

Patti

Hi everyone. Welcome to the Patti Brennan show. Whether you have \$20 or \$20 million, this show is for those of you who want to protect, grow and use your assets to live your very best lives. You know that phrase really makes me think about what is important to people. Is it really the assets, or is it the memories? Joining me today is Roy Moed. Roy is the founder of Lifebook Memoirs, and we've had phenomenal conversations over the past few months about what his company does for people to preserve memories that are near and dear to their families. Roy, welcome to the show.

Roy

Thank you very much. It's very exciting, and being English, it's quite interesting to be involved in a show like this. So, thank you.

Patti

You're very welcome. You know, it's interesting what you do for families. How did you start this, this company? How did it all begin?

Roy

Well, the fascinating thing is in your opening, you talked about assets and memories. I see assets as being memories as well. Financial assets and the financial values can be passed down. But your values and your memories are difficult to pass down. That was part of the beginning, and it was also very much about my father. I was too busy to listen to him, or he would tell me a story that I've heard before, and I'd start shutting him down. I said, "You know what? He's blind, he's 86 and he's depressed. I need to find a way to help him enjoy his elder years. And I because I thought I was too busy running around doing my stuff, I went off and got my secretary to go and visit him. We created this folder of the chapters of his life, she went and visited him every week and started recording them. It was on the pretext that we wanted his stories, but I didn't really. I wanted him to have a companionship. It was only three months later when he passed away. I realized that there were many stories in there that I'd never heard, including the one about the King of Poland. Our ancestor was the King of Poland for one night when the king died, and they needed a commoner without issue in 1568. They grabbed him and made him King of Poland for one night. Now, he'd never told us that story, and I just felt I couldn't ask him anymore.

Patti

You know, it is so interesting and so wonderful that out of concern for your dad and getting him some companionship, you uncovered an idea that is making such a difference to so many families. Roy, as you were talking, I was reminded of something that a colleague of mine Ron Carson once said. He said, inheritance is what you give to someone. A legacy is what you put into them, and what you've done is create a way to really provide that legacy. This is for people that we love and care about and gives them a real legacy that stays with the family forever. You know, as we think about transferring wealth, this is more of a wisdom transfer.

Roy

When you talk about legacy, I do talk about the value of legacy, not money. And it came to me that within my presentation, I talk about Alfred Nobel, and many people aren't aware of his story. In 1868, I think it was his, he was in Paris, he saw his brother had passed away, and they wrote his obituary. They made a mistake. They wrote Alfred Nobel's obituary rather than his brother, and it said the motion de la Moy Moore, the merchant of death, is dead. The man who killed more people quicker than anyone else, has now died because he invented dynamite and gelignite. Then said, my God, that's going to be my legacy. And he took his wealth, which in those days, was about \$2 million and he went and created the five Nobel prizes that we know today, and he changed his legacy. He had the luxury of seeing what his legacy was going to be and changed it. And I often say to people, are you happy with the legacy that you're going to be leaving? Do you want to do something about it? Now's the time. And when we started Lifebook Memoirs. Before we started, we went to the brain health institute in Toronto, and we spent six months researching with them and interviewing two of their residents. We talked to two of their researchers to look at how we could slow down cognitive decline in elder adults by engaging with them over a period. The difference between Lifebook Memoirs and every other company is that we do in person interviews. You do not want to be talking to a 92-year-old as they're crying about losing their husband or their son got killed or laughing and the video waivers. And you can't reach out and give them a glass of water or touch their hand. All our interviews are a human sitting with your mom and dad, or you in your home having a cup of coffee. I found out recently one of our clients has had a glass of wine every time, but whatever it is, we chat with someone, ending up with a beautiful memoir.

Patti

It is so interesting, because that's it. The story that you just told reminded me of how I came about meeting you. I was with someone who is 92 years old, we were having lunch, and I just love this woman. She's got amazing stories. And I kept on thinking, gosh, I wish I had a camera. I wish I had something to write this stuff down. And I found myself literally, Roy in my car, writing down some of the things that she had said, because that stuff just sticks with me. And it occurred to me that I knew somebody who is one of the people who does this for your company. She's a ghost writer, and she does those visits and interviews, and my friend is such a warm, wonderful human being. I called her and I said, "Tell me more about your process and the company. And one thing led to another, and here we are today. People need to know that this exists. So many times, I've talked to people and said, "You know, have you ever written any of this stuff down? What about all your pictures? How do you communicate with the kids? I'm just going to show people who are watching the video some of the material that you put together. You make it easy to share your life story in a beautiful book. This is amazing. Look at this cover. Isn't that cool?"

Roy

Yeah, wow, that was the first story. And yes, and they're great pictures. Then it's all printed on this archive paper. Because, you know, even Google uses this paper to protect their archive. You lose digital

recordings and digital records, but you don't lose a book. Our printer says on his website that if you want to go and see read the Magna Carta from 1086 you can go and turn over the pages with white gloves. But if you want to read a floppy disk from 1996 you can't.

Patti

You know, there is so much value in having an actual book with family pictures and all the stories. We live in a digital world today, right? Facebook, Instagram, you name it. And, I think about my own kids, they launch these stories on Instagram that evaporate in 24 hours. If you don't see it in 24 hours, forget it...it's gone. This is something that isn't lost, and it stays in the family forever.

Roy

Do you know, Patti, it's worse than that, because what people forget is that if I Google you, I can find loads of information about you.

You can find a lot of information about people who are in a certain age profile and what you can't do is find out anything about your grandmother on Google. You can't Google her and your mother's great grandmother. Your mother's grandmother is your great grandmother or grandfather. There's no information on that and that story dies when those people pass away, those stories and those memories. And whilst kids today think that that information is all there forever, it isn't. Those stories, if they're not recorded, will never be heard.

Patti

You know, it's very interesting. I was at a conference one time, and there were 500 people in a room, and the speaker was talking about this subject. And he asked the audience a question. He said, how many of you remember the first names of your grandparents? And most of us raised our hands. And then he asked a question. He said, "How many of you know the first name names of your great grandparents. Roy, no one raised our hands, and then he had a mic drop moment. He said, isn't it a shame to think that 100 years from now, people aren't even going to remember our names?"

It was really a moment. I was talking with a member of your company, and I said, you know, I don't think I'm all that interesting. And then as she started to ask me the questions, I love the format. You've got a very precise format on how to bubble things up. She said you'd be surprised at the stories, the things, and the transfer of wisdom that you could partake in something like this. So, it's really just wisdom.

Roy

It's not just wisdom; it's the fun as well. You want to know the stories. Nobody wants to know about every business deal you did and what you sold. Some of those stories are interesting and factual. But they want to know what happened when you were 14 and you had your first girlfriend, your first kiss, or how you got from whichever country you got to as an immigrant and literally got there. You know, we asked one of our customers why he did his Lifebook memo, and he said, "Well, I was driving my

grandchildren in the back of the car one day, and they had a school friend with them. And the school friend said to them, "So what does your granddad do? And my grandson said nothing. He's just rich. And I thought to myself, if I don't write it down, they're going to think I was just rich. They don't realize I came from Hungary, I had \$4, and I became just rich through quite a journey. This is one of the books we wrote, he's in that teens shirt which had studs in the 60s. And this is his photograph today. He's still able to get into the same shirt, but he told us his reason for doing his book was that he heard his daughter telling his stories one day and getting them wrong. And he thought, I better actually tell the right stories if that's going to work. And one of the side effects was somebody sent me a text a few days ago, and it was headed unintended consequences. And he said, Roy, you did my parents' life books about nine years ago and that was fabulous. I've always loved having them. But now my mother has passed away and my father's becoming demented. He's got Alzheimer's, and he's losing his memory quite rapidly. He's walking around the house with his life book, and that is his memory. It's like he's downloaded his memory. And he looks at pictures of the wedding of his wife of his youth, and it can trigger him for that purpose. And he said, "I'm texting you this with a tear in my eye. Thank you."

Patti

It's amazing what a gift that was to that man to be able to look at the book, look at the pictures and read about the memories. And to be reminded of what a full life he has lived, even though his wife has passed, she's still with him in his heart. And that is a gift. Oh, I get teary just thinking about it.

Roy

And when one person said, I recognize you can't ensure your memory. We're all going to lose it at some stage, but you can ensure your memories if you write them down, whether it's with a memoir or writing a journal as you did. And jotting down those answers when you did that. But it's also important that they're face to face interviews. And the aspect that you brought up in your Forbes presentation about Roy Coughlin of the MIT Age Lab.

You said the increase in loneliness went from 9% of elder adults to 17% and that was a few years ago. So, God knows what it is. Today we have UK statistics in England that say 4.6 million people in 2024, over the age of 65, consider themselves lonely and only speak to a human once a month. They use television as their only form of human contact. I know you're into financial planning, the background of what you do, and some of the incredible things you do, but it's so important that this legacy is more than just your money, but also your values.

Patti

Yes, and what Dr. Roy has shared with us is that the impact of loneliness is like smoking 11 cigarettes a day. I mean, it's a big deal. It really affects a person's health. When I was speaking at Forbes about the impact of social security, it's not about the monthly check that people get. It's that feeling of being with someone that shares your values that really cares. It's taking the time to listen and just spend the time with you. It's just having a warm, cozy body around, taking the time to listen and be heard.

Roy

We often hear about that. A kid can take time to visit his parents whenever. But not while looking at their watch or their phone. It's about listening, being heard, and having other conversations. Because you've now listened to something or you read it in their memoir, and you say, Dad, I never knew you did this. And we hear that all the time. That opens, refreshes intergenerational relationships, which is so important.

Patti

It is very important, and it's something that was such a big part of growing up. You know, we talk about how it takes a village to raise someone, and we don't have villages anymore. And it's really a shame, because all generations are hurt by that (the spreading out and the lack of content). And to your point, a text message isn't the same. Even a phone call isn't the same, it's just that that listening that makes such a such a difference.

Roy

When a text message does make a difference, and you're 100% right. It just reminded me, this is my favorite book of all time that we've done and over 20,000 people in the world now own a life book. Not sure if I can find it here, but we did what isn't considered a standard life book for a lady whose husband dropped dead at age 42. He was a fitness guy, he was in his gym, and he had a heart attack. And she was four months pregnant in addition to having a 15-month-old baby boy. Wow, they're never going to know their dad. So very bravely, Karen commissioned us to interview 26 people in New York, London, Beirut and Lagos...we did 26 interviews. The book is called Unforgettable, that's Tony, and it's that one on the bookshelf there. And every story is in there. She starts the book by saying, the reason I'm doing this is because if I tell stories to my kids about their dad, they'll think it's just blah blah, because I loved him, etc. 26 people from his school friends write the way through his life, telling stories, and then every chapter is separated by some artwork that they collected with a little story. Now she only had three copies made, and two are in a safe until the boys are 10. But what will that book mean to them when they're 10, when they're when they're 50. Wow!

Patti

That is amazing. So, as I think this through, it's amazing the fact that you will interview people in the person's life, because it feels like nobody wants to read a book about me. You know, it feels sort of an ego thing.

Roy

It's not. This is not vanity publishing. There's a whole market in which you're going to be famous, you've got a wonderful story, and you're going to sell loads of copies. We put a very fine, strong line between that. We only print 10 copies, just for the family. Okay, so it's your responsibility to write this book, because anything can happen tomorrow. You could have a heart attack and be paralyzed or whatever,

and you can't get that story out. And you don't want to be doing it when someone is ill. You want to be doing it when they're well. We do a lot when people are ill or terminally ill, that's obviously a time when people recognize they need to get that story down when they have a terminal illness. And what we find is that it extends their time quite considerably because they want to finish their project. We don't like finishing those books, but it's important that people have that opportunity to record their story. And everybody has a story for their family.

Patti

What I think is so fascinating is exactly that. How can you bring that story out of people? Again, I have the luxury of having my friend who does this for your company, and it's just so interesting. It comes down to the questions that are asked, taking an interest in in their life, and looking at the pictures and asking the questions, where were you here? What were you doing? And to your point, it's not about the rags to riches so much. It's just helping the next generation and future generations to understand that that they're going through are things that every generation has gone through. They're not alone. And just teach them, give them the tools that work for us. It's not that we're not pontificating, but it's just a beautiful way of sharing ideas and things that got you where you are. And it doesn't have to be someone super successful. I find some of the most interesting people are the people that you wouldn't think have a story to share, and yet they're so fascinating. Taking the time to listen, understanding the direction of their life and where they are today. What got them to being who they are today. It's really a wonderful gift to give, not only to the person who is sharing the story, but to the family.

Roy

So, we have a whole range of people who did, and there is a surprising number of people who don't have any children to give it to. But back to your point, about 100 years from now, we'll be forgotten if you don't have kids or grandkids. It's a way of saying I lived this life, and that book will remain in print forever. I have recorded my time on this earth. There are several people that may have been through a war, and they didn't want to talk with their family because they couldn't talk about it. But we had one who had survivors' guilt, and he never talked about it with his family, but he put it in his book that he survived Dunkirk. When his regiment got wiped out because he'd been transferred the day before. And he'd never told the story to his family, but it's so important that you've got that opportunity to get that story down.

Patti

You know, I think of this as being one of the most meaningful gifts a person can give. How do they get started? What do they do? I mean, I think it's not just for super busy, high achieving people. It's for everyone, right?

Roy

Exactly. And we coined the phrase about 10 years ago that it's the gift of a lifetime, because you're giving someone that whole lifetime, and they give it back to you as well. A lot of people are in their 80s

or 90s, they will do it and then on their 80th birthday and give a signed copy to each of their kids. So, they do it privately or secretly and then give it back. And it's one of the things you said earlier about the questions that we asked. Unlike our interviewers who are all individually trained. We have a process which takes them through how to deal with all the situations, and they don't have a list of questions. They take people on two journeys, either chronologically through their lives or on subject matters. Different people like it different ways, but they're trained to take the story down that path. And our process is the interviewer is in the home is not the writer. They're trained to interview and that goes up to our platform. We have picked a ghostwriter, which has a similar background whether they are Asian, Jewish, or Irish. Whatever it is to match the nuance and culture of the person. The ghost writer downloads it, writes it up, and uploads it. The editor goes in, looks at it, checks it, and this project goes on over about six or seven months. If the ghost writer feels that whilst interviewing you, we're in the middle of a story, but he doesn't have enough material, because a person said they were playing hooky from school, and you didn't ask, where did they went or who were they with...they can feed back to the interviewer. So, the next meeting, they do this. We don't use AI for any of this, because, as I said, the human being in the room with your grandmother or mother is essential. The humanity that comes through from the ghost writer can't be replicated by AI, and they don't think that'll happen for five or ten years. That whole journey is something that is iterative and that the person's involved in. And as with many situations, when you're talking to a third party, you give up things that you might not have otherwise. They have full editorial capacity. At the end of the book, there are people who've said things, maybe about someone else's story, about someone having an affair, or on cocaine or whatever. And we're in the position to say to them, look, that's not your story to tell. What if the grandchild of that person finds out that they used to snort coke or whatever? So, we're kind of counseling along the way to get the right story, something that they'll be proud of and happy with.

Patti

That is amazing. You know, the humanity of the process. That element of really caring about another human being, about their story, and really wanting to listen and document it. It's just amazing what you have built here. How long have you been in business? When did you start this?

Roy

It's been coming up for 15 years, and as I said, there's over 20,000 life books in the world. And that's my legacy. I had a background in food before and airline catering, and a little bit like Nobel, I wasn't going to be happy with airline food being my legacy. So now I have all these fabulous stories, amazing.

Patti

You know, as you were talking, I was thinking about an article that I read recently, and it was about encouraging people to do their pre mortem, in other words, write their own obituary. Think about what would be written and would they be proud of it. We all have things in our path that we may or may not be proud of, and that's okay. That's all part of being human. And the beauty of your process is that it gets documented, but people still have control over the outcome. I love that. It's an amazing thing that you've

done here, Roy, what a gift. How do people get started? I mean, I'm just curious, how do people do they how do they contact your company?

Roy

Literally, our websites, Lifebook memoirs.com. We have people who we call Lifebook Memoir advisors who will talk to people, all our sales are on the telephone and face to face. You don't go online and buy something of this scale, The Royal, which is the bookshelf product on the back behind me. That's for bookshelves. Other people want coffee table books. Our prices range from \$18,000 to \$42,000 but The Royal takes 200 hours of work, and these books are handmade. They're sewn. We're unique because the customer signs off their book, The Galley Proof, which is printed on beautiful paper. And we authorize it to go to print, to have an extra hour interview, which we scripted with them. Or they read from the book, and we get an hour of your grandma's voice. We put it in this little book, and it goes on a USB stick, and that means that you've got her forever laughing, crying, or whatever. Telling those stories in her voice. And before we print the pictures in the book, we improve everyone. We take out red eyes. If there's a tear in the newspaper article or a wedding certificate, we repair it. And we put all those repaired photographs back on here, so the family has in one place, not just the book, but this audio and photograph record forever.

Patti

Amazing, I think about the amount of money I have spent on stupid stuff, gifts, what have you. And to be able to channel that into something that is so permanent, like a life book. It's just an amazing idea, Roy. And thanks to all of you for listening and watching us today, and to you. Roy Moed of Lifebook Memoirs. Thank you so much for joining us, sharing all the stories, your stories, and the stories of people who have already had their memoirs done by your company. And to all of you, I hope you have a wonderful day and really think about sharing your memories with the people that you love and the generations to come. Have a great day. Thank you.