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John Moe: Quick note to listeners: this episode contains brief mentions of suicide.

You have never met anyone like the guest we have on this week. I know I sure haven't. It's days after I've interviewed him as I record this, and I still can't stop telling everyone I meet about this guy. He's the oldest guest we've ever had on. He has lived an amazing life. He had a front row seat to history... and depression. And he has some urgent messages that he wants you to listen to and heed.

It's *Depresh Mode*. I'm John Moe. I'm glad you're here.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: If you don't know the name Tom Johnson, that's okay. It's a pretty common name. The Tom Johnson that I talked to for this episode was never on screen all that much, but he was a hugely, historically important figure behind the scenes of cable news and newspapers. And the Oval Office. Tom was present and influential for a lot of history.

When Martin Luther King Jr. was shot in Memphis, Tom was working in the White House. And he was the one that informed President Lyndon Johnson—no relation—of the event. He's gonna tell us about that. When the Soviet Union dissolved, Tom was with Mikhail Gorbachev, and Tom's own pen played an integral role. We'll get that story too. He's got some credits on his resume. Ever heard of CNN? He was the president. Heard of *The Los Angeles Times*? Publisher.

Depression hit Tom hard, and at a time when depression was a secret most people who had it just lived with and sometimes died with. Secret, taboo, shameful even. And despite that, he went and got help. Ever felt a burning need to achieve? Ever defined your sense of self by the work you did? Ever sacrifice time and care for your family for the sake of your job? Ever felt strong regret about that later in life? Yeah. Tom Johnson has been there as well. Tom Johnson is 84 now, and he's written a book. *Driven: A Life in Public Service and Journalism From LBJ to CNN*. It's about a life growing up without much—a watermelon truck is involved—and facing a whole lot of challenges, including stress, trauma, Vietnam, journalism, and depression.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Tom Johnson, welcome to the program!

Tom Johnson: Thank you. Pleased to be here.

John Moe: As you write in the book, you did not grow up with a lot of privilege, a lot of connections, as I understand. Can you tell me about your family growing up and a little bit about where you were raised?

Tom Johnson: I was born in Macon, Georgia. I am an only child. My mother, Josephine Johnson, had miscarriages several times before a successful launch. My mother was a clerk in a small grocery store. My dad did not hold any regular jobs. However, he did sometimes purchase watermelons at the local farmer's market for 10 cents each and sell them primarily in low-income areas of Macon for 25 cents apiece or five for a dollar. I also worked in the same grocery store where my mother worked, Floyd's Grocery. And the compensation there was the ability to take home food from the store. And occasionally, my mother was paid in currency. But I did learn at the grocery store and at the selling food and watermelons that I didn't think that was my career path. That I really needed to think more about a different path.

John Moe: From those humble beginnings, how were you able to go to college and then onto Harvard Business School? Because that's not a that's not a classic pedigree for a lot of people.

Tom Johnson: As a very young man, I developed a drive. A drive. That is also the name of my book. But in my earliest years, I was determined that I would make it, that I would have a college education, that I would have income sufficient to support my family—especially my mother.

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And an opening came in the ninth-grade high school—(*correcting himself*) junior high school—for a sports stringer. And I should tell you. From my earliest, earliest days—ninth grade on forward—I fell in love with journalism and with journalists. The then managing editor of the Macon paper said he wanted me to beat the publisher of the paper. I walked over to his office somewhat fearful, and he said to me, “Tommy, I'm told by my editors that you are the hardest working guy around here. If you can apply and be accepted to the University of Georgia, I will pay your way.” So, I walked out of that office that day euphoric that I would have a chance to attend the Grady College of Journalism, and I would attend on a on what is called a financial aid scholarship.

John Moe: And then how did Harvard come along?

Tom Johnson: Well, as I approached my senior year in college, I had applied for a fellowship at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and actually had one—an internship that would enable me to also get my master's in journalism at Chapel Hill. And I said, “Peyton, I want you to know I've received this, and I tend to accept it.”

And he said—just in sort of an abrupt way, he looked at me and he said, “Tommy, what is it you most hope to do in life?”

And in my, I guess, innocent way or naive way, I said, “Mr. Anderson one day I hope that I can become a publisher just like you.”

He then said, “In that case you need to go to Harvard Business School. And if you can get in, I will pay your way.”

So, once again he provided me with a financial aid scholarship. I went to Harvard Business School, and then of course won the White House Fellowship after Harvard Business School. I served my tour of duty in government four years in the White House and then in the office of the former president, which was also a federal job in Texas.

John Moe: How old were you when you started working in the White House?

Tom Johnson: I was 23 when I won the White House Fellowship, but I turned 24 in September of 1965. And I was in the first class of White House fellows and one of the two youngest of the White House fellows.

John Moe: Well in your time with President Lyndon Johnson, you were there for much of the Civil rights movement, for the Vietnam War. Right in the middle of that, right in the thick of that. What was the stress and pressure for that like?

Tom Johnson: On my first day of work in September of 1965, I walked in and met Bill Moyers, who was the then press secretary. And he had asked me, among the 15 White House fellows, to come to work for him. After I shook hands with Bill, he said, "I'd like to introduce you to some of the other people around here." So, he walked me right into the Oval Office. He introduced me to this giant of a guy, sort of astonished me that I was being introduced to the president of the United States.

And I'll never forget what he said. He said, "Tom—Tom." They've now gone to Tom, and that's a very important breaking point. But "Tom, we've had no experience with this program. This is the first time that we've ever had it. So, we intend to treat you just like a full-time member of the staff." And I thought about it. Here he is saying to me I'm not gonna be treated like an intern. He's gonna treat me like a full-time member of the staff. And from that day forward until he died, I was treated as a full-time member of his staff. (*Chuckles softly.*)

Now, I came there after the great struggle that enabled the Civil Rights Act of '64 and '65, but I was there at a time of unbelievable turmoil—both on civil rights and on Vietnam. But also, just people who believed in the need to somehow enable particularly Black Americans to have a level playing field, to have no obstacles in their ability to get education and become jobs. But I saw him create the Job Corps and create Head Start and create so many other programs, but particularly the poverty programs. However, again, growing was the war in Southeast Asia. The United States assigned a treaty called the SEATO Treaty.

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It was a commitment that we would join with other nations in the area if one of the others were attacked. And second the head of Singapore—Lee Kuan Yu—said, "Mr. President if you don't stop communism there, that will come all the way down. They'll come all the way down the peninsula, including in my country, and Southeast Asia will become a communist-dominated part of the world." So, LBJ had those two things: one, the commitment to stand by the treaty; two, to try to keep the North Vietnamese and others from taking over South Vietnam. I never saw anybody anguish more than he did trying to bring about an end to that war.

And I must tell you, success with the Great Society was sort of triumphant in many ways. But the growing losses, I think at one point— I went to Vietnam a couple of times, and I saw these body bags out by the runway, and I didn't really know what they were. And I was told that those were American, quote, “boys.” Because at that time, almost all of them were. But we got up to 400 Americans killed each week, not to think about the thousands of Vietnamese and civilians that were being killed. But it was almost— It was like, on one hand, the whole Great Society, and on the other the war. But he knew how it was affecting his ability to achieve what he wanted to achieve in the US, in America. But he also saw the increasing cost of the war, including having his two son-in-laws out in the combat area during the war.

John Moe: How did you handle that? Like, you know you're still young, you're seeing people your age in body bags. Did that mess you up? And then you're working for Johnson, and there's protests, people saying, “How many kids did you kill today?” What did that do to you?

Tom Johnson: It had a profound effect on me, but it did not trigger my depression. But it had a profound effect on me. I was in the car with President Johnson, and in this occasion he had asked me to sit in the back seat with him. Usually, I'm sitting between two agents in the front seat—the driver, secret service agent, and the person who's sort of the lead agent sitting in the right front seat, and I'm in the middle. But on this occasion, I was sitting with him in the back. And as we drove out of the White House grounds, the loud screams of the protestors screaming, “Hey, hey! LBJ! How many kids did you kill today?”

And he leaned over at me, and he said, “Tom, I only wish that they knew that I want peace as much as they do.”

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: Short break here. More of Tom Johnson's story in a moment. We haven't gotten to the depression yet; that's just ahead. But hearing about Tom's life, can you imagine the dissonance? You're selling watermelons out of a truck with your dad in Macon one minute; you're working for LBJ the next, seeing guys your age loaded into body bags, talking about that with the dang president. I'm not a psychiatrist or a therapist. I can't say that this was trauma for Tom or that he got PTSD, but I have to wonder—just as a human—how could someone emerge from all that just fine?

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We are back with Tom Johnson. He was telling us about working while still a young man for President Lyndon Johnson. On April 4th, 1968, Tom was at the White House keeping an eye on the news ticker, and an urgent item came across.

Tom Johnson: But I looked, and I'll never forget what it said: “Dr. Martin Luther King has been shot in Memphis.” I ripped that off. It was only about three inches deep and about eight

inches wide. But I ripped that off and went immediately into the Oval Office, bypassing the President's personal secretaries. And whenever I would say to them, "I must go in," I was permitted to do so. That's the only time I ever did it! That was the only time that I ever said, "I must go in." I handed a note to President Johnson. He slumped back into his chair. You could just see it was like the air going out of a tire. It was just slumped back into his chair, his (*unclear*). And he then handed it to Mr. Robert Woodruff, the then chairman and chief executive of Coca-Cola—

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—who read it and handed it back to President Johnson. And then President Johnson handed it to Carl Sanders, who handed it back to LBJ and wrote a note on it—which I later was able to get for the LBJ library. But at that moment, President Johnson just went into action. And the two of them—Governor Sanders and Mr. Woodruff—started to get up. And President Johnson said, "No, just sit here for a minute." President Johnson started calling the FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, calling Attorney General Ramsey Clark, calling his appointment secretary—Marvin Watson—and others. And the office just started filling with his most key aids. Mr. Woodruff wanted to use a phone. And there was a phone in the Oval Office.

And I'll never forget this, because I could hear parts of it. He called the then mayor of Atlanta, Ivan Allen, and said, "Ivan, I'm here with the president in the Oval Office. He is being told by J. Edgar Hoover there will be riots in American cities tonight." And he said, "If you need additional resources for Atlanta—additional police, additional fire, additional civilians, whatever—go ahead and get everybody that you need to be prepared." And as a result, Ivan Allen was able to get Atlanta—and particularly sent people out to the Atlanta University Center, where there was Spelman College and Morehouse College.

But while we had a lot of protests at night in Atlanta, home of Dr. King, we did not have the kind of great flames of a city going up as happened in Washington and Chicago and Los Angeles.

John Moe: After the presidency—after your work in the White House—you went on to be a newspaper man, a publisher. In your book, you write about depression hitting when you were pushed out of your role as publisher at *The Los Angeles Times*. After your incredible career to that point, you have this huge setback. Was that the first moment that depression hit for you? Had it not existed to that point?

Tom Johnson: My wife, Adwinna, said it existed before that point and that I— And I should tell you. After I was actually shoved upward (*chuckles*)—and out, but really shoved upward—I mean, it was—I lost the job I had always loved. I mean, that was the ultimate goal of my life was become the—as I told Peyton Anderson—to become a publisher, and a publisher of a major magazine. At that point, *The LA Times* had been its highest year in profits, highest year in circulation, highest year in the number of Pulitzer Prizes. I mean, if they picked a year to fire me over performance, it couldn't be performance. The paper was doing incredibly well.

But the same board that has supported bringing me up from Texas to Los Angeles to be chief executive officer—I mean, some of them started seeing that the paper was too liberal. I

mean, we were for clean air. We were for clean water. We were for asking the Southern California Edison not to build a nuclear reactor on top of San Onofre, where there was some evidence that there— There were indications of possible earthquake on it. But we were for the Hispanics. And we— I mean, it was a strong paper that that, yes, I did have—I would guess by many measures—a liberal paper. And I was so proud of it.

Depression hit me. Hard depression. I had stripped away from me the title that I'd always hoped—the position I'd always hoped to achieve. Even though I'd become publisher in Dallas! But I'm publisher of *The Los Angeles Times*. Ah! And that night when I went home, the only person there was my son, Wyatt. And I remember he drove me—the two of us—to have dinner. And he was the first person outside of the paper that I said—and I said, “Wyatt, they got me today. They got me today.”

And he said, “What do you mean, Dad?”

And I said, “Well, they've decided I'll no longer be publisher.” And he was the first person that I told. There were other occasions when I talked to Wyatt about life. But Edwina said, “If you don't go to a psychiatrist—” Basically, she said, “I'm outta here.” Because I'd been very resistant.

John Moe: What were you doing that made her say that? What was—?

Tom Johnson: I was disengaging from activities that I had loved to do.

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I frequently found it best to be in a dark room. I frequently found it best to just be alone. I mean, just—(*stammering*) I couldn't even engage with some of my best friends to talk with them about it. I'd always felt that depression is something that shows a sign of weakness. And obviously, it had clobbered me. Fortunately, I did go to UCLA Department of Psychiatry, and I did meet with one of the top psychiatrists, who saw me three times. And he said to me, “Mr. Johnson, you have chronic depression.” And he started me on what were a series of antidepressants.

I should just say that the first two or three didn't work. And I've always been asked not to mention names of them, but on some of them I just felt like somebody—I had a wad of cotton that was in my mouth. And you know, I my responsibilities still were to speak. I had all kinds of responsibilities, even if the biggest one was taken away. But I also had developed the most unbelievable perspiration from one of my—I'd almost have to take a separate shirt something—or a couple—with me. The first two or three of them— And again, coming off of one—I know I was supposed to come off of one gradually before I went onto another, but that dive in between was really rough. Really, really rough. And fortunately—I mean, I have now been working with depression people since (*unclear*). There's probably no group of people that I work with more, almost, than people who are battling depression. But I also think there are times when those of us who've had depression—I feel like I'm more experienced in some of the doctors who've never had it!

John Moe: Yeah! Well, did you I mean it was a different time back then that you're describing. Did you know that it was depression? Did you understand that as a common mental health problem?

Tom Johnson: He told me! He told me it was. No, when he told me it was, it was like a light had come on. I knew that something was really wrong. I knew I was in a deep, dark spot. I just felt like at times I was at the bottom of a deep, dark well and could not pull myself out of it. I mean, it just took— In my case, I mean it just took my energy away. It took— And I had to lay down sometimes beneath my desk. I would have my assistant rearrange my calendar. But I would lay down beneath my desk just to get a nap. And I thought about that a lot, because to me it's like an iPhone. When the battery goes down, you need to recharge it. And in my case, when mine went down to the bottom, I needed a recharge. And somehow, some way naps helped.

John Moe: Why did you think it was a weakness?

Tom Johnson: I felt like I had failed whatever I should have been doing that would've made me continuing— Edwina said to me, “Tom, if you don't open up about your depression, you'll never be free. If you go around still trying to keep it secret and just don't tell people— You know some people have broken arms. You've got a broken mind!”

John Moe: That's a wise woman right there.

Tom Johnson: Oh my. Lemme tell you what, had it not been for her, I don't think I'd be here to today. I contemplate the suicide. I seriously contemplated suicide. But two things then came: these job offers! And one of them from Ted Turner, and I accepted that one. I mean, there were some others that were even muuuuch higher compensation, much higher compensation. But this fabulous opportunity to help to lead a global news organization to bring news to countries that had had no free information. I mean, the former Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, whatever. But to have a chance to lead that. And also, this new MD, Dr. Charles Nemeroff, who headed Emory, then he headed the University of Miami, and then he's now at the Dell Center in Austin. Charles Nemeroff, N-E-M-E-R-O-F-F.

And he's still my primary psychiatrist. And he researches, researches, researches. But in any case, I started coming up and at it. There was another med, and I will not mention it, but there was another med. But again, I went back to perspiring so much. It was unbelievable! I mean, I would perspire, and the room would be ice-cold on it. But you know, there are these side effects.

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But I still believe, and what I say today—and I really wanna say it as emphatically to the people who may listen: depression is a treatable illness, by god. There are new meds and new treatments that enable most people—and I wanna underline “most”—most people to get better. I don't say all, because I have lost two of my very best friends in life who took their own lives because of their depression.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We will take a short break here. But again, Tom Johnson's 84. He's retired. He could have sat back and lived out his life in quiet comfort. But he wrote a book, and he's speaking out, getting worked up about depression, wanting you to understand what he's saying about depression. My kind of guy. Just ahead: Tom, Gorbachev, and a fateful pen.

Promo:

Music: Exciting, rhythmic synth.

John-Luke Roberts: If you like too many podcasts, you'll love *Sound Heap with John-Luke Roberts*. It's got clips from all your favorite podcasts, such as *Diary of a Tiny CEO*—

Tiny CEO: Leonard Sprague, tell me how you make your money!

Leonard Sprague: I go to the beach, and I steal people's towels.

John-Luke Roberts: *Rememberama*.

Speaker: Remember the trend of everyone whacking themselves in their head with hammers and mallets when they wanted to lose weight?

John-Luke Roberts: And *Elty Jom's Lobly Sonds*.

Elty Jom: I'm here today with Kiki Dee! Hello, Kiki Dee!

Kiki Dee: Hello, Eltonnn.

John-Luke Roberts: There's dozens of episodes to catch up on and brand-new episodes going out right now! So, if you want far, far, far too many podcasts, then look for *Sound Heap* on Maximum Fun. Boop-boop!

(Music ends.)

Promo:

Ella Hubber: Alright, we're over 70 episodes into our show, *Let's Learn Everything*. So, let's do a quick progress check. Have we learned about quantum physics?

Tom Lum: Yes, episode 59.

(Pencil scratching.)

Ella: We haven't learned about the history of gossip yet, have we?

Caroline Roper: Yes, we have! Same episode, actually.

Ella: Have we talked to Tom Scott about his love of roller coasters?

Caroline & Tom: *(In unison.)* Episode 64.

Ella: So, how close are we to learning everything?

Caroline: Bad news. We still haven't learned everything yet.

Ella: Awww!

Tom: WE'RE RUINED!

Music: Playful synth fades in.

Ella: No, no, no! It's good news as well. There is still a lot to learn!

(They cheer.)

I'm Dr. Ella Hubber.

Tom: I'm Regular Tom Lum.

Caroline: I'm Caroline Roper, and on *Let's Learn Everything*, we learn about science and a bit of everything else, too.

Ella: And although we haven't learned everything yet, I've got a pretty good feeling about this next episode.

Tom: Join us every other Thursday on Maximum Fun.

(Music ends.)

Transition: Gentle acoustic guitar.

John Moe: We are back with Tom Johnson. After being publisher of *The LA Times* and having his first real slam of depression, Tom got to talking with Ted Turner—a very rich media mogul, opinionated guy, big personality, had some bold ideas—including starting a 24-hour news channel on cable, to be called CNN. This was 1980. Before accepting the job as president of CNN, Tom blurts out to Ted Turner, “You know, I have depression.”

Turner says basically, “Me too! Let's get to work.”

So, Tom did and ran CNN.

Tom Johnson: Coming into 1991, Gorbachev has done perestroika and glasnost, and he had begun reforming the then Soviet Union in many ways. But he had developed opposition to it, including from Boris Yeltsin. But there was even a more hardcore, hardline group that did not see this more enlightened approach that Gorbachev was taking. So, I get word that ABC is sending its number one guy, Ted Koppel, and its number one producer, Rick Kaplan, to Moscow to get the first interview with Mikhail Gorbachev. It looks as though he may be at a point of resignation.

The situation became so bad that these hardliners had actually almost trapped Gorbachev at a dacha, where he was being restrained. But frankly, he was helped to get out of that by General Shaposhnikov, the head of the Air Force—General Shaposhnikov sided with Gorbachev and came back to Moscow. But anyway, the woman who is sort of the head of bookings and was sort of my advisor, Gail Evans—I mean, she could kick my ass anytime she needed to. She was executive vice president. Basically, she said, “Tom, go pack, get on a plane, go to Moscow.”

I meet with Gorbachev's head of public information. I show our satellite map. Our satellite map shows that we reach most of the populated ground surface of the Earth—in English.

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ABC only reaches the United States; NBC the United States; CBS and the United States. And I remind him of this. He snaps at me, “I know that! I know that. This is public information.”

Well, anyway, I got my foot at least in the door there. And we proposed, “Okay let's do it together.” Let's have Gosteleradio, the Soviet network, broadcast to the world in Russian. We'll broadcast in English. He liked that. So, anyway, we got a pretty much an understanding. And I came back. And as Christmas approached, we get more word. So, I just go back to Moscow, take about 75 people with me—producers, anchors, reporters, technicians of all sorts—with me. And... we get it! “Get it” means we were able to get the first interview of Gorbachev, and we're able to get the first interview of Boris Yeltsin as he became president to succeed. I am in the room, technicians from CNN and technicians from Gosteleradio are the only people in there. No other network.

But I did violate one rule, and I was able to sneak in an AP photographer and an AP reporter. And I took them in as CNN people. And I was taking a big chance then, because they were—So, in any case, we're just a few minutes before airtime, and there are two

documents on the desk for Gorbachev. One is to sign a resignation—a resignation as the head of the Soviet Union. Two, to basically end the old USSR, break apart all of the republics. And then finally, to convey the power of government to Boris Yeltsin. President Gorbachev is sitting at his desk. Next to him, standing, is Andrey Grachev—his press secretary—and then there's Tom Johnson.

Gorbachev reaches down to try out a green Russian pen, and it does not work. It doesn't— It gives off no ink. He turns to Andrey Grachev who pats his chest, pats his pocket. He doesn't have one. So, I reach in, and I pull out my pen: a Montblanc pen that my wife had given to me for our 25th anniversary. And I said to him in English, “Mr. President, you may use mine.”

And he said to me in Russian, but they translated it very quickly, “Tom, is it American?”

And I said, “No, Mr. President. It's Montblanc. I think it's either German or Swedish. I don't know, but it's not American.”

He said back to me, “In that case, I will use it.”

And he used that pen to sign those documents. And then after everything was over, he was putting my pen back into his pocket. And I had the—I guess, the guts to ask him, “Could I have my pen back?” And I said, “Mr. President, my wife gave me that pen for an anniversary.”

And he— I think at first he didn't wanna give it back. I think he felt— He sort of had got (*unclear*). But he gave it back. And that pen has been shown for years until the museum in Washington was closed. But it had a great spot there, right next to a piece of the Berlin Wall!

John Moe: Wow! My goodness. You write in your book—(*sighs*) it was very moving— about when you retired. I don't know if regret is the right word, but you wish you had been there more for your wife and kids. You wish that your career didn't consume as much as it did. And I had to wonder if that sort of imbalance of, you know, these incredible achievements that you did, this front seat at history that you had at the expense—maybe—of your family contributed to the depression.

Tom Johnson: There is no doubt— Well, there is no doubt. And I say it at every opportunity: do not become a workaholic. I think workaholics have an illness. And yes, I do think that it contributes to depression. You just can't work around the clock, around the clock any more than you could play basketball 24 hours a day, any more than you could do anything else in life. But I just wanted this book to be as honest as I could make this book.

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I was a failure as a parent in the early years of my children's lives. I was out the door before they had their breakfast. I was home after they frequently went to bed. Thank god, once again, that I had a spouse who was so supportive. But also, in my depression, I was mean to her! I mean, I would lash out at her. I would never lash out at anybody in the workplace! I

mean, I could tell you. I don't think I have ever lashed out at a single person no matter how big the mistake in the workplace. But— Because I have a rule, which is “treat others the way you wanna be treated.” I've read that somewhere. But treat others like wanna be treated. But I was a lousy father during the early years of little Krista and Wyatt. And for a period of time—

I mean, Edwina would've had every right to have left me on it. And I know that I got better as I underwent my sessions with therapists.

John Moe: It's an amazing story. *Driven: A Life in Public Service and Journalism from LBJ to CNN*. Tom Johnson, thank you so much for your time.

Tom Johnson: Well, I appreciate very much the opportunity.

Transition: Spirited acoustic guitar.

John Moe: I keep thinking about what made Tom Johnson such a professional success. Part of it, of course, is drive. He said so. His book is called *Driven*. I think there's more to it than that though. To navigate the channels he did and to be on top for as long as he was, I think Tom had to have an extraordinary sense of sympathy and sometimes empathy for people. His social IQ must have been off the charts. He was writing for the paper in Macon when he was 14. 14! Filing mostly sports stories at first and succeeding, because sports stories are human stories about people facing challenges, exerting themselves, going beyond what they thought they could do. And the more Tom understood people, the more he listened to people, the better he did. And he did so well that he was in the White House right outta grad school, working for and with Bill Moyers and LBJ.

Later, he succeeds in newspaper and cable news—kind of helps invent cable news—which are all human environments, ultimately. They're about stories, stories that we tell each other to understand our shared humanity. And so, now when he writes about depression in his book, when he talks about it with me, his story is about understanding one more person: himself. He reports on his illness and his treatment, and he does so with urgency. He wants you—the listener, the reader—to get his story, just like he did when he ran the wire item into the Oval Office. He wanted LBJ to get that story. Just like when he secured the trust of Gorbachev as the Soviet Union fell. He put himself out there so that people could get the story. And then—then after retirement, in writing the book, in talking to me here on the show, then he understands his family. And all this achievement and drive might have cost him. And now he has regrets, which must be crushing: to love people and feel late in life that you failed them. And again, he wanted you to get that story too. There's an urgency there.

Tom Johnson understood people from his dad on the watermelon truck to LBJ to Gorbachev to his family to himself. He understood depression and what was to be done about it. He wants you to know about that. Don't be a workaholic. Treat your depression. Have a pen handy.

Music: “Building Wings” by Rhett Miller, an up-tempo acoustic guitar song. The music continues quietly under the dialogue.

John Moe: Our show exists because people support it. That is our model. We get donations from listeners who value the shows that we make, who get some help for their own lives and minds and (*chuckles*) complicated brains, and who like the idea that other people are getting that as well. So, we depend on you. So, if you've already joined, thank you. If you haven't, please do. It's super easy. We need you to in order to keep making this show. All you gotta do, go to MaximumFun.org/join. Find a level that works for you. Maybe that's five bucks a month, maybe it's 10, whatever it is, 20, I don't know. You make that call. And then pick *Depresh Mode* from the list of shows!

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That gets the show into the world to where it can help people! We wanna help people. Speaking of, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline can be reached in the US and Canada by calling or texting 988. It's free. It's available 24/7. We're on BlueSky at [@DepreshMode](https://twitter.com/DepreshMode). Our Instagram is [@DepreshPod](https://www.instagram.com/DepreshPod). Our newsletter is on Substack. Search up John Moe or *Depresh Mode* there. You'll find it. I'm on BlueSky and Instagram at [@JohnMoe](https://twitter.com/JohnMoe). Join our Presbies group. A lot of good discussion happening over there on Facebook. Just search up Presbies on Facebook. And you'll have to ask to be let in, and we'll let you in, and we'll hang out together. It'll be fun. Our electric mail address is DepreshMode@MaximumFun.org.

Hi, credits listeners. I just finished the first season of the TV show *Pluribus*, and I think I would be great at being one of the people taken over by the alien whatever it is. Making this show, for instance—making *Depresh Mode* would be so much easier if all I had to do was make something that Carol would enjoy. All that audience research? Boom. Done. Carol, we just want to help.

Depresh Mode is made possible by your contributions. Our production team includes Raghu Manavalan, Kevin Ferguson, and me. We get booking help from Mara Davis. Rhett Miller wrote and performed our theme song, “Building Wings”. *Depresh Mode* is a production of Maximum Fun and Poputchik. I’m John Moe. Bye now.

Music:

I'm always falling off of cliffs, now

Building wings on the way down

I am figuring things out

Building wings, building wings, building wings

No one knows the reason

Maybe there's no reason

I just keep believing

No one knows the answer

Maybe there's no answer

I just keep on dancing

Hannah: Hey, this is Hannah from Minneapolis, and I promise you're not the only one who feels this way.

(Music fades out.)

Transition: Cheerful ukulele chord.

Speaker 1: Maximum Fun.

Speaker 2: A worker-owned network.

Speaker 3: Of artist owned shows.

Speaker 4: Supported—

Speaker 5: —directly—

Speaker 6: —by you!