

Episode #47

**A Reluctant Entrepreneur: When Her Ad Agency
Downsized, Jane Launched Grownup Travels**

(7/11/2019)

Who	Audio Segment
Jane Canapini	Well, the way I looked at it is I used to hoard everyday of vacation time so that I could travel. And I worked in advertising to facilitate that, really. And then, yeah, it was every spare minute that I had. Get me on a plane. So, I traveled as much as I possibly could. And that was my passion beyond the advertising.
	INTRO MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST OVERVIEW
Andy Levine	<p>Welcome to Second Act Stories, a podcast that looks at people who have made major career changes and are pursuing more rewarding lives in a second act. I'm your host, Andy Levine.</p> <p>I met Jane Canapini at a travel conference in California. We got to talking at a cocktail party and at the end of the conversation I asked "Do you think I could interview you tomorrow?" We found a quiet space in the Anaheim Convention Center and she shared her story with me.</p> <p>Jane was a 20-year-veteran of the advertising world in Toronto, Canada working as a creative director for both large and small advertising agencies. But in 2012, her last agency downsized and she was laid off at the age of 51.</p> <p>Rather than pursuing another job in advertising, she decided it was time to make a change. She pursued her life-long passion by launching a travel blog called Grownup Travels. Here's Jane's story....</p>
	FADE MUSIC
Andy	Most of your professional career has been in advertising and you've been a creative director for a range of different, I think it looks like large and small advertising agencies.
Jane	Yeah. Run the gamut.
Andy	Tell me a little about that work, how you ended up in that and just, you know, kind of your career 20 years I guess in the advertising world.
Jane	Well, I knew from the beginning that I did not wanna be a starving artist in a garret, making money on my paintings 20 years after I died. So, I was prepared to go the route and sell my soul to commercial art. I didn't know what field so I ended up starting with a fine art English degree, and then the plan was to go to college and get a more practical applied arts degree, and I was going to go into advertising. And someone told me once when I was doing an illustration project and I was selling it harder than the image was, she said, "You're gonna be good in the board room." And I thought, "Oh, okay. It means I can't draw or paint that well but I can maybe sell it."

Andy	What were some of the big accounts you worked on?
Jane	I've done literally everything from soup to nuts, and pretty much sold everything in between. I used to say I've sold drugs, I've sold cars, I've sold anything that's under the sun. But I think some of the bigger ones that people would recognize would be Sun Life Financial. We did a lot of packaged goods as anyone in advertising knows, you kind of cut your teeth on that. So, some of them more high profile brands would have been Dove, BeceL. And then in between there was this smattering of everything.
Andy	Did you enjoy agency life?
Jane	I did, I did. You know, I always said my life is many things but it is never boring, good and bad. But I was not assembling widgets, I knew that there would be a different challenge every day and I like to think of myself as a creative problem solver. Sometimes the problem I solved was coming up with creative and sometimes you just had to be creative in solving a different kind of business problem.
Andy	Michelle Smythe worked with Jane for five years at her last agency.
Michelle Smythe	Jane is a consummate storyteller and incredibly passionate about those stories. She visually paints a picture, just put her words, even she'll paint a picture, but she will also take to her computer and craft up the most stunning visual representation of the story that she wants to tell. And I think that if you sit down and talk with Jane you'd have to agree she's one of the most vibrant, enthusiastic, resilient woman that I've ever met.
Andy	So that's the professional side of Jane's life – working as a creative director. But on the personal side, Jane caught the travel bug while backpacking in Europe more than 30 years ago.
Jane	I fell in love when I was traveling. I fell in love with Rome in particular and thought that, "Oh, well, it must just be because it's the first time I've done this kind of a trip." But it really sort of struck me that this is something that I could do. And in fact, I remember distinctly the day. I was sitting on the Spanish steps in Rome and there was somebody playing like a six-foot-tall classical harp on the terrace and, you know, it was sunny and I looked around, and I just thought, "I could actually live here."
Andy	You're in your 20s at this point, I guess?
Jane	I was 24. I was also engaged, so I was supposed to be coming back and getting married. But I came back obviously, another bug had bitten me, not the romantic one. Another arrow had pierced my heart and it was travel.
Andy	And throughout the next 20 years, the travel bug remains strong, intensifies, I mean what can you say?

Jane	Well, the way I looked at it is I used to hoard everyday of vacation time so that I could travel. And I worked in advertising to facilitate that, really. And then, yeah, it was every spare minute that I had. Get me on a plane, I traveled solo because a lot of the times you couldn't find people to travel with you because it was either financially or logistically not the right time. So, I traveled as much as I possibly could. And that was my passion beyond the advertising.
Andy	Life was pretty good for Jane until...
Andy	2012
Jane	Dan-dan-dan-da.
Andy	Tell me what happened in 2012.
Jane	Short answer, I got fired which was not altogether unexpected because I was mentioning, by the time I was in advertising for about 15, 20 years, looking around the age of 40, I wasn't seeing a lot of gray hair in the creative departments unless they were, you know, equity partners in the agency. I was working as the managing creative director, so you kind of have the financial target on your back because salaries are now at, you know, the top of the field. And I had been involved in sort of helping to restructure the department in a way that I knew it was going to ultimately lead to my demise.
Andy	So, it wasn't a total shock.
Jane	No, it wasn't a surprise but it still was a shock, I mean no matter what. When you get fired you still think, it's like getting dumped in a relationship. You go back through your mind thinking, "What could I have done differently? Was there something that I did? And, you know, was it the quality of my work?" And, of course, none of that was a factor. It was just, you know?
Andy	Financials.
Jane	Yeah, financials and maybe something else, maybe something a little darker.
Andy	Okay, a little age discrimination.
Jane	A little ageism. You know, advertising is an industry that is very youth-oriented and because you're in the creative world, they don't necessarily attribute seniority to more creativity. They will often look to the younger to be more creative because they think they're more in touch with whatever is happening. And so, at a price tag that's half of your salary and the finger on the pulse of what's happening out there in the world, sometimes we get brushed with a little bit of negativity as you get older.
Andy	Jane had opportunities with other advertising agencies in Toronto.

Jane	There were a couple of offers from, and I don't wanna say lesser agencies but I just felt like it would have been the work that I had done many years before, so sort of have been there, done that. But more importantly than that, I just thought all that does is buy me a little bit of time. But it didn't answer what I needed to ask myself which is, "What are you going to do next?" And so, I wanted something that was sustainable and sustaining for me as a creative person, that I could discover using the time. So, I did, I made a conscious effort. I turned down other opportunities.
Andy	Jane was 51 years old and remarkably open about her situation. She allowed Toronto's major paper, the Toronto Star, to profile her in a series called Turning Point. They even provided a life coach.
Jane	You know what they say, when the student is willing the teacher will appear. So, I was matched up with a life coach. And I think what she helped me do was focus on the trees, not the forest, because I was looking around trying to think, "How could I transfer the skills that I have into another job that would pay, you know, a reasonable amount of money? And I realized, you know, you're looking for something that you're passionate about, not just something that pays the bills, and it was always there. I was traveling when I got into advertising. I hoarded everyday so I could travel more. So, I thought, "Well, maybe there's a way that I can flip that model." So, now I can travel most of my, or spend most of my energy on the travel component, not necessarily traveling but exploring that sector. And maybe the money isn't the big part of that, and it sure isn't. Let's be clear about that.
Andy	With her coach's encouragement, she decided to explore the world of travel blogging and attended a conference called TBEX, which stands for Travel Bloggers Exchange.
Jane	I went and checked out the conference and went to all those sort of business-related seminars to see if this was just a bunch of, you know, people on vacation writing about their stories or if it was actually something that I could consider as a career. And I thought, "Yeah, you know, there is something here."
Andy	So, from that Grownup Travels emerges.
Jane	Yes
Andy	Tell me about your company and what you do, and the growth of that.
Jane	Well, and this is where maybe the thing is it's always in you and you don't know because I had such a love for travel. If anyone said they were going to Rome or they were going to Bruges, or they were going somewhere, I couldn't help myself. "Oh, my goodness, you have to go here, this is the best thing. Don't do that. You don't need to take a taxi, take this bus, it will do." And I found that I was, you know, naturally sort of spreading the best tips and recommendations, and people were so grateful and so thankful for that. And I thought, "Well, this is something you've just always done so now, maybe that's your platform. Maybe you just need to go to a bigger audience and share those things."

Andy	As she dug in to the travel space more deeply, it became clear that no one was focusing on the older traveler, people like her who were over the age of 45.
Jane	<p>So, I thought, "Well, I'm gonna start writing about the kind of travel that we do and the new generation of 50 plus that don't just wear adult diapers and, you know, need a step into tub, you know." And there was such a response from all of my peers that said, "Yes, yes."</p> <p>So, I tried to organize it from the beginning as more of a website that you could go to and be inspired by photography and the photo gallery, or search by destination and find something that might appeal to you from that perspective. Recommendations for accommodations that are, you know, the kind of things that we find which are unique or boutique, not always chic, but something that comes with the story. And the name came from something that was more, the problem is how do you name this group of people where a huge demographic that goes from, you know, hippies at the leading edge to Gen X, no names in the trailing end. And no one wanted to be named because you can't call us seniors, you can't call us, you know, zoomers, boomers with zip, you can't do that. But I thought it's more about how we travel, we're grownups.</p>
Andy	Talk about the financials. You know, previously, you're getting a paycheck I'm assuming every two weeks and there's a 401(k) or some sort of this and that. And now, you're an entrepreneur, it's a completely different situation.
Jane	I like to refer to myself as a reluctant-preneur.
Andy	Okay. You would like a regular paycheck.
Jane	Necessity was the mother of my reinvention, but no. I mean, honestly, there's no comparison between the advertising world and the travel world in terms of financial compensation. Anybody works in travel does it because they love travel. And, you know, the advertising world comes with all kinds of stress and I think that's why it pays. It pays better than a lot of other sectors. But I'm fortunate enough because this happened at this stage in my life when I'm not trying to go to the bank and negotiate a mortgage or, you know, apply for a mortgage and say, "I'm a travel blogger."
Andy	So, you're in Jane 2.0 right now and what does the future hold for you, you think?
Jane	I think just more of this. I think this is laying the ground work. I haven't, you know, maxed out either my opportunity within this or my endurance or my appetite for it. Because this is something I hope to do until I'm talking to people who are 80 years old and had to travel that way.
Andy	If you were advising someone else who is considering a second act or maybe someone who has lost their job and has hit the end of the road in terms of a particular career, that sort of thing, what advice would you give them?

Jane	Accept all invitations, no matter how much they seem like they may not be anywhere remotely close to what you think it will lead to, and know by doing. Because I think you can get into this analysis paralysis and I'm a real planner and I'm a real analyst of thinking. I'm gonna do this and this is the way to do it. This is the path and no, I won't like doing that because it has all these things. Or I would like doing this because it has all these attributes. And you don't know any of that, whether it's right or wrong, or could lead to something until you actually do it.
Andy	Accept all invitations is a real interesting phrase. Is there an example of something that you maybe reluctantly accepted and it's turned into a great opportunity for you?
Jane	It's the kind of thing where even there might be that day where I was in, you know, there was a meetup or something with an industry that was putting on some kind of a meet-and-greet. And it was like I really don't feel like going and it's not gonna lead anywhere because they're looking for something other than this. They're looking for sales people but I would go and all of a sudden, you click with someone and next thing you know you're invited on a press trip because they clicked with you. And it wasn't anything that you thought is gonna lead to that. It's just really about you don't know where the next opportunity is going to be, so don't turn down invitations because you're overthinking whether they're gonna give you what you need or not.
Andy	Today Jane is frequently on the road. And now she often travels with her husband Hank who serves as Grownup Travels photographer. I'm giving the final word to Jane's former colleague and forever friend Michelle Smythe.
Michelle	She seems really happy and I love seeing her so happy. I think the fact that she and Hank found a common passion, that they could then turn into a bit of a side hustle for both of them. And for Jane, I think it's way bigger than a side hustle now. I think it is pretty much a full-time gig. And it enabled them to do what they really, really wanted to do, which was to travel the world and do it in an efficient way. But along the way, it turned into an opportunity to share this incredible wisdom that they had about traveling as a more seasoned traveler who wasn't really looking to stay at hostels and, you know, wasn't really willing to put on the backpack and hike through versus finding appropriate transportation.
	OUTGOING MUSIC; FADE TO BACK DROP FOR PODCAST CONCLUSION

Andy	<p>From each and every interview I always pick up a nugget or two of wisdom. From my interview with Jane, the phrase that sticks out to me is "Accept all invitations." It is terrific advice for anyone in the early stages of a second act. You never know what is going to be behind the next door that you open.</p> <p>My special thanks to Jane Canapini for being so open with her story. And thanks to Michelle Smythe for making the time to speak with me by phone.</p> <p>If you want to check out Jane's website, the address is www.grownuptravels.com. If you are over 45 years old, you'll find both inspiration and information for your future travels.</p> <p>We hope you'll keep listening. There are more second act stories just around the corner.</p>
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