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2023-04-26 Pit Stop Ann Richardson.mp3

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DURATION

59m 59s

3 SPEAKERS

Karen Commins

Anne Flosnik

Ann Richardson

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:01] Karen Commins

And as it is now the top of the hour, I want to welcome everybody to the Pit Stop. It's your fortnightly midweek rest area to refuel your drive. I'm Karen Commins. I'm an audiobook narrator and the chief cartographer for narrators roadmap.com. And I'm your host for Pit Stop. And with me in the copilot seat is my lovely friend and award winning audiobook narrator Anne Flosnik, who hosts the Narrator Uplift show here on Clubhouse. So how are you this afternoon, Anne?

[00:00:32] Anne Flosnik

Oh, great. Thank you. It's lovely to be in the new house.

[00:00:35] Karen Commins

Yeah, it kind of looks the same, right? I'm not. Not detecting a whole lot of changes, which I'm worried about because I didn't know if they changed everything or just some things. Anyway.

[00:00:49] Anne Flosnik

I don't get it. But here we are.

[00:00:51] Karen Commins

Here we are. And that's half the battle. Yes. Well, every other Wednesday we do the Pit Stop audiobook narrators who do more than narrate pull into Pit Stop, and they are sure to inspire you to follow your interest and use all of your talents and gifts. And I want everybody to know we're recording the conversation so you'll be able to listen or catch parts you missed and feel free to comment in the chat or raise your hand in the app if you want to be part of the conversation, because we would love to hear from you. So thanks everybody so much for joining us. I am super excited today to welcome Ann Richardson to Pitstop. Anne is an award winning audiobook narrator who works from her home studio, and she's done that since 2008. In addition to narrating for many of the big publishers, she coaches new narrators independently through Voice one Training academy in San Francisco and also online with Narrator.Life During the pandemic, she started Great Plains Audiobooks, an audiobook publishing and production company. And we're going to be talking with her about that. She lives in Northern California with her husband and two French mastiffs, and she balances her free time between long distance running, wine tasting and cleaning up after the slobbery dogs. And I'm not sure if it's in that order, but maybe she'll tell us that too. But welcome, Ann. I'm so happy you're here.

[00:02:17] Ann Richardson

Thank you, Karen. It's so nice to join you and Anne. And I'm really looking forward to this. This is my first time in a house, so I hope I can keep it all together.

[00:02:29] Karen Commins

I'm sure you will. With your normal aplomb in such matters. It. I'm sure it's going to be a great discussion. You know, you and I have known each other, I don't know, like ten years or something. And there's still so much I don't know. Like, I know you studied broadcast journalism, but I don't think I know what your original career plan was. What were you wanting to do or be?

[00:02:55] Ann Richardson

Well, that was it, actually. I was going to the University of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln studying broadcast journalism. And my plan was I was going to knock Diane Sawyer off her pedestal.

[00:03:10] Karen Commins

I was going for Barbara Walters. So you and I are in the same boat?

[00:03:16] Ann Richardson

Yeah. She could keep hers. I liked I thought Diane Sawyer was classier somehow, so I was going to go for her. But then I met a boy and fell in love, married him and jetted off to California. So that put an end to my broadcast journalism studies. But I did realize in that transition that I don't have the personality to do that. Um, I respect people's privacy and I'm not an ambulance chaser and I don't like to get up at 3:00 in the morning and go into someplace to work. So all those things made me realize that broadcast journalism probably was not my calling.

[00:03:59] Karen Commins

Well, so then you, you I know you worked in pharmaceutical services for a long time. Did you go straight there, like, after you and Gary moved to California?

[00:04:12] Ann Richardson

Yes, I did.

[00:04:13] Karen Commins

Go straight into that line.

[00:04:15] Ann Richardson

Or I did, you know, we were just starting out. And you do anything that comes along for a paycheck. And it was really kind of ironic. Um, I got introduced to one of the directors at the company because our friends from Nebraska, one of them worked there and she knew that I was into horses and her director also had horses and was looking for someone to exercise her horses. And I thought, well, that's a kind of a nice way to ease into California life. So I came into the office and interviewed with the director for a little bit and she said, Wow, you know, everything's cool, but we really need a receptionist. Do you think you could fill in until we find one? And so I said, yes. And then I was there for ten years. I never did exercise or horses. Oh, but didn't I didn't stay the receptionist I, I graduated from that to being the coordinator for a consulting pharmacist, pharmacist, department, personal secretary to the president of the company. And, you know, just on to other things, a lot of continuing education stuff also.

[00:05:27] Karen Commins

Well, that's because you, I think, always have had and I know have always had ambition and weren't content just to stay with the status quo and always moving up, up, up.

[00:05:39] Ann Richardson

Yeah. You know, I believe in the climb.

[00:05:42] Karen Commins

That's good. You know, sometimes I'm thinking, when is the climb going to stop? You know, just get to a level place. And.

[00:05:55] Ann Richardson

I know, I know. So. Yeah, I mean, that's when you. Yeah, that's a good question, Karen and an I don't know when when you hit that place where you want to just sit back and and let residuals roll in or whatever. I don't know. I don't know if I'll ever hit that place.

[00:06:11] Karen Commins

Well, I actually hit it several times a week, but then, you know, that's what I want, but that's not what actually happened. So it's a.

[00:06:21] Ann Richardson

Temporary thing, right?

[00:06:23] Karen Commins

I think so, yeah. Because then I think, oh, but I want to do this and I want to do that and oh, I need to find out how to do something else. So it just kind of keeps rolling back in on itself, I think. Yeah. Well, how did how did you get from the pharmaceutical place to working as an insurance specialist?

[00:06:46] Ann Richardson

Ha, That's funny. Um, yeah, we never have a straight path, do we? It's always very circuitous. So I quit working at the pharmaceutical company because I was having my second child, and I thought I wanted to stay home and be a full time mommy. Well, the second child didn't agree with that. He. He was of such a personality at a young age that he needed much more interaction and stimulation than just mom could give him. So I put him into daycare and he thrived there. I mean, he really he he just really needed that kind of stimulation. He was a ADHD borderline. And we didn't know that until I narrated a book about it. And he ticked all the boxes. Oh, um, yeah, it was really interesting. That's a beauty of our job, right? We get to learn so much. Um, so after I quit the pharmacy, I could have gone back, but I didn't really want to, so I took a job with a boy, one of our best friends who also raced cars with my husband, worked for as an on the road consultant and salesperson for after the market auto products like warranties and paint, sealants and things like that and insurance. So she said, Well, why don't you come work for me? You know, it's fun and we know we get along and I know what kind of person you are.

[00:08:12] Ann Richardson

So we did. And so for four years, I traveled 500 miles a week driving from. Yeah, driving from Salinas to Marin to way out Central Valley dealing with car dealerships. And I like to say I did the impossible. I sold things to car salesmen. So, yeah, that was. And that taught me a lot. Oh, my goodness. Um, that taught me a lot about how to present yourself, um, how to how to be cautious about who you hit your wagon to, you know? So. So like, say you're in with a company and they have a product and you're like hawking this product really hard. You really want your customers to buy it, you believe in it, but then you realize it's not that great of a product. And so then you decide, Wow, should I continue representing this product or should I take a step back? Or, you know, and also the way you represent yourself, I mean, how you dress, how you talk, how you interact with people, you know, it all makes a huge difference. And I learned a lot trial by fire in that job. And it's really helped me in my narrating career as well.

[00:09:36] Karen Commins

You know, I bet you could put together a little course just on that topic. And and maybe you maybe that's part of what you already teach in your. Beginning narration classes.

[00:09:50] Ann Richardson

I do. I touch on a lot of those aspects. But you know what? Karen and Anne, times are changing, so I employed a lot of the things that I learned in that marketing job, and also from watching my father, who was an immigrant from Sweden, who had his own heating and air conditioning company, And I watched his integrity, you know, if a customer called at 7 p.m. on Friday night and said, Hey, can you come out and fix my AC? My dad did, because his advertising in the Yellow Pages said 24 over seven. And I knew he didn't want to go out there at, you know, 7:00 on a Friday night. But he did it because he said he would. And times are changing. And so this generation of young people don't exactly offer things like 24 over seven. They have a better grasp on their own personal time and time off. And they respect themselves a lot more than I think some of the old guard did. You know, Yeah, we detest this job, but we said we'd do it, so we're going to do it and we over promise or we under-promise and overdeliver. And I think that's maybe hitting a level not necessarily going away, but people I don't think are quite over promising or over delivering. Gosh, got to get that straight like they used to.

[00:11:18] Karen Commins

In the old promise.

[00:11:20] Ann Richardson

I know, I know.

[00:11:22] Karen Commins

Maybe that's a bad thing, too, if you don't live up to it.

[00:11:25] Ann Richardson

Exactly. Yeah. So you want to under-promise and overdeliver so that that you are sure you honor your word. And I'm not saying this up and coming group of professionals are slackers or shysters or anything by any means. I'm just saying they seem to have a better grip on what they offer and when to draw the line. And so I've, I don't quite, um, pound the or stump, you know, I don't quite advertise those old style advertising and marketing things like I used to because I think some of them are obsolete.

[00:12:09] Anne Flosnik

That's interesting.

[00:12:10] Karen Commins

But integrity is never obsolete. It never goes out of style. Huge, Huge. Your comment about if I say I will do something, I will do it, I think. It has to be the core of everything we do. And, you know, you hear producers talk and it just boggles my mind. They're they'll say things that, you know, people will say, oh, I'll get it in. And then they don't get it in the book done in time or they don't let them know there's a conflict or just all these things that could be cleared up with a little communication and a little of standing by your word. And it just shocks me to hear that there are people in our profession who don't necessarily have that as a value or they don't demonstrate it. I guess maybe it's the better way to say it, because I I'm surprised every time I hear a casting director say something like that that people really act this way. It just. It just confuses me because that's not how I was taught to approach things.

[00:13:12] Ann Richardson

I know. I agree with you. I mean, it's really disheartening to see, uh, incidents like that where either a narrator, ghosts, a publisher who hired them, whether it's independent or a big one, or they ghost each other when it's a dual or duet situation. It's really it's it's sad. It actually hurts to see those things.

[00:13:37] Karen Commins

It does. But now, how did you get from working from, you know, the sales and insurance to the car dealers? How did you get from there to audiobooks or is there another step in between?

[00:13:51] Ann Richardson

Well, there was a big step. It was kind of a cliff 2008 hit and the economy dropped out and people quit buying cars. So my job evaporated. And yeah, much like today's day and age, you know, when COVID hit, people came to audiobooks in droves. You know, they saw all those articles that said Make easy money at home, you know, thank you, Publishers Weekly and New York Times. But that's not true. Yeah. Yeah. So my husband said, Why don't you just sit and contemplate what what it is you want to do? Because I always did say, I don't know what what I want to be when I grow up. And I decided to revisit the, the broadcasting thing, not exactly in that capacity, but I thought, well, maybe there's some form of it that I can do from home. And I took a community education class called You're On the Air How to Make it in Voice Overs. And it got really good feedback. And I thought, Well, that's pretty cool, but is it a fluke? So I took another one at a community college nearby like two weeks later, and I got really good feedback and I thought, okay, maybe I've got something here. So I hired a mentor who turned out to be Heather Kafer. Um, yeah. And she said, Why don't you volunteer for recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, which is now known as Learning Ally. She said just to get used to being behind the microphone and storytelling and being comfortable in that zone because I was studying with her to be successful in voice overs and it was really a hustle and it wasn't really a good fit. So as soon as I was approved to narrate at Learning Ally because they send you through some training before they let you narrate, I was smitten. That was it. I was very blessed to find my calling. Not everybody finds it, but I found it. And that was it.

[00:16:02] Karen Commins

Wow. I'm sitting here smiling because your story and my excuse me in my path are so similar. It shocks me how similar it is because I did the same thing. Kind of. But we're not talking about me. We're talking about you. But I'm just. I'm just relating to everything you said. Because, you know, I did the same recording for the blind as well. And, you know, at first I thought that's all That's all I needed. But then I, you know, the more I did, the more I wanted to do. And so how did you move from going with Learning Ally to actually working with commercial publishers?

[00:16:43] Ann Richardson

I researched online incessantly, I mean, voraciously. I was online all day long. I couldn't get enough and there weren't very many resources back then. I think the biggest turning point was, um, I, I tuned into a podcast with Trish Bassani and Terry Daniels and they talked a little bit about audiobooks in there and they gave me enough hints for me to have a direction to research. So I started Googling everything about publishers, about coaches, about the process, things like that. And so I decided to try and find a good coach. I found kind of a shady one at first, but we won't go into that. And then I coached with Mark Cashman and it was really affirming. He told me I was on the right track and he told me I had the the guts or I had the I had the chops basically. And then through learning Ally, they were having their record a thon. And I, I joined the APA because of it was either Mark or it was the podcast that suggested joining the APA. And I did. And I listened to a podcast with Simon Vance and I found out he was in the San Francisco Bay area. So I went to his website and this was during a record a thon and I sent an email and it said, Hey, Simon, I'm an aspiring narrator in the Bay Area and I'm working with learning. Ally. Would you be willing to donate an hour of your time to record for our record a thon? It's our annual fundraiser, and your name would bring a lot of attention and credibility and. And it'd be great to meet you.

[00:18:37] Ann Richardson

And holy cow! He responded within an hour, and he said he would be happy to. So I was just so impressed with that guy. He's still so accessible and so friendly and willing to lend a hand. Um, I wouldn't have done this, but he's. He's a brave guy. He came to my house, I served him tea, and I drove us to Palo Alto, which was an hour one way, and I got to pick his brain for all the time we were in the car together and he helped me figure some things out. He gave me some great direction. He offered to listen to my demo, gave me a little bit of feedback on that, and I just continued in that way, reaching out to people and trying things out. And then AC came on the scene and I auditioned for a whole bunch of really cool books simply because I liked how they sounded, didn't know. Yeah, you know, it's kind of like, you know, I'll bet on that horse because it's a cool color, you know? That's a stupid beginner's luck. Yeah, stupid way to do it. But I did it with zero thought of will this make me money? Will this look good in my portfolio? Is this a person I want to continue working with? What's their history? I didn't know any of it, so I taught myself to check out everything before I jump in the boat. You know, Who is this person? How many books do they have out? Who's this publisher? What do they specialize in? Things like that. And so that guess that kind of tells you about how I got started.

[00:20:23] Karen Commins

I remember seeing your name a lot back in the early days of ACX, and there was one occasion somebody had contacted me about they had a book that they needed a narrator who knows Swedish. And I said, Well, you know, that's not a common language that a narrator might know. Ask us for Spanish or French or German. That's, you know, maybe Italian because I know a narrator with that, but I don't know anybody who speaks Swedish. Good luck with that. I'm saying to this person, well, my my brother, my younger brother used to have a quote on his email sig line that said, People who say it can't be done are usually interrupted by someone who is doing it. And lo and behold, if you didn't do that book for I forget which one it was, but I mean, I was just like flabbergasted. Somebody actually knows Swedish. And so now you're you're like doing that's kind of a niche for you, it seems.

[00:21:23] Ann Richardson

Yeah. You know, that's funny. I remember that. Karen Oh, my gosh. That was so many years ago.

[00:21:30] Anne Flosnik

Yeah.

[00:21:31] Ann Richardson

That was so many years ago. So I did narrate that book and it was a beautifully written book about Swedish immigrants that came and settled in the Midwest, and it was just a lovely book and it was a series. She wrote six of them. And I yeah, I narrated all six of them because and this is important, any new narrators listening? I wanted to build that part of my catalog. I wanted to be able to say, you know, take demos from those books of the Swedish that I spoke and how I interpreted it, shared it, whatever. Um, it was a conscious decision because it was not a money making series, and I knew that, but I really wanted that in my catalog. So I did them. And then she this was kind of a kind of a pisser, if I may. She came back with a seventh book and she said, I've come out with my seventh book and I'd love for you to narrate. And I said, okay, well, since this was not part of, you know, what I had anticipated, I'm going to have to charge you my going rate, which was a reasonable rate. It wasn't high, but it wasn't, you know, rock bottom. And she said, Well, I can't do that. Or actually, no. You know what? She didn't even reply. She just ghosted me and picked somebody else to do it. Royalty share. And I thought, you know what? I did six books for this woman and I think I did a pretty good job. And she can't even throw me a bone, you know, come on. That was kind of a pisser. But anyway. Onward and upward.

[00:23:10] Karen Commins

You're entitled to say that that's a pisser.

[00:23:14] Ann Richardson

It didn't seem fair, you know. It just it didn't seem fair. So anyway, I grew from that. I got a little wiser. You know, maybe I could have done just 2 or 3 books and not all six, but. Oh, well.

[00:23:29] Karen Commins

Well, and I know you did more than ten books before you started teaching, and I guess you started on your side and then you become part of the faculty on Narrator life.

[00:23:40] Ann Richardson

Yeah, you know, didn't start teaching.

[00:23:42] Karen Commins

Voice One, two. Yeah. So, yeah.

[00:23:45] Ann Richardson

They were the first ones to reach out to me and ask me to join their faculty. And that was only, I want to say like five years ago. So I had done over a hundred books before I started coaching. And even then I didn't feel like I had enough under my belt. But I realized, you know, I can.

[00:24:07] Karen Commins

And did we lose you?

[00:24:10] Ann Richardson

Are you still there? Can you hear me? We are, but.

[00:24:12] Karen Commins

We dropped out for a second.

[00:24:15] Ann Richardson

That is so weird.

[00:24:17] Karen Commins

It's wonderful. But it's not always perfect.

[00:24:20] Ann Richardson

No. And I'm wondering if that. Go ahead. Go ahead. I was saying that I didn't start coaching until I had probably over a hundred, 125 books out there. And even then I didn't feel qualified to coach. But then I realized I made all the mistakes. So I can certainly share with newbies, you know, how to avoid those mistakes and, and what constitutes integrity, you know, and, and what goes into being a narrator that they may not have realized. So that's my niche in coaching. I don't profess to be able to coach well-established narrators. That's not my focus. There's much better coaches out there to help focus your performance and improve your engagement, things like that. But if you're new and you're learning to navigate, I can certainly help with that.

[00:25:16] Karen Commins

And then you started a production company because you didn't have enough to do, apparently.

[00:25:23] Anne Flosnik

I know.

[00:25:24] Ann Richardson

I know. My goodness. Well, that started it had always been niggling in the back of my mind because on a flight over to Sweden one year, I was reading Vilhelm Moberg's book *The Emigrants*. And that is a classic book. It's it's wonderful. It's huge. And it's just a beautiful book about the journey of a family from Sweden over to America back when there was a huge exodus, just like I want to say in the 20 seconds from Sweden to America. And I thought I would love to narrate this book. And so I searched and searched and searched and I sent email after email just shooting in the dark, trying to find out who owned the audio rights to it so I could narrate it and I couldn't get it done. So I put it on the back burner. But my Swedish instructor, who taught me Swedish, gave me the Swedish version of that book. So I had one in English and I had one in Swedish. And I just I cherished those books and they lived on my desk. And then funny how things come around. I mean, you and I have talked about manifesting your own destiny. About four years ago, Tantor reached out and was having a terrible day with technology. My email was totally crashing on me every time I got a message so I could see the subject line and the first 2 or 3 words of the email and then it would die. So it was like a like a strobe light email. Oh God.

[00:27:02] Anne Flosnik

You're like, Come back.

[00:27:03] Ann Richardson

And I got this email from Tantor and between the flashes and crashes, I saw Vilhelm Moberg *The Emigrants*. Are you available? And I was like, Oh my gosh. And I was dancing around the house, even though my stupid email wouldn't let me reply and couldn't believe it. So I got on my cell phone and emailed back and I said, Did I read this right? Because I'm having a terrible issue with technology today. Are you asking if I can narrate *The Emigrants*? And they emailed back, Yes. And I was like, Hell yeah, I was so over the moon. I mean, oh my gosh. And I still mean to write a blog about that. Karen like you suggested I should because it's one of those hold your dreams, they'll come true someday. Stories. So anyway, guess that story. I have to circle the wagon back, though, and tell you that that's when the concept of having my own publishing company was planted. The seed was planted in my head because I did search out subsequent books and I did find rights holders for subsequent books, but nobody wanted to deal with a person. They said, We don't license our audio rights to individuals. We only deal with publishing companies. And I thought, well, crapola. And then you had your webinar with Jessica K about how to obtain audio rights, and I bought that and I listened to it several times. And I've I've corresponded with Jessica because she's a great lawyer and has all the answers. And yeah, during the pandemic I handle stress by working and thought, well yes, I'm, I've got a great heavy narrating load, but I think I should start a publishing company too.

[00:28:55] Anne Flosnik

Why not?

[00:28:56] Ann Richardson

Exactly. So I did. And I was lucky enough to reach out to some really good Swedish writers and their agents. And I licensed the audio rights to a Swedish book called *Inlands*, and it was a hit in Sweden. They even made it into a movie, an independently screened movie or whatever you want to call it. Oh, wow. Wow. Yeah. So I narrated that and I hired Krista Lewis to direct me because it is such an ethereal book. It's so slice of life, almost stream of consciousness book that I was not sure I was understanding it properly. And she really helped me fully grasp the book and what was going on in it. And so I did it and I published it with Jessica Kaye's help and it won an earphones award and I got highlighted in *Audiofile* magazine.

[00:29:55] Anne Flosnik

Yay, yay.

[00:30:00] Ann Richardson

Yeah. So it's wonderful. So my, my goal with Great Plains audiobooks is twofold. I will publish books that are by or about Nebraskan authors or about Nebraska. Or Midlands, I should say, because it can be. The Great Plains extends beyond the borders of Nebraska, but being raised there and growing up on a farm and growing up on horseback and in forage and things like that, it's really important. It's in my genes. So I love books about or by Nebraskans, and that's one prong of my publishing goal. The other prong is Scandinavian books. So I'm in the process of narrating, narrating another blockbuster Swedish book by Lena Andersson, and it's called *Willful Disregard*. They were pretty excited that somebody wanted to narrate it in English, so I licensed the rights to that. And later this year I will license the rights to the sequel and narrate that one as well.

[00:31:08] Anne Flosnik

Wow. Yeah.

[00:31:10] Karen Commins

You are on a roll.

[00:31:13] Ann Richardson

I am. But you know the hard part. Yes, you know the hard part. Marketing.

[00:31:18] Karen Commins

Oh yeah, there is that there.

[00:31:21] Ann Richardson

Is that because they have to earn their keep? I got to I have to find a way to have this make money. So that's been the hard part. You know, I can acquire audio rights, I can narrate it or hire somebody to narrate, but it's the marketing that's the thing that I really struggle with because I'm already narrating my my own books. I'm getting hired to narrate, which includes researching and pre reading. So where do I find the time to market these audio books? Right now I'm squeezing it in between, like on weekends or after hours after I've prepped a book or something at night. And it's it's getting to be a lot, but it needs to be done. So that's the that's the struggle.

[00:32:07] Karen Commins

Sounds like you need to hire a marketing person.

[00:32:10] Ann Richardson

Yeah, I do.

[00:32:12] Anne Flosnik

But before we leave the whole licensing thing, and because there was a big glide there, you know, from the first time that you wanted to license something and then you, you know, you got Jessica Kaye and listened to her and Karen's presentation about how to do that. Had you learned everything you needed to know to, to get the next book by yourself to license it? Or did you involve Jessica again?

[00:32:41] Ann Richardson

I learned enough. She helped me license the audio rights or lease, whatever you say, the audio rights for two, three books. So two were from University of Nebraska press and that was pretty straightforward. The the press had some changes they wanted to make to the contract. And so I worked with Jessica to make sure that that was all okay. And then that book Inlands, I had to deal with a Scandinavian publisher. So that means it was an international deal. And so Jessica really helped me with that. And I learned a lot working on those three books. So I felt confident going after the next books all on my own, using those boilerplate contracts and making sure that I negotiated properly, like instead of negotiating a higher, um, advance against royalties, maybe I negotiate with how many years it's available or what percentage of royalties I'll pay out. So she helped me understand a lot of ways I can negotiate that will still work for my company and who I'm dealing with.

[00:33:58] Anne Flosnik

Goodness gracious. It's like an onion. But instead of getting easy, I think this gets more complicated.

[00:34:06] Ann Richardson

Amen.

[00:34:09] Anne Flosnik

Sorry to come back to marketing then, because, yeah, there's no easy answer to this, is that we just have to if we want to do it, we're going to have to dive in and take the steps that you did and just figure it out.

[00:34:21] Ann Richardson

Yeah. Yeah, It takes a lot of footwork, a lot of bandwidth. And so that is a challenge.

[00:34:28] Anne Flosnik

Definitely.

[00:34:29] Karen Commins

Well, and I would think even more so with with those with the Scandinavian books because. A book that's familiar to an American audience, which is your primary market kind of sells itself, or it has that possibility where. Something from Sweden that we don't necessarily know. Probably takes a bit more to make it visible to people and something they're interested in.

[00:34:58] Ann Richardson

Right. And that's where my, my, um, Swedish comes in handy because I did join a lodge. Remember on Fred Flintstone, the Moose Lodge or whatever He.

[00:35:10] Anne Flosnik

Yabba dabba do! Yes!

[00:35:12] Ann Richardson

Yeah, exactly. Well, I joined I joined.

[00:35:16] Anne Flosnik

Just make that my.

[00:35:16] Karen Commins

Ringtone for you. An yabba dabba doo.

[00:35:19] Ann Richardson

Hey. Yeah, exactly. Um, yeah. So I joined a Swedish lodge, mostly to acclimate my kids to the Swedish culture and music and things like that. So we went once a month to this Swedish lodge and learned about Swedish. There was a presentation at every lodge. We learned about the Vasa ship that sank, and we learned how to sing Happy Birthday in Swedish, and we learned all the Swedish Christmas songs and traditions and foods and things like that. Um, and so I know a lot of Swedish American organizations where I can post these audio books so it works in my favor.

[00:36:07] Karen Commins

Yeah, but that's again all a building process and not an instant fix. It obviously has taken time to immerse yourself in that and then find the other organizations.

[00:36:20] Ann Richardson

Right? Yeah, it does.

[00:36:24] Karen Commins

Your father. Your father emigrated, right? So you learned some Swedish as a child, right?

[00:36:30] Ann Richardson

Well, that's funny. Um, he did emigrate. He came over in the early 60 seconds, and he was of the mindset, and this is not uncommon. He was of the mindset that he was American now. So he did not force the family or really even promote it very much to learn the language, to learn the culture, to make sure that this aspect of our heritage was retained. Oddly enough, it was my mother from Iowa who who worked hard to learn how to bake Swedish bread and make Swedish meatballs and what are the customs in Sweden and make sure that we learned a little bit of that. But we didn't learn the language. Dad never taught us to speak the language until I was 14 and my sister was 16, and he took us to visit Sweden for five weeks. And on the plane over there he taught us to count from 1 to 10 in Swedish and to say, I don't speak much Swedish. So it was really odd and kind of sad, actually, that that was left out of our upbringing so much. And then when he passed away, my sister and I went to Sweden to visit. And when we came back, I made a vow to myself that I would find a way to learn to speak the language. And so I enrolled in a Swedish speaking course on Monday evenings, and I did that for five years.

[00:38:06] Karen Commins

Oh, wow. Yeah, well, I knew you said you had. You said earlier in this conversation and you mentioned your Swedish teacher, and I thought, oh, well, she must be getting refresher, refresher or just practicing with somebody. But I didn't realize that you came to it rather late. I mean, you didn't get it as a child, which is what I had always thought.

[00:38:31] Ann Richardson

Yeah. I wish I had grown up bilingual. That would have been cool.

[00:38:35] Karen Commins

No, You grew up as an American, and you know that's us. I mean, it's. Everybody speak English. We're American. That's what we expect.

[00:38:44] Ann Richardson

Right. Right. Thankfully, that's changing. I think parents are working hard to make sure their kids are are, you know, growing up with with that included in their upbringing, whatever heritage they have, I think parents are spending a bit more time letting that be part of their kids growth.

[00:39:07] Anne Flosnik

I think it's very individual though, too. Anne. My parents were Irish immigrants to England and by no means do I know Irish Gaelic. I wouldn't claim that. But it's amazing how many words in Gaelic he would, and my mother too would just drop into, you know, normal parlance.

[00:39:28] Ann Richardson

That's wonderful.

[00:39:30] Anne Flosnik

And it's not that many. But now, reflecting back now that they are both gone, you know, it's amazing how many times I hear those words in my mind and think, Oh, because half the time I never even really realized it was just another descriptive word. That I didn't really pay any mind to, if that makes any sense. Did your dad not kind of let any Swedish words come in at all?

[00:39:54] Ann Richardson

Not really, no. Um, we did, however, have family members from Sweden come and visit us almost every year in the summer. They'd stay for a couple of weeks so I could overhear them speaking. And sometimes they would try and teach us a word here and there. But like meatball shot bowler, they would they would teach us little words here and there. And of course, when we met our cousins, they would teach us all the cuss words in Swedish. Good. Yeah. That's what you laugh and laugh. I know that's. It's adolescence, but no, we never did. Um, we did have. My father's sponsors were an elderly couple from Sweden. I mean, really elderly. And we would go and visit them and make sure that they had whatever they needed. And we saw some things that I only realized later on were odd, kind of like you're saying, and things that were just we accepted it as normal. Well, yeah, something that a lot of older Swedish people did was if the coffee was too hot, they would pour it in the saucer and drink from the saucer. Oh. What. And you. I know, I know, I know. And they even put their sugar cubes in the saucer. And I didn't realize until I was taking Swedish lessons that that was a thing. It just, like, resurfaced. It had been gone in my memory for so many years and was like, Oh, yeah, remember they did that? And a lot of them also. This is also very odd and I cannot replicate it. They would speak on the intake of breath, so they would start a sentence in in their language and obviously that was dumb. Anyway, they would start speaking and they would run out of breath, but they wouldn't stop talking. They would suck in breath and continue talking as they were sucking in breath. Um.

[00:41:50] Karen Commins

This didn't lead to a coughing fit.

[00:41:52] Ann Richardson

No, no, they didn't do it at the same time they drank from the saucer, luckily.

[00:42:00] Karen Commins

Do you know why about the saucer? I mean, what. What about putting it in the saucer instead of the cup?

[00:42:07] Ann Richardson

It cooled the coffee. They would pour the hot coffee from the cup into the saucer to cool it down a little bit. So it was drinkable.

[00:42:14] Karen Commins

But did they pour it back in the cup to drink it?

[00:42:17] Ann Richardson

No, they drank it from the saucer. Yeah. I imagine it would be too messy to try and pour it back into a smaller opening. That would be.

[00:42:24] Karen Commins

Wasteful. I don't drink coffee, but if I did, that would be all down the front of my shirt.

[00:42:30] Ann Richardson

I know, I know.

[00:42:32] Karen Commins

This is why we have cups.

[00:42:35] Ann Richardson

True. True.

[00:42:39] Karen Commins

Well, I've got a question. Or maybe more than one. It depends on what I like to call the pit stop hot seat. So one of my favorite questions to ask people is if you went into the witness protection plan, what identity would you like to assume?

[00:42:56] Ann Richardson

Oh, wow.

[00:42:58] Karen Commins

That's the usual reaction to this.

[00:43:02] Ann Richardson

Wow. Uh, shoot. Oh, dang, Karen. That's a good one. Um. My guard. I'd be a gardener. I'd work at a nursery.

[00:43:17] Karen Commins

Oh. Do you garden now? You and does a lot of gardening. Do you do that too? In my dreams.

[00:43:25] Anne Flosnik

Yeah.

[00:43:26] Ann Richardson

I do. I love gardening. I love propagating, I love pollinating. I love raising edible stuff. I have a passion for succulents and cacti. I just. I love gardening.

[00:43:39] Karen Commins

And not to mention daisies and seeds. And thank you for my my spring collection.

[00:43:46] Ann Richardson

Oh, good. You got it. You're welcome.

[00:43:49] Anne Flosnik

Yeah, I've.

[00:43:50] Karen Commins

Had a wild week last week, and I didn't get to send you a note, but I did appreciate that very much. And it's such a great branding thing for you, too, obviously. But it definitely now that I hear about your love of gardening, it's like this all ties together.

[00:44:06] Ann Richardson

Yeah, I love it. And daisies are just the reason I love them is because they're just so simple. They don't try very hard, you know? They're just. They grow and they're beautiful, and they're just so simple.

[00:44:21] Karen Commins

So another question I would like to know is what is your most trivial, useless or flat out counterproductive superpower?

[00:44:36] Ann Richardson

Oh, man. My. Oh, man, I. I. Okay. I can tell you what breed a dog is by just looking at it. I'm kind of a dog breed nerd.

[00:44:54] Karen Commins

That's a good one.

[00:44:55] Ann Richardson

Isn't that strange? Yeah. I just love reading about dogs and dog breeds. And it's same with horses, too. And for one of my birthdays, I was given two huge, huge volumes of dog breed identification books. It was like an encyclopedia. That's what they were called, dog breed, encyclopedia of dog breeds. And I pored over those things. I learned the most fascinating dog breeds and other countries, weird looking, strange, specialized. I just I love them all. And so, you know, if you show me an obscure dog, I could probably tell you what it is.

[00:45:37] Karen Commins

That's a great superpower.

[00:45:42] Ann Richardson

Yeah. No, I'm sure I know a lot of other worthless crap that takes up my brain space so that I can't remember my social Security number. Well.

[00:45:51] Karen Commins

Generally, you're not asked that, and I sure wouldn't ask you that. So. And you have a card. You can look at that. You can. You know, that one's not one that you have to remember because you have it written down and you can find that. Exactly. So do you. Do you have a big WHY? Do you know what it is? I mean, you don't have to tell us if you do, but, like, do you have a big WHY behind you do what you do?

[00:46:23] Ann Richardson

Yeah. I love I love, love, love reading great stories. And I want everybody else to love it as much as I do. And if I can be a vehicle to share how fantastic stories are, then that's what I want to do. Whether it's writing the stories I love to write. So whether it's writing the stories or narrating the stories, I just want to share the emotions, the colors, the the feelings of the story with other people.

[00:47:02] Karen Commins

Well, that's a great answer. That makes us all want to love it with you. Even if we already didn't, we would want to. And you mentioned writing, and I remember you took a class or maybe more than one at Berkeley, and it seems like you published it and then decided to work further on it. So where are you on your writing? Because I know you don't have enough to do so you've got to be enough to.

[00:47:27] Ann Richardson

I know. I know. I tell myself all the time, if I got laryngitis or something, I would finally have a chance to work on those books that I've got outlined. I've got like three novels outlined that I haven't had a chance to finish. But anyway, that's okay. Um, I did. I took a creative writing class at University or Berkeley, Cal Berkeley. It was online and it was great. I really enjoyed it. And so I did finish writing a book. It was a like a romance, an easy reading, easy writing romance. And what it was, was part of what they called Kindle worlds. And so at the time, this was several years ago, they had what they called Kindle Worlds. So somebody with a successful series that was published on Kindle would give permission to other writers to use their characters and their setting and write like fan fiction. So I used a little bit of this one woman's Kindle world and wrote this story about some traveling gypsies or Romani people who put on a show in San Francisco. And um, yeah, I could go on and on. Anyway, I wrote it. It was a romance. It got published as part of Kindle Worlds, and then they pulled the program about five years later. So my book became unpublished. So I'm trying to go through it and kind of tighten things up. I know better now and I know what I want to change. And some there was some implausible part that I needed to fix, but I, I wanted to publish the thing and get it out there so I didn't fix it. So I want to fix that. And on and on and on. And then I've got, like I said, I have like three other books outlined that I want to write and put out there. But I just, you know, other things are more important right now.

[00:49:29] Karen Commins

I know that several narrators have either taken a writing class or they've read a book about writing. Some of them, even for their job as a narrator, have had to narrate a book about writing. Do you find that? That helps you as a narrator. Does it bring out something in you as a narrator that you didn't have before? Like to understand some deeper level of the story or point of view or something.

[00:49:57] Ann Richardson

Yes, absolutely. What it did for me and having written a book, really drove home the point that every word that author puts on paper is important. And so I know that sometimes as a narrator, it's easy to get a little frustrated at, you know, oh, why does he use this word so often? Why why do they say it that way? They could say it this way and it would be better, more concise, Clearer. And then you got to kind of have to back off of that because writing is a Herculean task. I mean, that's a huge deal. And I guarantee you every word that I put down on paper I meant to put down on paper, and I agonized over it. So by golly, if I had somebody hired to narrate it, they'd better write every word I wrote. So that really helped me appreciate, from the writer's perspective, what goes into writing a story and why they wrote the way they wrote. I may not understand it, but that's how they wanted to write it, so I need to honor that.

[00:51:08] Karen Commins

But surely, as a narrator, you must think like because you're hearing yourself read these words aloud and they've said the word door 14 times on the same page. You know, some of it is not I think it is not that it was intentional. It was that they didn't read it aloud. And here the repetition of words and here because I mean, I get plot errors, you know, they'll say something on one page and then 20 pages over. They either repeat the same thing or they say something that couldn't have happened at this point in the story. And I think if every author read their words aloud, they'd catch so much of this stuff. And yeah, I mean, I know even myself, like even, you know, an email I, I will sometimes write it so fast that like the word that often becomes then or vice versa. And I don't see it until I'm actually reading it aloud. So, I mean, I can't think that every word is intentional because I mean, I get that the thought is intentional, but maybe the expression isn't.

[00:52:23] Ann Richardson

Yeah. Okay. So after my flowery speech about honoring their words. But it was a great speech.

[00:52:31] Karen Commins

I mean, I don't mean to. I don't mean to knock your speech. It was wonderful.

[00:52:35] Ann Richardson

No, but there is reality. Karen And hiring an editor should be part of that reality. I agree. You know, there are. There are. Oh, I've I've had some struggles, let's just say, you know, so and so gets kidnaped on page 48. But on page 53, they are a part of the conversation going on. Right. And they shouldn't be. Um, so yeah. And that, you know, that also is a lesson in itself to keep engagement with the story because if you don't, that sucker is going to unravel on you and you that those are points in time where you may want to reach out to the publisher and say, hey, uh, so and so got kidnaped, but they resurfaced and it shouldn't be that way. What do you want me to do? And so the publisher may reach out to the author, or they may just make an executive decision and say, Oh, you fix it or whatever. Um, but those are times when you may consider reaching out and getting clarification, but you it forces you to stay engaged if you care about what you're doing. That is and I happen to care very much about the stories I'm telling. So yeah, it's painful sometimes.

[00:53:58] Karen Commins

Well, we're coming up on the end of our time with you. And so. Audience, if you want to jump in, definitely raise your hands or put a, you know, put a question up because we'd love to hear from you. But I wonder, Ann, do you do you have any advice to other people who are thinking about expanding beyond narration to doing something, you know, expanding their horizons in some way? Do you have advice for that person?

[00:54:27] Ann Richardson

Yeah, do it. And especially if it scares you. Do it. Um, but I would also say research it thoroughly before you look for customers. You know, it's, it's not fair to experiment with a business relationship or if you're a if you're thinking about narration, it's not fair to your author to experiment and learn on their baby. So whatever you're planning on doing, whether it's extracurricular or focused on your profession, make sure you research it before you do it.

[00:55:05] Karen Commins

Wise words for us all.

[00:55:08] Ann Richardson

Yeah. It's like, you know, you and I spoke a long time ago, and I think you put this quote on your on narrator's roadmap. You only have one chance to make a first impression. And it's not a good look to make a bumbling first impression with things that you could have easily discovered on your own before you made contact.

[00:55:31] Karen Commins

Yeah, it's actually your quote and it is there. And that was pretty, pretty close to being exactly what it is.

[00:55:42] Ann Richardson

Yeah, Yeah. It's just frustrating. I mean, I can. I can push buttons as easy as the next guy. So. Come on, folks. Google stuff.

[00:55:54] Karen Commins

Google is your friend. That's what I've been saying for years and years, especially even when I worked in IT. It's like Google is your friend.

[00:56:01] Ann Richardson

Yeah. Don't make me do your work for you. You can do this.

[00:56:07] Karen Commins

Do you have anything coming up that you want to plug and how can people get in touch with you? I've got your website, your audiobook production company, Great Plains Audiobooks is pinned here. Is that how you'd want people to contact you or. And like I say, do you have anything coming up you want people to know about?

[00:56:27] Ann Richardson

Oh, gosh. Um. Gosh, no. I don't really have anything to plug. You probably the best way to reach me is just my email, and this is super tricky, so pay attention everybody. It's and tested. Exactly. My email is Ann at AnnRichardson.COM and there's no E on an contrary to the lovely Ms. Flosnik.

[00:56:57] Karen Commins

Yeah, That's how I tell y'all apart is you're the N without a E, and she's the one with it. Aside from many, many, many other ways that I tell you both apart.

[00:57:08] Ann Richardson

Well, on paper or via email or whatever. That's a good way to look at it. Thank you for appreciating the. No.

[00:57:15] Karen Commins

Well, you know, I have a name people can't spell, and so I'm always want to spell people's names correctly. And and I do like when I'm writing to either one of you, I make sure I've got the right spelling because, I mean, I try to do that with everybody, but it's it's important. And so, yeah, I actually do think about that. She doesn't have any. She does.

[00:57:37] Ann Richardson

So thank you.

[00:57:44] Karen Commins

Well, this has just been a wonderful, delightful conversation. And I'm just appreciating all you've said and your time and everything with us today. I think, though, it's probably time for everybody to get back on the road. So I'm going to wrap up today's Pit Stop and the recording will be available on Clubhouse later today and in the near future I'll have it on NarratorsRoadmap. On the and also a transcript on the Pit Stop page. Anne Flosnik, tomorrow we are doing Narrator Uplift. Do you want to talk about that for a second?

[00:58:24] Anne Flosnik

We'll just be talking with our delightful mutual friend and colleague, Caroline McLaughlin, catching up with her.

[00:58:34] Karen Commins

Yeah, I'm excited about that. We. We used to alternate our shows. So I was one week and Anne was the next. And so this is the first week that we're actually going to be on the same week, and we think that's going to be easier for us and easier for everybody else to keep up with. We hope that's the case. But anyway, I'm looking forward to to that tomorrow and I hope everybody will join us in another two weeks for another road trip on May 10th. When that day, we will talk with narrator and author Travis Baldree here on Pit Stop. In the meantime, I hope you find joy in every journey and live the life of your dreams. Thanks again Ann Richardson for this delightful conversation and your time today. Do you have any parting thoughts?

[00:59:25] Ann Richardson

No. It was a pleasure, Karen. You asked great questions and I was happy to share and just honored to be here. Thank you so much.

[00:59:34] Karen Commins

Well, thank you. And thank you, Anne Flosnik, for your excellent observations and questions and support. And thanks to all the audience for joining us this afternoon. I hope you have a great week and we will see you soon.

END OF TRANSCRIPT

