TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 131-SAY "THANK YOU" PART 2
(to someone from your past)

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 131.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen. (Music fades)

Last May I got an email that changed a corner of my life, and that same email could very well change yours.

Here's what it said:

Hello Jill Baughan,
My name is Bill Roberts and I'm not selling anything or asking for any donations! I was a student of yours at VCU. I'm not sure exactly what year. I'm guessing '86? I have the greatest memories of being in your class

I remember you always being so upbeat and encouraging. I have memories of you leading us to be very descriptive and teaching us about the importance of varied sentence lengths! I always thought that it was so cool of you to allow us to rewrite our assignments after you'd graded them, allowing us to get a better grade.

As we move through life we meet LOTS of people and sadly some pass away and all we have are memories of them. I've had a few close friends come to the end of their lives recently. Thinking back about people that have touched me I remembered you and your endless support and kindness. Thanks for being so cool!

I'd love to speak to you to say thanks for the great VCU memories!

Do I need to tell you how touched I was by the fact that Bill took the time and effort to say "thank you"? Because I hadn't seen this guy in decades! For all that time he remembered a

simple little English class, and through the current miracle of the interwebs, was able to say "thanks" because, as he said, he had lost a few close friends recently and realized we just don't have that kind of time to keep putting off thanking people for ways they touched our lives. So he became one of those rare people who actually did that thing.

It took some courage, risking being perceived as a slick salesman or just a garden variety creeper.

But he did it anyway, and I'm so glad he did because I actually remembered him from all those years ago!

But wait. There's more.

We decided it would be fun to get together and talk face to face, so he and his wife met my husband and me for dinner one night and spent a totally delightful couple of hours catching up on the last 35 years.

Yes, 35 years.

But that's not all! (I know. I should write infomercials, right?))

He inspired me to go looking for people from my own past to thank.

And so I began a list. The first person on it was Jeff Kellam, a Presbyterian minister, jazz afficionado and a radio announcer who was the creator and host of a radio show in the 1970s called *Celebration Rock*. I loved *Celebration Rock*. Every Sunday morning Jeff would take the music of a current pop/rock artist and weave spiritual truths in and out of the songs we were hearing on the radio. I thought it was the coolest thing ever.

The timing of the show was unfortunate for me, however, because on Sunday mornings I was on my way to a church across town to play as an organist/pianist. So I'd tune in to *Celebration Rock* on the car radio and tape the show on my *tape recorder* so I'd have a *cassette* to listen to the show again, undistracted, when I got home. The quality of the recording was kind of sad, but we were used to substandard audio back in the day.

One day, I thought, "Gee I wish Jeff would do a show using Barry Manilow's music," because I thought Barry was THE Bomb. And then I thought, "Gee I should write a show myself and insert my favorite Barry tunes, and give it to him and save him some work."

Looking back at my own presumptuousness makes me laugh and shake my head and blush all at once.

But I did write something up and I did deliver it to his studio, and we did talk for a few minutes and whaddyaknow, he did use the show.

And that's the last time I spoke with him, when I was about 25 years old. Over 40 years ago.

But that one experience showed me that I could write for a larger audience than the pages of my journal, gave me the confidence to do some articles and a couple of books and several decades later…a podcast.

So I needed to thank him. Finding him was easy, thanks to FaceBook. I messaged him, we set up a Zoom call and finally spoke voice-to-voice for the first time since 1978.

Of course, my first order of business was to thank him for that trajectory-changing opportunity way back when.

And then he shared some of his own experiences with putting words to gratitude.

One day, he said, *I returned home from NYC to find some voicemails. One was from a couple thanking me for doing their wedding... fifty years ago! Yes, they were celebrating their anniversary and announcing that my one-year guarantee had made it 50-times over! I am so touched that they reached out! I do remember them; I was fairly new in ministry, hadn't done many weddings...and Joan had played for the service. I called them back today and had a wonderful conversation with two 70-year old kids.*

Jeff also went on to talk about the times when he himself said thank you to others: Like his high school math teacher, Mrs. Woodard, who was so kind and accommodating, especially to students like himself, who couldn't claim math as a strong suit.

He always remembered her kindness, though, and after many years, went to her house, knocked on the door (so brave!), reminded her who he was and had a wonderful conversation which included, "Thank you for being such a kind teacher."

You might feel a little hesitant to contact someone from your distant past, for fear they'll think you're weird or have sinister ulterior motives or you're selling something and trying to use them to work your way up some sales pyramid. Or maybe you get a chance to see them face to face, and they are not the way you remember them. I I get that, and your concern is valid.

Jeff said that he once had a composition teacher, Dr. Bleasby, whose repeated comment on all Jeff's writing in college was "Wordy." Later, he said, "when I was starting my pastorate, I wrote to him and said every time time I wrote a sermon, I always remembered "wordy" and tried not be. And Dr. Bleasby actually wrote back and included a poem."

But years later after his retirement, Jeff found him, went to his house to say thank you, and there he was in a sleeveless white T shirt, unable to see well any more, and generally very feeble and just not the man he remembered. "It" he said, "was very sad."

Sometimes our memories embellish the past, and set us up for disappointment.

So a few guidelines for this kind of good will hunting might be helpful:

Christopher Donovan, a mental health support worker in Liverpool, England, offers a couple questions to ask yourself as you start this adventure:

1. *Why are you reaching out? What's really behind your impulse?*

For our short time together in this podcast episode, we're concentrating on saying "thank you" and not expressing anger, repairing a broken relationship, assuaging loneliness, or reconnecting with a lost love to sing, "Oh I had the time of my life…" into the phone. Yeah, no.

2. *What do you want to achieve by reaching out?*

Again, the purpose is to let someone know that they were a light in your life, and express your gratitude for that and them, and to bring joy to that person's life. First and foremost, it's about them, not you. Would you like to meet up in person? Or on a Zoom call? Or just express your thanks in writing? Have your goal in mind from the beginning, and always keep in mind, as Donovan says, that

3. *You might not get the response you want.*

Even though you only want to bring good news, they may be having a rough go of life, may be suspicious of your motives, may not have liked you in the first place. You may get a hostile response or no response.

Try not to take it personally; just know that it's a possibility when you start, and move on to another person on your list.

I personally have several more people on mine: a former boss, a friend from church camp, and a taxi driver in Italy who took me on an adventure…and also whom I forgot to tip. Listen to Episode 31 for that story, and know that I have not given up on finding her and finally thanking her with a generous tip, even though years have passed.

So how about you? Is there a teacher, a friend, even an acquaintance from your past you would like to thank? Think about doing more than just saying, "Yeah, I really should let that person know…" Because a life just might change with your words.

And so, my friend, as you consider embarking on this adventure,

May you give some thought to people in your past who were a light to your path,

And may you consider taking the risk of reconnecting with that source of light,

And may you—before it's too late—give someone the thanks they deserve…but never got from you. Until now.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know anyone who might owe someone some long overdue gratitude, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at jillbaughan.com, click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Say "thank you" to someone from your past, my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTES:

Podcast Episode 31: "Have Yourself an Adventure."
https://jillbaughan.com/2020/10/05/podcast-episode-31-have-yourself-an-adventure/

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Donovan, Christopher. "Before You Reach Out to That Person from Your Past: 3 Things to Consider." https://tinybuddha.com/blog/before-you-reach-out-to-that-person-from-your-past-3-things-to-consider/

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