idea where to get coal dust.

**Sydnee:**

Justin, we live in West Virginia. We can find coal dust if we need to.

**Justin:**

Stop perpetuating stereotypes. We don't all know where coal is!

**Sydnee:**

I do.

**Justin:**

Where's coal?

**Sydnee:**

When I did a... My dad got it for me. [laughs]

**Justin:**

So, just go to find Sydnee's dad.

**Sydnee:**

When I did a science project about acid mine drainage in 6th grade, my dad got me coal to try to grow plants in. It didn't work.

**Justin:**

Didn't work.

**Sydnee:**

No.

**Justin:**

Sorry.

**Sydnee:**

There you go. Anyway, in World War II, the surgeon general actually had a certain kind of gauze that was coated in Vaseline sent to the front lines, uh, commissioned it to be created and sent there to apply, you know, in a gauze form for wounds and burns. And there was this report at the time by the New York Times that it helped save 75 burn victims because of this magic Vaseline gauze.

**Justin:**

Hm...

**Sydnee:**

I don't know that, that's necessarily true, but I'm sure it was used on burn victims.

**Justin:**

We're... I don't wanna get... I know you like to talk about this towards the end but, like, does it actually have, I mean, does it have, like, therapeutic use or is it more, like, it seems like protective more than, like, it would actually, like, help healing. Right?

**Sydnee:**

Yes. Yes.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

You're getting to the—to the root of it.

**Justin:**

I know I'm getting ahead of you.

**Sydnee:**

You are.

**Justin:**

Let me... You continue, sorry.

**Sydnee:**

Yes, that's okay. But yes, you are on the right track. Your instincts are correct.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, as for Rob, he ate a spoonful of Vaseline every day after he created it because he believed in its health benefits.

**Justin:**

Because he had too much of it.

**Sydnee:**

[laughs]

**Justin:**

He was trying to secretly get rid of it.

**Sydnee:**

Trying to get rid of it as fast as he could.

**Justin:**

What do you think, Sydnee...

**Sydnee:**

Uh-huh.

**Justin:**

What do you think that would do inside? [laughs] Like, what do you think the—the—the—the return on that investment would be?

**Sydnee:**

I... my concern, I mean, it's just a bunch of hydrocarbons is all it is, all mixed together. I mean, it's, you know, petroleum jelly, it's oily. I don't know that you would, I mean, it wouldn't... If you ate enough, it would harm you. I think, if we're talking like a teaspoon, I don't know what a spoonful is. Teaspoonful we'll say.

**Justin:**



Something.

**Sydnee:**

For like a teaspoonful, I can't imagine it would harm you. Don't try this though.

**Justin:**

Yeah, don't do this.

**Sydnee:**

But, you know how sometimes, uh, like fat free stuff has other kinds of alcohols in it and stuff that make everything—

**Justin:**

Sure, yeah.

**Sydnee:**

... kind of oily and greasy in there?

**Justin:**

Mm—hmm.

**Sydnee:**

And then you get anal leakage?

**Justin:**

Sure, yeah. Yeah, like olestra.

**Sydnee:**

I wonder if that would happen if you ate enough, like, petroleum jelly. So, it might just grease everything. I mean, you're not going to digest that.

**Justin:**

I don't know, yuck-a-roony. Why don't we move on?

**Sydnee:**

I don't know.

**Justin:**

Sorry I delved into this.

**Sydnee:**

This is clearly out of my element. In medical school I was never taught what happens if you eat enough petroleum jelly. How does it come out of your butt later? I don't know. I imagine it would be a greasy show.

**Justin:**

Hm. Come on.

**Sydnee:**

Sorry. He also claimed to have survived a bout of pleurisy in his '50s by having his nurse coat him head to toe in Vaseline every day until he got better.

**Justin:**

That's responsible.

**Sydnee:**

That just sounds like a, kind of a fetish to me, personally. Uh, to be fair, he lived to 96.

**Justin:**

Hey, all right.

**Sydnee:**

So...

**Justin:**

Give me that, pass that jelly over here.

**Sydnee:**

So, there you go. The company would later become Chesebrough Ponds. You've heard of Ponds?

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

Maker of beauty products, oh, and a lot of other personal care products. And by 2005, worldwide, a tub of Vaseline was being sold every 39 seconds.

**Justin:**

I wonder who owns the brand now? Probably Unilever or somebody.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, I think you are right, actually. I think you're right, it's Unilever. I read into that, but I didn't include it, 'cause—

**Justin:**

That sounds about right.

**Sydnee:**

I don't know, I'm a doctor. I wasn't that interested.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

Um, reported uses now, uh, because you can find people who still think Vaseline is kind of a cure all.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Um, they... it is used for leather goods, you know, to shine things, to keep leather looking fresh. Uh, I've seen people say that it will, like, get chewing gum off of surfaces that it's stuck to or get lipstick stains out of your clothes, uh, to lubricate any kind of machinery that, you know, rusty hinges or whatever, you can use it. To rub on chicken combs to prevent frostbite. I found this multiple places, I guess people put Vaseline on chickens so they don't get frostbit?

**Justin:**

What? What, really?

**Sydnee:**

I guess.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

Uh, to stop fungal growth on turtle shells. I know this is a problem we all encounter on a daily basis.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

Use it on car battery terminals, you moisturize your dog's paws with it, and some people recommend it for, like, different beauty uses. For split ends, I've seen that multiple places.

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

To put it on your hair to prevent split ends.

**Justin:**

I mean, yeah, it will stick them together?

**Sydnee:**

It will stick them together.

**Justin:**

Sure.

**Sydnee:**

Or too, like, you put perfume on and then you put a little bit of Vaseline over it and it, like, holds the scent on your skin—

**Justin:**

That seems ludicrous.

**Sydnee:**

... longer. Um, here's what I will say. Kind of what you alluded to, Justin. It is gonna hold moisture into your skin longer. So, if you're talking about, like, will it heal a cut, will it heal a burn? No, but it will protect it from debris. I mean, if you've got a coating of petroleum jelly on top of a cut or a wound, you're not gonna get dirt or debris or anything—

**Justin:**

Mm-hmm.

**Sydnee:**

... in it. I'm not gonna say that it will protect it from all bacteria, um, but it certainly would kind of coat and cover and protect a wound while it's healing. They did find that there are actual studies to support that after, like, laser skin resurfacing, you could put petroleum jelly on your skin and it would help hold moisture in it longer. Um, you can... there are a lot of, uh, ear, nose and throat doctors who recommend it to moisturize inside your nose to prevent, like, nosebleeds.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So, that might be useful for you.

**Justin:**

Yeah, 'cause I do get nosebleeds.

**Sydnee:**

There was though this one case of somebody using so much in their nose that they, like, inhaled it, and they got a case of lipid pneumonia, it's like inflammation in their lungs from the—

**Justin:**

There's always gotta be someone who ruins it for everyone else.

**Sydnee:**

... petroleum jelly. I've only found, like, one case of this. I suppose it—I suppose it could happen if you tried to inhale petroleum jelly or, like, stick it down your nose.

**Justin:**

Don't use that much, everybody, stop!

**Sydnee:**

Yeah, so just be careful with that. Um, as a moisturizer, as a skin lubricant. You gotta be careful with condoms, though.

**Justin:**

It can, uh, make them less—

**Sydnee:**

Strong.

**Justin:**

More porous, right?

**Sydnee:**

Yes, exactly. Yes, so you gotta be careful if you're using it for those purposes and specifically for vaginal intercourse, there's been some concern about correlation with that and, like, yeast infections or that kind of thing. I don't know that it's causation, but the point is you— you may not want to use it for vaginal intercourse or for... or with condoms, certainly. Um, okay for use, as far as we know, for like, um, rectal thermometers. It doesn't seem to have the same irritant effect as it does on the vagina.

**Justin:**

Okay.

**Sydnee:**

So, but that's about... that's really about it with Vaseline. It's super popular and you can use it in—

**Justin:**

I don't... you know, I was thinking about this.

**Sydnee:**

... lip balms.

**Justin:**

I don't think we have any. It seems like everybody has some, right? I just don't think we have any.

**Sydnee:**

I don't think we have any either. You know what's crazy is that growing up, we always had it in the house 'cause my mom used it to remove her eye makeup.

**Justin:**

Oh, weird.

**Sydnee:**

Always has. Actually, I did that for a long time, 'cause I just thought that was what you... back when I wore eye makeup, I don't anymore, but back in

the day, to take off my mascara I would rub Vaseline over my eyes and wash it back off.

**Justin:**

Fire and ice, man.

**Sydnee:**

Go figure. I don't know.

**Justin:**

Vaseline.

**Sydnee:**

Vaseline. There you go.

**Justin:**

What can't it do.

**Sydnee:**

A lot of things. I mean, what can't it do? Many, many things.

**Justin:**

Many, many things. Okay. Uh, folks, thank you so much for listening this week. Um, I want to mention something, if I could for just a second. Uh, every year, um, we, uh, one of my other podcasts, My Brother, My Brother, and Me, um, and I would say our extended family of podcasts participate in something called MBMBaM Angels.

And what this is, is, um, there's this list called Empty Stockings, which is for our area, Huntington, West Virginia. And, um, folks who aren't gonna have a Christmas, uh, and... or can't afford to give Christmas to their kids or what have you, put in requests for things. Um, you know, simple gifts that they want to, uh, get for their kids. Not much, you know, clothes, warm clothes, boots, maybe a few toys, that kind of thing, um, but they can't afford to.

And this list is so heartbreaking, and it's published in our local paper every year, and we decided, uh, that we would start trying to fill those along with you, our dear listeners. Um, and, uh, if you find it in your heart to— to kick in, um, it's really easy this year, easier than ever before, I would say, uh, because all you have to do is go to [mbmbamangels.com](http://mbmbamangels.com) and there's a list of all the people who need your help.

And it is really as simple as claiming somebody, calling the organization to make sure that, you know, it's still needed and then getting it. And, we've got the list 60% filled at this point, um, but there's still a lot of people who need help. Um, and it makes you feel great, um, and it's so helpful in an area that has had, um, so much sort of economic hardship, um, it really means a lot to people, so.

**Sydnee:**

It really does. Our community hugely benefits from it. People are extremely grateful, um, we get those comments a lot, so.

**Justin:**

It'll make you feel great. So go to [mbmbamangels.com](http://mbmbamangels.com), and, uh, help if you can. There's also, uh, if you wanna donate money, you can just donate money, and they use that to buy some bigger ticket items that would be hard for any one person to get. So, please do that.

And, uh, thanks to the Taxpayers for letting us use their song, Medicines, as the intro and outro of our program. Thanks to Maximum Fun for having us as part of their podcasting family. If you need a new podcast this week, I'm gonna recommend Adam Ruins Everything. It's not just a TV show, folks, it's a podcast too, and it's on Maximum Fun. And, uh, that's gonna do it for us 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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