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LIVE INTERNET TALK RADIO

Lives Well Lived

Guest Presenter, Sky Bergman

TRANSCRIPT OF ORIGINAL BROADCAST ON AUGUST 2, 2019

Millions of people are living better. They are enjoying a healthier lifestyle, learning more about overcoming obstacles and keeping a positive outlook. Now you can be a member of the club. This is the Living to 100 club with Dr. Joe Casciani. Our guests share incredible stories and advice, bring new outlooks on wellness and show you how to keep moving forward. Now here is your host, Dr. Joe Casciani.

Joe: Hello to all of our listeners. Welcome to today's episode of the Living to 100 Club radio show on the Voice America Network. Thank you for being with us today. I'm your show host, Joe Casciani. I'm joined today by an award-winning filmmaker Sky Bergman. Her film *Lives Well Lived* puts the spotlight on successful aging, I'd say literally puts the spotlight on successful aging. We'll be discussing her film, the inspiration behind it, and what lessons we can learn from it. I invite you to join the Living to 100 Club. There are no dues in this club, no meetings, just a desire to rethink traditional stereotypes about aging and throwing off those limitations we put on older adults. Our tagline, turning aging on its head, asks our members to keep a positive adventurous frame of mind, and push ahead no matter what our limitations are.

I've seen the film and I think Sky's film does exactly that. Before the introduction, I want to remind our listeners that your questions and comments are welcome. You can make a call to (866) 472-5792 and speak directly with Sky or you can send your question to info@Livingto100.Club. Now, a little background on our guest. Sky Bergman is an accomplished award-winning photographer and filmmaker. *Lives Well Lived*, Sky's directorial debut celebrates the incredible wit and wisdom of adults 75 to 100 years old who are living their life to the fullest. Encompassing over 3000 years of experience, 40 people share their secrets and insights to live a meaningful life. *Lives Well Lived* has now been screened in over 150 cities, beginning with a premier at the

Santa Barbara International Film Festival. The film has won eight awards, enthusiastic reviews and a 100% fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

Lives Well Lived is screening at community and educational institutions around the country sponsored by organizations such as Aging 2.0, AARP and Leading Age. Further, Sky's fine artwork is included in permanent collections at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, Seattle Art Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France. Her commercial work has appeared on book covers for Random House and other publishers. Her magazine spreads have appeared in Smithsonian, Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel, Reader's Digest and Archeology Odyssey. Sky Bergman is currently a professor of photography and video at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo, California where she had been teaching since 1995. She's also working on two new short films which encourage intergenerational connections and a feature length film about love. Welcome Sky. We're very glad to have you with us today.

Sky: Thank you very much. I'm tired just hearing all those things.

Joe: Impressive credentials. I first heard you in an interview last fall on National Public Radio and I thought what a great guest you'd make on this year's show. I started to stitch it together. I know we talked then and we've been in touch then. I love the film. I love what it says. I love what it can highlight for successful aging and its becoming the norm, not the exception. Why don't you tell our listeners what the film is all about?

Sky: It started with my grandmother who at the age of 99 was still working out at the gym and I thought, oh my God. I better film her because nobody's going to believe that at 99, she's still working out at the gym. She had a phrase "move it or lose it" which I think of often when I think I'm too tired to go to the gym. I put together a little one minute of video of her working out and I came back from that trip and I thought, wow there's something here. I really want to do something with this. I was just looking at approaching 50 and thinking I want to find other people out there that are as much an inspiration as my grandmother is to me, as I am looking at kind of approaching the second half of my life.

I put a call out to my friends, family and alum that I teach at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. I've taught here for 25 years. I have about a thousand people on my email list that I sent out a blast to and said "Hey, here's the video of my grandmother at the gym. If you have somebody in your sphere that is as much as inspiration as she is to me, then please nominate them". I was just inundated by nominations. It was very heart-warming.

Through the film, I interviewed 40 people with 3000 years of collective life experience. The film kind of highlights eight of those people and then interwoven throughout their stories are the questions that I asked everyone. I asked everyone the same 20 something questions. I have about five questions that I chose. Like one of them is "What's a life well lived and what do you think of your own mortality? What do you

wish younger people understood about life?” Those questions are woven through with montages of all the people that I interviewed and what great lessons I learned.

Joe: Well, I'm sure. Mostly then, the inspiration started with your grandmother and after talking with your colleagues you said well, she's not an exception. There are plenty of other people that we could highlight in this film. What part of you, I mean knowing you're a filmmaker and a creator, what side of you, what part of you really wanted to put this together? What was it that caught you?

Sky: I think as I said before, while I was looking at approaching 50 and looking for role models out there. I just don't think that there are that many positive films about aging well. I wanted to show all these people that were aging well and also tell their stories. That was really what motivated me to start on this journey. I always tell my students the more personal, the more universal things are. This is a very personal journey which started with my grandmother and led me to basically, the fact that I have 40 new grandparents now as a result of the film. I think that that was really what it was. It was a kind of a personal journey that led me to work on the film.

Joe: That's an interesting comment. The more personal it is, the more universal it is. Tell me what you mean by that.

Sky: I think when people know and I think this word gets bantered around a lot lately but when things are authentic, you can tell. When you're watching something, I didn't do this film thinking, “Oh my God, everybody's, people are aging. The boomers are getting older. This would be a perfect film and I'll make a lot of money doing that” because you don't make a lot of money as an independent filmmaker. I did it because of a love of my grandmother. Because it was such a personal film, I think that then when I interviewed the other people that I interviewed for the film, they saw the love that I had from my grandmother and that I was really interested in it because of her. I think that shows through in the film.

One of the questions that I ask everyone after they see the film is by a show of hands, “How many of you are thinking of somebody that would have been perfect for the film or you think you would've been perfect for the film?” I would say 95% of the hands go up every time I do a screening. It connects in that way. That's where I think, although it was a very personal project for me, it became very universal because everyone can see somebody in that film that they identify with and they can think of somebody that they would like to interview and that they think would be perfect for a film like this.

Joe: How long did it take to make the film?

Sky: It took four years of interviewing and because I do have a day job. Like I mentioned, I teach at the university here at Cal Poly. I would do this in between teaching and then I took another year of editing the film. Really it was a five-year process of getting the film to the point that it was ready to be seen on the screen.

Joe: Did you travel to where all of your, I don't know what you're calling your participants, your actors, did you travel to where they were?

Sky: I would call them my friends, but I travelled to where they all were. A lot of them were in California so that made it a little easier, but I also interviewed people in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in Florida, in Pennsylvania. I did travel around a bit. I interviewed all the people in their homes except for one person that I interviewed in a library space but everyone else, it was really important for me in the film to show the space that they were in that they lived in. We did move furniture around sometimes but pretty much it was their space. There was something that you could tell about them by looking at the background of where the space was.

Joe: That whole context makes a big difference. Was it one of the persons in a bakery where he was still working?

Sky: You're probably thinking of Lou Tedone who makes fresh Mozzarella every morning. He's now 96 years old and that was in his home. He gets up at 4:15 in the morning, goes to the gym first and then he comes home, and he makes fresh Mozzarellas. He lives right around the corner from me. He's become a very dear friend. I did not know him before the movie started, before I started filming it. If I don't go visit him once a week while he's making the cheese, as he calls them his mozzies in the morning, he will email me to make sure that I'm okay. When I travel, I have to give him my travel schedule. It's really quite wonderful because I love just hanging out with him and just listening to his stories. I don't have a camera anymore with me but I just keep him company and listen to the stories because I think that one of the things that I really learned when I was working on this project is that everyone has a story to tell if we just take the time to listen. We're so engaged with our iPhones and our gadgets that a lot of times we don't put them down and we don't take the time just to listen to people. I had the gift of being able to do that for four years. I really think that my life is forever changed as a result of that.

Joe: A lot of commonalities of course. I mean people would have the kind of zest for living and not letting age get in the way, believing that age is only a number and that's something we all firmly believe I know. Were there some differences among the different people? I mean obviously a lot of commonalities, but were there some differences that you detected?

Sky: It wasn't so much that there were differences. I mean, I think there were more commonalities and I will say that I did not go into making this film as a social scientist. I went into this film really looking for those people that were still positive and engaged. Maybe that's why I found more similarities than differences. The three common things really that I found amongst the people was that they all had something that they enjoyed doing every day and still wanted to learn about every day and gave back in some way. Rose Albano Ballestero for example, is in her eighties and still goes and teaches ESL every morning at the high school because she did ESL when she was a student. She's still giving back. As I've mentioned, Lou is still making his Mozzarellas every morning so there's something that people are doing and on a daily basis.

Second is that they all have a good support system whether it's family or friends. The interesting thing was it didn't necessarily have to be family. It could be friends, but they were not loners. Then the third thing, which is so cliché, but so appropriate I guess is that they all were people that saw life as the glass is half full rather than half empty. I mean the stories that these people told and the things that they lived through some of them were really horrific, but they didn't dwell on them. Instead, they looked at the glass as half full and were so grateful for where they were at that point in their lives. I think because I was looking for positive people and I think that I found more of the commonalities rather than the differences.

Joe: Yes, of course. They would stand out. I use that. I mean it's an old expression but half full or half empty. It's a single eight-ounce glass and there's four ounces of water in it. It's the same glass but yet people see it one way and other people see it a different way. It is that whole notion of how do we perceive these events in our lives and how do we respond to them? Do we let them weigh us down or do we move beyond them? I could see that's certainly a common element in your group. They're all working or very active and the family support, friends support. I'm curious, how did you get this funded? Did you have some outside sponsors, or did you fund it yourself?

Sky: I funded it myself. I did do an Indiegogo campaign, and I also had a fiscal sponsor which means that people could donate and write off their donations but for the most part it was self-funded. I am pleased to say that the film has done well enough that I do believe that I'm at the point where I have broken even and now, I'll start making a little bit of money off of the film. That of course is only the money that I spent on it. I spent five years and more, five years in making it and now all these years of promoting it where I didn't get paid. It's a labor of love. When people say that, I really understand what they mean. I feel like the film has taken on a life of its own and has really changed so many other people's lives after they've seen it, that it was absolutely worth the time and the effort to do that too.

Joe: Well that's great. Good for you. I mean, just to get some of your expenses back is a big thing, let alone getting some of your time compensated but you made a real contribution. I wonder, are there some, I know we're going to get into this more in the second part of our but just to begin thinking about it, we talked about the commonalities. I'm curious what is it that these individuals still have and what do they care about? I mean there is a certain optimism of course and they shrug off the losses. They don't get caught up in the pessimistic but what separates them from those that don't have that optimism? I remember years ago we had that Geritol product and I mentioned to you earlier, is there a Geritol for the 21st century? I mean what is it, what's that, what's that magic? What is that fire that some people have, and some people block? What's your take on that?

Sky: I think it's just having a positive attitude. I mean, there were people that I filmed and for the movie, that were not necessarily in the best physical shape, but I don't think that they let that down. I think mentally they were just so grateful, having a grateful and positive attitude makes all the difference in the world. Your body is going to age as Lou will say when I see him, "How are you doing?" "Oh well, you know,

amazing". We're all aging but just knowing okay, you might have certain limitations but what are the things that you can still do? I think that looking at again, that glass is half full and having that positive attitude and being grateful for what you have goes a very long way in terms of how those people respond in the world.

Joe: Let's pick up on that a little bit more after the break. It's time to take a short break. This is Joe Casciani and my guest is Sky Bergman. You're listening to the Living to 100 Club on the Voice America Health and Wellness channel. Stay tuned. We have much more to talk about. We'll be back in just a couple of minutes.

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Joe: All right, we're back. Thanks to all of our listeners for staying with us and Sky, I see that we have a question. Let me see if I can read this. Let's, let's take this question: "I've not had the privilege of watching the film yet. What do you say about the population that doesn't have anyone anymore? No one to visit them. How do you have a glass half full outlook? When is it time to have someone to reach out to that person? They don't have that support".

Sky: One of the things that happens as people age is that their network of friends definitely can get smaller. I think it's up to us as individuals to keep a wider network. There are senior centers. I know have a wonderful program in New York called DOROT (<http://www.dorotusa.org>), which connects generations, connects younger people with elders and they come and visit them. There are ways even if you don't have family or you've lost lots of friends that you can still get connected to other people. You might have to put yourself out there a little bit to make that happen, but I think that in the end it's worth it because that social connection is so needed. One of the things that my grandmother always used to say when I would ask her about her secret to living a long life was to meet younger friends.

There's something to that because she lived to be 103 and a half. Her friends had all passed away. She had a friend of hers from when she was like two years old. She lived to be a hundred. She had her best friend who lived to be one hundred, which is amazing but most of her friends were, by the end were younger than her. She cultivated that not just later in life but all of her life. She had friends of all different age groups. I think that that's something that's important to think about. I think that partly what happens a lot of times is that when we're working, we're so busy and we kind of forget about doing that and then we retire. Our friendship mostly came from the work a lot of times because that's where we spend most of our time. You kind of have to reinvent yourself and think about putting yourself out there and not just staying at home.

I would encourage people to get out there, to call the different services that have those programs that connect people especially the intergenerational connections. I think those are so meaningful not just to an elder who might be lonely but also to the younger generation. They learned so much from being with their elders. A lot of people, because we're so separated, people live thousands of miles away from their relatives. They don't have that connection that I had to my grandparents. I was lucky I lived five minutes away from them. To have that connection with an elder I think is something that we really have lost in our society.

One of the things that I found in my research when I was doing the film was that the last hundred years is the first time in human history that we looked to anyone other than our elders for advice. I really feel the world is suffering as a result. Any time that I can have the film be a catalyst for intergenerational projects, I'm always happy to make that happen.

Joe: I'm just thinking of that advice from your grandmother. Very smart thinking. I've actually never heard that before. When we're picking our friends and developing

relationships, we want to step outside of our cohort group, the same age group and look at all ages. Really stay away from any labels. We're developing relationships with other people who are older or younger or same age of course. That's an interesting bit of advice. I'd never heard that.

Of course, you're familiar with the blue zones of course and all those elements that people living in those eight or nine geographic regions around the world that have those common elements. A lot of that is that support and that kind of intergenerational relationship and interaction and socialization. That's so important just to respond to the caller's question. Let's look beyond whenever we can. Sometimes it's not possible of course but let's look beyond to maintain those kinds of thriving relationships.

I'm curious about, how many showings has the film had? How many screenings have there been?

Sky: We've done over 150 screenings. At this point I've kind of lost track because we had our film festival run which we just did a short film festival run and then, because I got distributions it was opened in theaters in February 2018. Then we've been doing community and educational screenings now since last August. It's just amazing to me. I mean I'm still getting bookings for screenings all over the country through to the spring. It definitely strikes a chord and I think that what happens is when people see the film then they want to bring somebody else to see the film again. It ran here at our local theater for nine weeks. Almost everywhere that it ran, I mean LA and San Francisco and New York, they've either brought it back or it ran an extra week because I think there is that drive to want to share it with other people. That's kind of nice. You can see where it's going to be screening next. It's on our website and you can see that. You can sign up for our email newsletter list on the website and know when, we're going to release the DVD probably in December or January. It's coming up pretty soon. You'll find out when that is happening.

Joe: Why don't you share the website address now if you could?

Sky: The website is Lives-Well-Lived.com or if you just Google it, if you put Lives Well Lived then it's the first thing that will come up.

Joe: Lives-Well-Lived.com or just Google to Lives Well Lived.

Sky: Just Google Lives Well Lived. It will come up.

Joe: Good search results. Okay, that's good. 150 showings, maybe more and you tend to have smaller, kind of community centers not mega theaters I take it. I saw at a small community center.

Sky: We've done both. In two days, I was back in Rhode Island. I did a screening at University of Rhode Island for 600 people. On the next night, it was for 50 people at a little community center. It really runs the gamut from any kind of screening. One of the things that I love about doing these screenings versus just having people see it on their own is that I think that the conversation happens after people see the film. I'll

hear people as they're walking out of the theater talking about how it influenced them or who their favorite person was or they're thinking about their own life in relationship to the film. I think that it's really lovely. There is something about that communal experience when you go to a theater or you go to a place to actually see a film that you're going and you're seeing it with other people that it forms the way that you feel about the film. I really love when we are able to do that. Having people see it via a DVD at home will be a whole other experience but it's really for me, just a lovely thing to witness having that whole communal experience. Being in the audience, I love that and hearing the laughter and hearing when people get the jokes. It's just really what a treat.

Joe: Much better to process the movie instead of just walking out to your car in the parking lot. I mean you really want to have people discuss it. I know that took place when I saw the film here in San Diego. I'm curious, what are the reactions, obviously they are going to be very strong and positive. Are there some other kind of dissenting opinions? Are there other people that are saying oh, this is too rose-colored kind of? Any dissenting views or anything contentious?

Sky: I think the biggest thing would be that people will say oh well, everybody in your film is healthy and they're doing well. I would say that's not entirely true. I think that they're mentally all doing well in terms of their attitude and that's why I chose them to be in the film but for example, my dad is in the film. He is actually a geriatric physician and has been since he got out of med school which I think is kind of interesting and ironic and with what I'm doing now. I interviewed him for the film, and he's had several strokes and he is in a wheelchair although he's still practicing medicine. You wouldn't necessarily know that because in the interview he's sitting down but I think that is one comment that I will hear sometimes then that I'll tell people it's really more about how you're doing in terms of your way of thinking and your outlook on life rather than your physical strength.

My dad is actually, I believe, we've had conversations about this, actually more happy and grateful for the things that he can do now than he was before. He was always one of those people that the grass is greener over in the other field and now I think he realizes hey, the grass is pretty good right where I'm sitting. This is good. His attitude has really changed as a result of the strokes. I love witnessing that firsthand, but I also would say that it's really not about necessarily your physical strength or your physical wellbeing. I think it's more about your emotional wellbeing.

Joe: I say that all the time. I mean the body doesn't necessarily cooperate and the body has ailments and certain conditions or diseases but mentally, regardless of our limitations, we can still have that positive, forward thinking outlook. I see a question, more of a comment from Anthony. He says, "Sky is my cousin and I work in the senior living industry". "Hello Anthony". "There are many facilities I would love to pen pal with the younger generation and pass along their story, wisdom and knowledge". What an interesting idea that may already be happening. I'm not aware of it. Do you have any thoughts on that to engage some of those?

Sky: Yes, there are quite a few people that are doing stuff like that. Hello to Anthony, my cousin who by the way the grandmother is this grandmother too. It's on that side of the family. That's so cool that he's listening. One of the things that I realized as I was working on the film was that I had to cut off my interviews at 40 or I would never get a film done but I want it to be more inclusive than exclusive. On the website, there's actually a place where people can share their stories or the stories of their loved ones. There are about half of the questions that I used when I was doing the interviewing for the film because I think one of the hardest things to start the conversation is to know what questions to ask.

If you just sit down with somebody and you say "Oh, can you tell me your life story?" It can meander in many different ways. Having a set of questions is really helpful. When we've done our intergenerational projects, what we've done is show the film to the different generations together so that they get to see that together. Then we pair up students with an elder and they use those questions from the film to start the conversation going. Then they collect the stories and we do a big wrap party at the end of the quarter and share those stories. I would encourage people to do this, if they know of people, or if you're a teacher at a high school or college and you want to do a great project. The discussion guide for the film with all the questions is on our website and you can use that and go into some of those places.

I'm sure that they would love to have some connections like that happening. One of the things that I didn't realize that I was doing when I was doing the film was one of the people in the film said to me, "Thank you so much for collecting my story" because all those people that I collected their stories, they feel like their life is validated in a way because they had somebody that took the time to collect their story and care about the life that they led. It's such an act of kindness that I didn't realize. How easy would that be to do for someone else is to make them feel like their life meant something and to validate it in that way?

Joe: We see that all the time. I've spent so many years working with people in nursing homes and mental health professionals who work with these residents. Nobody else takes the time to listen. Some people say it's a luxury to be able to do that while it's actually a good health care practice to take the time and find out about these people, validate their lives and give them some reasons to feel like they still have some quality. I can see where that takes place at any level where you're taking the time to listen. People, everyone has a story and sometimes people have things that get in a way of feeling good about themselves but when you can take the time to listen, they can feel that much better.

Sky: Just to add to that, one of the things that happens is when people age sometimes, and I know this happens to my grandmother. The few times that she was in a hospital, I'd have a doctor would come in and if I was in the room, they would talk to me instead of her. I would say she is the patient talk to her. A lot of times people that are older get ignored because I don't know why, maybe they can't hear as well. Whatever the reason is but I think if you make that effort, I mean my grandmother

was totally lucid and wanting to make the decisions and ultimately actually fired that doctor because he wasn't listening to her.

I think that in taking that time and hearing the stories and hearing the things that people have done in their past, it connects you to that person in a very different way. You see them as a person rather than necessarily as a patient. I hope that the film can be used in a lot of gerontology programs to make people kind of more aware and to start a little bit more of that dialog going. One of the best stories I heard was of a woman who, when she went into a nursing home, her friend put up pictures on the wall of this woman, her name was Beatrice Woods. She was a very famous ceramicist. Put in images of her from her whole life on the wall so that when people came into the room to work with her, they were seeing her as a person rather than just the patient. That made all the difference in the world. I think that that's something that's missing.

Joe: Yes, because they don't have the time to talk about that. Nobody even asks them. Just to bring in some of their whole life story into their room and let the visitors know there was a real person here more than just an individual who is getting treatment. I do like that notion of a pen pal system. I could see where senior living centers and higher functioning people would really enjoy sharing that and having a pen pal to communicate with. Maybe at some level it could be done with skilled nursing facilities, which is what I'm familiar with. It's certainly worth exploring. I think that whole notion of connecting and reconnecting with people is we can take them out of their dark days.

All right, I see that we need to take another break here. A short break. This is Joe Casciani and my guest is Sky Bergman. You're listening to the Living to 100 Club on the Voice America Health and Wellness channel. Stay tuned. We have much more to talk about. We'll be right back.

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Joe: Okay and we're back. Thanks to everyone for staying with us for our discussion with Sky Bergman. Sky, a question came in during the break. Let me read it. It says "I'm 14. My pa, maybe grandpa is 86. How do I connect with him when I'm not sure how we have anything in common?"

Sky: First of all, I'm impressed that a 14-year old is listening in. That's great. I would say the first thing that you can do is use this as an experience where you can go to the website, grab the questions, you can blame the questions on me and say hey, "I want to interview you. I want to do this project". That will open the door to at least having a conversation. One of the funniest things I thought that happened when I was doing the interviewing was when I had a student with me when I interviewed Lou Tedone who makes some Mozzarellas and he's a very lively Italian guy and talks a lot. My student who was with me afterwards said "Wow, I didn't realize that older people talk that much". I said, "Well, don't you have anybody who is older in your life?" "Yes, but my grandfather doesn't say anything". I said, "Well, have you ever asked him anything?"

I think part of it is breaking that barrier down. He really just didn't know that these people could have these amazing stories. People love to talk about themselves and I think if you take the time and your grandfather actually really knows that you're interested you would be surprised at what doors open and what kind of relationship could happen after that. You might find more things that you have in common than you ever thought before were even possible.

Joe: There are questions on your website. Someone can go there and look at maybe a series of questions that they could use.

Sky: Absolutely, yes. There's a link on our website for shared stories and if you click on "participate" it brings you to a list of questions that people can use. If they want

more questions, they can email me through the website and I'm happy to send all the questions that I use for the film.

Joe: At least to provide some structure, some reason to get started. A premise, if nothing else just to say "Hey, I've got some questions for your gramps. Can we sit down sometime?" I actually had a friend who was staring to starting to do this kind of recording for families. They would have a series of questions for the older adult and put it on video so it could be recorded. I think that's being done more and more these days just for that history but you're right. We don't know until we have the questions. We can't assume anything can we? Just because there's an age gap, we cannot assume anything.

Let me ask you what is the lesson that you learned from all this work, four years, five years of putting this film together. You've maintained a lot of relationships. What are some of the lessons you've learned?

Sky: I think the biggest takeaway for me really was to just live more in the moment, to be grateful for each and every moment. I think that when you're in your twenties, thirties and even forties, you're kind of rushing around with your career and you forget to just take a moment and breathe. I try and do that a couple of times, at least during the day where I stop myself and go okay, let's just look at how beautiful the world is. If I'm at a screening, I just look at the audience and say, I'm so grateful that you are here and just really soaking it in because I don't think that we necessarily live in the moment as much as we should. Life is a lot better if you can slow down and do that a little bit. Just breathe and look up every once in a while, and say well, I'm really grateful for where I'm at this moment. There are some days that are harder than others, but I think even in those darker days, if we can find something to be grateful for it really, it makes life a lot richer and better.

Joe: It's easy to focus or it's not hard to focus on the disappointments and the negatives and the kind of frustrations. It's almost like wearing blinders. We need to take the blinders off where we can see the whole picture then. We see more than just the negatives. We can see all the positives that are out there too. You have to slow down to do that. You're right, you have to slow down to do that. You mentioned that you're still in touch with a lot of the people on the film. Who were the ones that have really made the lasting impressions on you?

Sky: I would say all of them did in different ways but there are people that I have stayed more in contact with like Lou Tedone and Marian and Paul Wolf. I owe the fact that it's a feature length film to Marian Wolf because when I started the project, I just thought it might be a web series. She came over. She grew up in Germany and then moved to Austria when the war broke out and ended up coming on the very first Kindertransport from Vienna, Austria to the United Kingdom where they were taking Jewish children and trying to save them from the war. I am Jewish and I did not know anything about the Kindertransport, and she still had the little cardboard number that they had put around her neck when she was eight years old to go on that Kindertransport.

I get chills every time I think about it. It was at that moment that I realized this really needs to be a feature length film. Although it's about the words of wisdom of all these wonderful elders, it's also about their stories. I really sought to find a diverse group of stories. For example, one of the stories that was really important for me to tell was of a Japanese American because I told the story of Suzy Eto Bauman who was interned during World War II. It's very easy to say "Oh, all those things happened over in Europe and much more difficult to look inward at what we did in our own country". I hope that using some of their stories that we learned from our past and do not repeat the same mistakes in our future. I think those were the, those people all had different impacts on me for different reasons. Like I said, I feel like I have 40 new grandparents and I just feel so blessed. My grandmother left me with quite a legacy.

Joe: You're busy at holidays with all those grandparents, right?

Sky: Well, I'm certainly busy writing out cards to people and staying in touch with people that's for sure. Lots of presents to people.

Joe: We hear the word longevity. We hear about successful aging. We hear about the secrets to living longer. You've been immersed in this for quite a while now. How do you define successful aging?

Sky: I think it's about quality and not quantity. I think that it's really, I see people who are in their forties and fifties who I think are old in their way of thinking. Then I see people in their eighties and nineties who have such a brighter outlook. I think that it's the quality of how you're living and the things that you're doing. What are you giving back to society and what are you giving back to your family and friends and trying to stay engaged and active. I think all of those things are really just incredibly important in terms of successful aging. The people that I think were the most successful agers were actually people that were giving back in some way. You do reach a certain age where you have all this knowledge and you have all this wisdom that you want to give back. I think that those people that gave back and in whatever way it was, in very different ways were the ones that were the more successful of the people that I interviewed.

Joe: That's an interesting perspective too. It's really that connection goes both ways and being able to kind of give back and kind of replenish those around them and help kind of share your experiences but also doing for others that maybe they can't do for themselves. That's an interesting notion that whole idea of being able to give and not just look at it being on the receiving end.

I'm curious about your next film. You mentioned or maybe I read in your bio that you're working on a couple of short lengths and a feature film on love. Tell us a little bit about that. What have you got going?

Sky: Two of the short films that I'm doing, one is about The League of Women Voters going into high schools at least in California where I live and trying to encourage high school students to preregister to vote. You can pre-register from the time you're 16. I love that intergenerational connection that happens. They are really making a

difference in terms of encouraging the students and educating them about voting and voting rights and completely nonpartisan. We need that today. We need those younger people to be out there voting and having a voice. What really is going to be their world because they're the ones that these changes are going to affect the most? I love that.

The other short film that I'm working on is about Mochi making which is a Japanese tradition of counting rice and making Mochi to bring in the New Year. That happened because I was working with Suzy Eto Bauman, who's in the film now. Her family gets together here in Los Osos and 150 people, all different generations come together and pass on this tradition which again, I love that intergenerational connection that happens.

As you mentioned, the feature length film that I want to work on next will be all about love because one of the wonderful things I felt like that happened with the lives on this film was when people talked about their relationships. You could see when people talk about when they met their significant other, you could actually see the twinkle in their eye. You could see them going back to that moment in time. That was some of my favorite moments in the film was when people talked about love. I would like to do a film just dedicated to love for another feature.

Joe: Try to capture that sparkle in one's eyes talking about their loved one.

Sky: I would love an episodic series about Lives Well Lived because I think it's the everyday people, their stories are amazing. There's so much bad reality TV out there. If I could find somebody to fund a reality TV show of Lives Well Lived, I would be delighted to do that.

Joe: That'd be super. Not a sequel to this one then. Not going back to the same people.

Sky: I wouldn't go back to the same people. If I did an episodic series of Lives Well Lived, it would be different people.

Joe: I'd watch it when it's available. Let me know. This has been great. It looks like we're almost out of time for today. Just a great discussion, Sky. Thanks for being our guest and for sharing your work with us here. It has been very inspiring and listening to your stories and how it impacted you and how others benefited from the film as well. Please tell our listeners again how they can find you.

Sky: If you go to Life-Well-Lived.com or just Google Lives Well Lived, our film will come up. On the homepage you can sign up for our newsletter list or you can email me from the homepage. You'll see all of our screenings that are coming up on the homepage.

Joe: About how many times has the film shown? I mean, is it like once a week in different cities or twice a week?

Sky: It really depends. Right now, it's summertime so it's ramping back up again end of fall. I should say if anybody wants a community or educational screening to come to their city you can reach out to me and I'm happy to work with you to try and get sponsorship and get a screening in your area. If you don't see it listed on our website,

still reach out and we can try and make something happen. Then the DVD will be for sale either in December, or January so that's coming soon.

Joe: Thanks to you again and thanks to our listeners for tuning in. We only have a minute. For our listeners, visit our website, and sign up for our email list. While you're there, be sure to download a copy of our member handbook. It's something I wrote. "Nine Principles for Maintaining a Positive Frame of Mind". I'm your host Dr. Joe Casciani and you've been listening to the Living to 100 Club on the Voice America network. Be sure to join us for next week's show when our guest will be Faye Girsh. Dr. Girsh is the former president of the Hemlock Society. She's known internationally for her advocacy for a right to die laws.

My closing thoughts for today comes from the Roman philosopher and former slave Epictetus who said, "We are disturbed not by events but by the views we take of these events. We are disturbed not by events but by the views we take of these events". Thanks to everyone and we hope you can join us down the road. Bye.

Thank you for being part of the Living to 100 club. We hope you'll join Dr. Joe Casciani again next Friday at 5:00 PM Eastern Time, 2:00 PM Pacific Time on the Voice America Health and Wellness channel. Until next week, stay on the right track to mental and physical fitness.