

My dad believes in Bigfoot. You're probably not entirely sure what this podcast is about, but I bet you never guessed we would talk about large, mythical apes. This is Stacy Julian with episode 5 of Exactly Enough Time. You might think from its title, this is a podcast about productivity and while I love to rock a day and get stuff done, "exactly enough time" is much more about being present. It's about recognizing the time you have and making the most of it. It's about owning what you love. I love beginnings! And inviting more of whatever that is into your life. In this podcast, I tell stories and I invite you to celebrate people, places and things, like rainbow ink pads, that make you and your life amazing!

So my dad, Dr. Briggs Hall, is kind of a Bigfoot expert. He was interviewed on the show "Monster Quest" we'll talk more about that later. If you're listening to this episode when it comes out, I will be in the middle of the Caribbean ocean somewhere, teaching storytelling with my friend, Tracie Claiborne. I never would have imagined that going with my friend Heidi to her sister's "stamp party" back in the summer of 1993, would mean that "someday"- today, I would be able to earn a cruise for my family by teaching what I love. Everybody and everything has a beginning. Beginning stories are some of the most important stories we can tell. But here's the rub, in very few instances will you recognize a beginning story, when it begins. This is because - ready for profound insight- they're just beginning! And the sequence of moments that will spark something magnificent down the road appears to be so ordinary and totally unremarkable, our brains cannot tag them yet. They can't put any relational hooks into these moments, because our brain at this point has no true knowledge of them at all. Until connections are made between neurons and this happens with time. I'm already wandering off, I think, but only to say that one thing I adore about scrapbooking or more specifically about the way scrapbooking can change you, is that I believe you become more aware and more able, if it were possible, to sense a present moment as memorable, meaningful, before passes. I think as you practice the consciousness required of a memory keeper, you can strengthen the process whereby neurons connect. This of course has not been written up in any professional journal, but it has been tested with positive outcomes in my own lab, my own brain.

Now, back to where we were. Except that before I tell you about my dad and bigfoot and more about the postage stamp party that I almost skipped out on, I want to read you a quote that showed up in my inbox today from Todd Henry. Todd is one of my creative heroes and mentors, he says "it's tempting to believe that some people are born brave and others are naturally timid. Well, it's true that some creative pros are able to shut down the chattering narratives that call their ideas into question. It's also true that those of us who struggle with confidence can develop the discipline of bravery, so that we can defend our ideas and put them into the world. "Bravery," Todd says, "is a discipline." Oooh- that's good. Back in episode 2, I talked about how naming my inner critic has helped me shut down the chattering narrative that tries to diss on my ideas. My inner critic, of course, is Persephone. Well I've received some comments from you about naming your inner critic. Here's one from Gina K, she says "I'm naming my inner critic Medusa, because those negative comments snake their way into my life more often than not. Thank you for throwing your hat into the podcast ring, can't wait to listen to more episodes. Sending you big hugs and lots of sprinkles." Margo says "I'm going to call my negative lizard brain voice,

Thomasina, as it so often expresses doubts.” Yes- you guys-awesome! Thomasina, Medusa, Persephone it almost sounds like we could write our own version of Descendants, right?

So, anyway it's the summer of 1993, my husband is in medical school and he has one year to go. I have just given birth to my first baby, Clark. We are living in Chicago, but Jeff signs up for a one-month internship at the University of Washington. We get to spend July in Seattle with my parents and my siblings! While I'm there, one of my bestest high school friends, Heidi, calls me and says, “come with me tonight, please.” “Where are we going?” I ask. “Oh my sister's having one of those parties, it's a “stamp party” and she just needs bodies to show up.” I think to myself, I don't collect postage stamps and I hate those home party things. I'm always so embarrassed for the person selling. But, I really like Heidi and I do want to spend some time with her, so I decided to go. Just to be sure, and in the off chance something about this postage stamp party convinces me to start stamp collection, I leave my wallet at home. Maybe you've already guessed what happens. Turns out it's not a postage stamp party at all.

We show up at a house where I obviously know no one, except Heidi and her sister. We stand around, we eat treats, we stand around some more waiting for something to happen. Finally, we're ushered to one of the tables and we sit down and Heidi's sisters friend passes around a basket with three things in it. The first thing is a piece of wood with rubber stuck to it. It's a picture of little kids holding hands. The second thing is a rainbow ink pad and last of all, a stack of this super shiny, glossy, white paper that's extra thick. When the basket gets to me, I do what I've seen everyone else at my table do. But when I press down on that stamp and then lift it up again, when I see that multi-colored impression on that shiny paper, I feel this tickle- like sensation in my chest and my breathing suddenly becomes shallow and short. I honestly don't remember what happened next. But I do remember laying in bed that night with a “Dots” catalog. I had begged Heidi's sisters friend to borrow- just for 24 hours. I turn the pages back and forth, trying to decide how best to spend my budgeted \$15. Finally, in exasperation my husband said, “can you please turn off the light?”

The crazy, unfortunate, but actually serendipitous thing that happens next, in this sequence of moments, is that we get home to Chicago and my stamp order never comes. It just gets lost in the mail. I am so sad, I walk to the post office three or more times, just to check and see if by chance it's shown up yet. After a week and then two, I start to question-how am I going to get my hands on that catalog again? And how am I going to find money to buy more stamps? Back then, a “Dots demonstrator kit” actually costs more than it does today, go figure. It felt like a lot of money. I had to discuss this risk, this potential investment with my husband and sort of borrow the funds from our bank account, with the assurance that I would absolutely pay it back. As much as I disliked the idea of being “someone who sells things door-to-door or party-by-party” I had to do this. I had to see if I could do this. So I did, and the day after I got my kit, Katie Couric just happened to mention rubber stamps, how popular they were, on the Today Show. So when I went in to work at the outpatient cardiac rehab unit at Loyola hospital and ate lunch with the nurses, booking my first party was easy. The order sheets at the time were triplicate, a copy for me, a copy for the customer and one copy to send to Dots headquarters. After I finished with my first demonstration to this very first group of would-be stampers, I had a stack of order sheets. The order summary sheet, the one that I filled out and sent it to the office

showed a max amount listed for one party as \$600. I couldn't imagine selling \$600 worth of stamps! Apparently, if you sold more than \$600 at one party, you would have to use two order summary sheets. I had to use two order summaries. And so I began building my business as a Dots Demonstrator. One of those people who sells things at home parties.

This is a beginning story. Because when my husband matched for his medical residency in Utah, I was unknowingly headed to a mecca of craftiness. Where in four short years, I would attend my first Dots convention, find my first stamp and scrapbooking store, and teach my first "Moonlight Madness" crop. This is where I would self-publish my first idea book. Where I would meet Don and Diana Lamson co-founders with Lisa Brunson, of Creating Keepsakes magazine and where I would attend my first-ever editorial meeting. During this four-year period, I would fly with Deanna to Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin for the first taping of the first PBS show I would ever be on. This beginning was unfolding fast and to think I almost didn't go to that postage stamp party. And now, here we are, just a few years later I have the opportunity of working with Dots again. Only now, they are called Close to my Heart and while I'm cruising in the Caribbean, staff from the Close to my Heart home office, are actually manning a booth, a "Story by Stacy" booth at the annual RootsTech conference. RootsTech, by the way, is a family history and technology conference and trade show. It's held annually, in the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. It's the largest of its kind. I've attended before and even taught a few classes. I am hoping that the story based product kits I've created will be embraced by a few of the more than 15,000 participants that wander the show floor. Why am I telling you this? Because I recently created a few projects for the Close to my Heart staff members to display in this booth.

Remember Margot who named her inner critic Thomasina? In her comment she also asked me a question, she said "do you have any thoughts on overcoming the resistance from a proposed subject? It's not always those who are willingly invested in the project that needs to have their stories told." Do I have thoughts? Yes I most definitely do! And Margot's right, the people who you want to help tell stories are not always willing and invested. I've been trying to get my dad to tell some of his stories for years. I showed him multiple times how to use the voice recorder on his smartphone. I signed him up for a really cool service that emails you one question a week, all you have to do is hit "reply", answer the question and the story is archived in your account. I even took my dad to a week-long storytelling seminar with master storyteller Donald Davis, to see if that would light a fire under him. It didn't. A year ago, when I was visiting, I opened a blank word document on his computer, I called it "Briggs's stories" and I saved it to his desktop. "Dad," I said "all you have to do is double click right here, anytime you want. The document will open and when it's open, it looks like a blank white piece of paper and you can start typing. You can type anything, any story about any experience in your life. It's not hard, dad, I promise. Then when you're done writing, whatever you write, just hit "save". You can keep adding to it. Keep hitting "save" and then the next time I come to town, I will do the rest." The last time I was in town, I asked if he had written any stories for me. "I can't find that document thing you set up for me" he said "you mean this one right here?" as I pointed to one of three things saved to his computer desktop, but my dad didn't want to talk about that. He wanted me to help him organize some of his wildlife photos. Photos he has taken during the 10 years that he worked for the

state of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as their veterinarian. So, I sat down at his computer and I helped him. Then I flew home.

The next week when I needed to start creating projects for the RootsTech booth, I had the thought, "I wonder if I could create a "Stories I Love" album for my dad, about some of his experiences as a wildlife veterinarian." And let me tell you, my dad has had some seriously cool and crazy experiences in the forests and mountains of Washington. He has worked with scores of biologists, to gather data for all kinds of studies, bear studies, elk studies, mountain goat studies. He has flown in helicopters and darted cougars. When the sea lions suddenly showed up at the Ballard Locks in Seattle and wouldn't leave, guess who they called? My dad. My dad has worked with Native American that know the remote hills and area of Washington like a back of their hand. He has sat around campfires with some pretty interesting and colorful folk. For 10 years he was also tasked with the job of returning phone calls from Washington residents who "saw or heard unusual things" when they were camping and hiking. He would return these calls and he might hear something like this "oh yeah, thanks for returning my call...so, we were camping last weekend and, I don't know, I'm just wondering can a bear stand up and walk on his hind legs?" My dad listened to dozens of reports like this. His job was to note the date and the location of such reports and then reassure those who recreate in our great state, that it's all well and safe. The Department of Wildlife cannot and does not believe in bigfoot, but I have it on good authority that the biologists do, and the Indians do. My dad certainly does.

Back to my project, and one of the possible solutions to Margot's question, maybe we aren't helping the people who aren't telling the stories in the right way. Maybe "we" and by "we", I mean me, are focused too much on the "how". Like how to use their smartphones and how to tell stories like a master storyteller and how to save documents or reply to emails. When what they need is a specific invitation to do a very well-defined thing by a fast approaching date. Now this might not be the solution to Margo's situation at all, but guess what happened when I called my dad and asked him to write four wildlife stories for me? He said yes. I told him, "dad I'm serious, I need four stories. They don't need to be long, maybe 350 words, and that's like only three paragraphs, but I need them by next Wednesday and I'm going to put them in a book for you. And each story will have one picture next to it just one. Can you write me four stories and pick out four pictures by next Wednesday? That's only 5 days, dad." What happened next was magical, if not a miracle. My dad emailed me a story and then called me, "Did you get my story?" I did. "Did you like it?" "I haven't read it yet, dad, I just got it this afternoon." "Well, call me back when you read it, I want to know if it's okay." "Okay Dad, I will." After dinner that night I get another call from my dad, "Did you read my story yet?" "Dad, I'm so sorry, I've just been busy, I will read it I promise. I'll call you tomorrow." The next morning I read his story and I loved it! When I called him, guess what happened? He said, "I just sent you another one, did you get it?" And this went on for 4 days. I got stories from my dad. And those stories are now in a book with a few photos. They are in a book that can be shared with my siblings and with his grandchildren. And the best part, I talked to my dad as I was finishing the album and he said "can't you do some kind of phone call with this crazy iPhone thing where I can see what you're making?" "Yes dad, it's called FaceTime. I will FaceTime you right now." And I showed my dad his "Stories I Love" album and he said "so what now? What if I have more stories than that? I've

got a few more stories I'd like to tell you you know." "Well, I can make more albums," dad-"I would love to make more books of your stories."

Do you guys want to hear one of the stories my dad wrote? Let's do it. This story is titled "Backpacking." Many years ago Connie and I hiked into a basin in the mountains north of Winthrop, Washington. The basin was formed by a ridge in the shape of a "U". Ground water oozing from the sides of the ridge created a large swamp in the middle of the basin. With a resulting stream that drained out of the bottom to the south. The hillsides were covered with Buck Brush and scattered pine trees with openings of smaller vegetation. As it grew dusk, I observed an occasional deer coming out to feed on the hillsides. The deer hunter in me is always on the lookout for good hunting spots and early morning is the optimum time to observe deer. So I had determined to arise early the next morning to do some deer scouting. Accordingly, I climbed out of the tent at first light, the sun's rays were just beginning to illuminate the top of the ridge to the west. As I gazed around my attention was immediately drawn to a large animal working its way through the buckbrush near the top of the west ridge. What could that possibly be? I was confused as to what I was seeing because Buck Brush grows to a height of 6 or 7 ft and a deer or a bear walking into this brush would be completely covered and no longer visible, yet I was looking at the head and shoulders of an animal moving up the hill. The other confusing thing was the color of this animal. Deer are brown and bears in eastern Washington or either brown or black, the subject I was looking at appeared in the morning sun to be gray. Then just for a brief moment I spotted, in a small opening, what appeared to be a coyote moving up the hill in tandem with the larger creature. I couldn't fathom what I was looking at, but I was sure it wasn't an animal one would reasonably expect to see in these mountains. In what was no more than a minute, the creature reached the top of the ridge and passed out of my view.

When we returned to civilization I stopped at the Winthrop ranger station and asked what kind of animal lives in these hills that would be grey in color? The ranger advised me, it would have to be the Cascade fox. That response wasn't very satisfying since I knew a full-grown Cascade fox was no bigger than a Cocker Spaniel and that was clearly not what I had seen. Years after this backpacking trip, I learned that the mature males of the mythical creature known as Bigfoot, turn gray on their back, just like the Silverback gorillas of Africa. And that the young of the bigfoot species run on all fours until they are 4 to 5 years of age. Had I in fact seen an adult and an infant Bigfoot as they returned together from their morning drink? This singular experience was the beginning of my curiosity about Bigfoot and what has become through the years with the state of Washington a keen interest. Now that I'm retired, the desire to learn more and hopefully prove the existence of Sasquach has become my quest.

Did you hear that last part? Where my dad wrote "this singular experience was the beginning.." You guys, I never knew the beginning of the "my dad believes in Bigfoot" story! It was just an ordinary backpacking trip. Man I love beginning stories! They are so fascinating. The girl who goes to what she thinks is a "postage stamp" party and the guy who takes his wife backpacking so he can scout for deer, both in unexpected ways, discover life quests, passions, interests that will occupy them for years. And those two beginning stories, just collided two weeks ago, when the scrapbooking daughter documented some of her dad's favorite wildlife stories. Including the one where he probably saw a Sasquatch.

Here's the takeaway, everybody and everything has a beginning. Women who have given birth love to tell labor and delivery stories, the beginnings of each child. Newlyweds pour over pictures and pick just the right ones to document the beginning of their lives together. We celebrate the beginning of each school year almost like it's a holiday and the beginning of each week, month and year tend to stir a little bit of extra potential in us. What beginning stories could you tell? And now here's my plug for present-living. Look around, what do you do, who do you love, where are you going next? Is there a beginning story linked to any of the answers to those questions?

T.S. Eliott said "every moment is a fresh beginning". T.S. short for Thomas Stearns Eliott, by the way, one of the twentieth century's major poets, a British essayist publisher and playwright, was actually born in the US in St Louis, Missouri in 1888. When he was 25 he moved overseas and at 27 he was introduced to Vivian Haywood. He was immediately smitten and married her on an impulse. Vivian refused to cross the Atlantic in wartime, and so Elliot took his place in literary England. He became a British subject at the age of 37. He renounced his American passport.

Everyone and everything has a beginning. So what is happening today or this week that could be the beginning of something you will cherish in the future? The secret is to pay attention. Keep that smartphone camera close and try to be just a little bit curious about what might begin to unfold and become the beginning of something down the road. And if you've dropped the storytelling ball, pick it up again. Put any guilt or shame that you have around what you haven't done, in a bubble and just blow it away. Then start, not at the beginning, but *with* a beginning. You have exactly enough time to do so. And thank you for listening.

If you have something to say to me, a comment question idea for a future episode, I invite you to use the orange button on the sidebar of the show notes for this episode. Just click on it and send me a voicemail and then I can play it back and share it with you, like this "stacy!stacy!stacy! It's Amy McGrue here, thank you, thank you for today's podcast. I'm a shy girl, believe it or not, I am kind of introverted too and your message really was awesome and it was perfect for sharing with my team. I love everything about this podcast, you make my day. Thank you thank you thank you for donating your time and energy to sharing your thoughts with us, you truly are an inspiration. Anyway thanks again Stacy, I really really enjoy, Exactly Enough Time." Thank you, Amy. I just think it will be lots of fun if I can share with my listeners the things that you want to say. So use that orange button then send me something. And by the way, if you want to see the full video clip of my dad on the "Monster Quest" show that's in the show notes too.