

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / The Happy Pod: Everyone has a story to tell

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Hello, happy pod listeners. I'm Doreen Makonde.

And I'm Fauzia with a very beautiful story for you all the way from Kenya.

It really is. And this is the happy pod from the BBC World Service.

I'm Jackie Leonard and in this edition, uploaded on July the 8th, the power of a backstory.

Me as a person, I guess, and not as a patient. They have to give pills too. I have feelings.

Also in the programme.

My neighbour told me, are you in labor? I told her, I don't know.

No spoilers, but I think you can tell where that's going. Also in this podcast.

Seen lots of things in jars in my lifetime, but to think that that's actually mine is very weird.

The woman whose heart is part of a museum exhibition.

Now around the world, people are wrestling with how best to care for our aging populations

and the conditions the elderly face. So this week, we start with a story about memory,

dignity and identity. Jay Newton Small's father, Graham, had dementia,

his condition deteriorated. And when Jay couldn't look after him anymore,

it was time for him to go to a care home. There were a hundred things Jay wanted to

tell her dad's new carers, but they didn't seem to be a way for her to do that. However,

Jay is a writer who worked at Time Magazine. So she wrote a one page summary of her dad's life,

outlining his childhood in Australia and his international career.

And then she stuck copies of the story all over the care home.

They ask you to fill out all these forms. There's like a financial form and a health form and but then there's also one about his life and it's, it was a good 20 pages. And I was sitting there

sort of struggling to write down the answers to these questions, like describe your parents,

40 plus your marriage in four lines. It's like writing haiku. He was treated as a checklist and

as a group of clinical problems. And I wanted people to know that he was this extraordinary

human and he had incredible stories. And if he could just get him to talk, open up, it was enriching.

And so instead I handed in that form blank and said, look, I'm a writer and I think it's just

easier for me and easier for you if you let me write down his story. It actually really transformed

his care. The staff remembered it. They told each other about it. Two of his caregivers were

Ethiopian and they'd had no idea that my dad had lived in Ethiopia for more than four years

early on in his career with the United Nations and they became his champions. They would sit for

hours and ask him what it was like to work with Emperor Hailu Selassie and what the Empress was

like. And dad loved it because he remembered Africa still really well at that point from his early 20s,

even if he didn't remember last week or last month or last year. Knowing that story, knowing

that biography for my dad was crucial to being able to handle him, to understand him, to be able

to engage with him, being able to redirect him, calm him down and say, hey, what's going on here?

Why don't we go look at some picture books of Australia or here's a great show on Africa.

Let's go watch it. Those things would be able to calm him down, but if you knew nothing about him,

you weren't going to successfully engage with him. Care workers weren't the only ones who read

Graham's story. The families of other patients read it too and asked Jay to do the same for

their loved ones. This small initiative grew into a company memory well that's created more than

a thousand patient biographies across the U.S. in hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living

communities. The BBC's William Kremmer went along to see the project in action at a rehab and care facility in Augusta, Maine, run by Maine General Health and met some of the people involved, like Dot. I studied engineering and got a degree in mechanical engineering, but when I went to get a job in those years, they weren't hiring women. I took a job as a writer. I went to Europe and I spent four and a half months there with no plan, no ticket. I went over by ship and I had a book this thick and this big and it was Europe on five dollars a day. Can you imagine that? For anybody who's been into a senior living community, there's just such a disconnect between the way people are and who they are and the value that you place on them and what the reality is. And I look at them as a group of just phenomenal stories and wonderful humans who are wise and can tell us and teach us so much, but the fact of the matter is they're not treated like that and they're not seen. They're seen as problems and they're seen as issues and they're seen as checklists and I think being able to recapture that humanity and those connections and bring dignity back into senior care is what the goal is for memory well. Is it okay if we post this in your room for you so you can see it every day and remember everything that you've done? It was amazing because I didn't think I could do it. I didn't know that I would be able to talk that much and think of so many different ideas so I was surprised at myself. What are the things that you hope the nurses and the doctors when they read the story, what are the things that you hope they will really notice? Me as a person I guess and not as a patient that they have to give pills to and I have feelings and really would like that. Dorothy, who prefers to be known as Dot, writer, engineer, sailor and traveler. And there are more brilliant stories from our colleagues at People Fixing the World. Just look for them online. Now to a story about a special arrival shared on social media by Kenya Railways. They said they were delighted to announce a heartwarming story of a mother who welcomed her bundle of joy on board the Madaraka Express passenger service train to Mombasa. The baby girl in question has been given Madaraka as her middle name. Her mum is Doreen Chisinde-McCondy who had help from a number of people who deserve a name check. Indaneni, Luceso, passenger assistant Mary Nyeha and midwife Fauciya Lugogo. Doreen thought she had a couple of weeks to go when she got on the train. Let's let her begin the story. The journey started at 8 a.m. after two hours I felt pain in the lower abdomen. My neighbour told me, are you in labor? I told her, I don't know. She asked me, are you ready to be examined? I said yes. But first I asked, are you a nurse? Are you qualified? Madam Indaneni Luceso told me I am a qualified nurse. She took me to the toilet. The toilet was too small. She announced, imagines Indaneni Luceso took me to the search and pushed the other passengers and all the captains bring the curtain and surrounded me with a curtain. And that's where Fauciya comes in. I personally was leaving work from night shift. I had somebody in the train shout that there is somebody giving birth. And I immediately stood up. It was very instinctively for me. Somebody's giving birth. I'm a midwife. Somebody needs me. It is one of the most critical parts in any pregnancy delivery. Because with delivery,

there is two things involved. Saving the baby and actually saving the mother. Because once the placenta is out, that is where anything can go wrong and you never know. Once case scenario, we lose the mother. And this is one thing that is very common in Africa or in the world at large. Then I now did a quick physical exam on the baby. And I noticed he had mild respiratory distress syndrome. So I kept simulating the baby and keeping the baby warm, like rubbing the baby all round. But it was at this point, Miss Mary informed me that we are just arriving at the train station. So we got at the train station. They escorted Doreen and the baby to the ambulance. So Doreen, let's get back to you, Doreen. When did you tell your husband? When the baby was out. And you're feeling fine now? And your baby is fine now? The baby is fine and I'm okay now. Our congratulations to Doreen, Chisinde, Mekonde. Welcome to Testimony Maduraka, Eric. And well done, Fazia Lugogo. Now imagine going to a museum and seeing a display case. And in that display case is your own heart.

Not the stuff of nightmares, but an actual thing that happened to Jennifer Sutton from the southeast of England. She visited her own heart at a London Museum 16 years after it was removed during life-saving transplant surgery.

Jennifer told my colleague Lucy Ambash what it's like looking at her own heart.

It is incredibly surreal, the minute that you first walk in and think that used to be inside my body. But it's quite nice too. You know, it's like my friend. It kept me alive for 22 years and I'm quite proud of it, really. What sort of state is it in? How's it kept?

Essentially preserved, you know, pickled, like you would see other specimens of other things in jars. Okay, and that first moment when you first saw it, what was your thought?

Wow, definitely wow. I've seen lots of things in jars in my lifetime, but to think that that's actually mine is very weird. So tell us how it all came about. Tell me about your heart transplant.

This was back in 2007. I'd been ill for quite a number of years. Yeah, I got told I needed a transplant. Beginning of 2006, by 2007, I was on an urgent transplant waiting list that was in April and by June in 2007, I had a transplant, which is incredibly lucky for me because a lot of people have to wait a lot longer than that. Okay, who's heart was it? It is a person who was out there who incredibly luckily for me decided to give the greatest gift that I possibly could be, which is to give the gift of life. So I couldn't be more grateful to them and their family. Wow. So without that heart, we wouldn't have you now? No, no, it's been 16 years, 16 fantastic years, and I wouldn't have had any of them without my donor. And so what was the point in putting your original heart on display in the museum then? I was asked by the Royal College of Surgeons 16 years ago now to be in a display. That did happen. And it came off display and then went back on this new display, which is a permanent display at the Hunterian Museum in London. They just asked at the time if there was anyone on the transplant list that would be interested, and I was like, yes, please, definitely me. I love that kind of thing anyway.

Anything to promote organ donation and get people talking and thinking about organ donation is exactly what I want to be doing. How old are you and how do you look at life now? Having something like that happen to you just must change your outlook. Yeah, I'm 38. I wouldn't have been here. So I just spent my entire life telling everybody live your life, live every second of your life. If you're sat there thinking, I don't want to use those special plates, I'm saying use them. If you're thinking one day I want to go to a different country and do something fun, go and do that this year. Book it, make it happen. You do not know what's going to happen to

you in the next hour, in the next year. Live your life. I love that. I had it tattooed on my wrist. Oh, yeah.

Live life in Latin and I look at it every day and I think, come on, just go out there, go do the things that you are excited about that you think one day I'd love to do that, do that today. That was Jennifer Sutton.

Coming up in this podcast, we'll hear from the butterfly father of China and a song that struck a chord. I would describe it as a little joyful anthem of self-acceptance.

Who is the greatest African Premier League player of all time?

See if your choice made our list on Match of the Day Africa top 10, a new podcast from the BBC World Service. Find it wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

Now, some more of your sounds. Cleopatra from Romania, but now living in Denmark, sent us this magnificent singing.

She says she notices blackbirds singing a lot more in the late dusk hours that come with longer days and warmer temperatures. And it makes her happy and nostalgic for the balmy summer days back home in Romania. And an unusual sound returns.

Hello, happy pod. My name is Rocío Maciel and I am from Mexico City, but I am currently living in Michigan. I wanted to reach out because my favorite sound that makes me happy is actually a knife sharpener. So, yeah, happy, happy memories. And I just wanted to say thank you because listening to that episode and realizing I'm not the only one made me really happy, brought me smile to my face. So, me shall accomplish with a happy pod.

And Gabi, an Australian living in the US, sent us this.

So, any ideas? What is it? We had gone on a visit back to Australia. I took my youngest daughter with me. It's the sound on North Stradbroke Island when we went onto the beach there and she just started squelching her feet in the sand and it's very squeaky clean. So, it's the sound of that.

And what is specifically special about that Queensland sand?

I've lived in a few different places around the world and I was always surprised that the sand is never as nice as it is in Queensland. There's hundreds of miles of this super fine.

It almost feels clean sand on all the beaches there.

And you say you've travelled a lot with your family. Tell us a little bit about some of the places that you've been. We've actually lived overseas a lot through my adult life. I'm 60 now. My mother was a geography teacher. She was somebody that understood the world really well, but actually never travelled. So, I guess she put it into me that I had to get out there.

So, I've lived in the UK a couple of times. I've also lived in California for a year and New Hampshire in the United States. And we did live in the Bahamas for many years as well, which have beautiful beaches. But yeah, there's nowhere like the sand is in Queensland.

You describe the sound of the Queensland sand as squeaky and clean. So, your favourite other squeaky sounds, please, Gabby. A toy that my granddaughter is playing with perhaps.

Or my daughter has a little puppy and some of his toys are very squeaky. So, yeah, I like that.

And thank you, Gabby. Now, a few other things that caught our eye over the last few days.

Tracy Chapman has made history as Luke Combs rendition of her 1988 hit Fast Car, has reached number one on the country charts. It makes her the first ever black woman to have a soul songwriting credit on a country chart topper. And to an unusual wedding in Mexico, Victor Hugo Sosa, Mayor of the town of San Pedro, Guamulula, has married a Cayman in a traditional ritual believed to bring good luck to his people. Olivia Perez,

who helped dress the alligator-like reptile in bridal finery, yes, she really did, explained the significance. She said, for us, the Cayman represents a lot because she is the queen, a princess who brings water, a good harvest and rain.

The U.S. celebrated its independence day on the 4th of July and for decades, Nathan's hot dog eating competition has been part of that day. It's even broadcast live on TV. Joey Chestnutz won his 16th title in the men's division with 62 hot dogs. Mickey Pseudo won the women's competition

for the ninth time by eating 39.5. And thousands got together in Australia to dance to the song Nut Bush City Limits in tribute to the late singer Tina Turner. 5,838 people at the music festival called the Big Red Bash danced for five minutes to set a new record for the largest Nut Bush dance in the world as adjudicated by the Australian Book of Records. Now, in early summer in a valley

in Yunnan in southwest China, 100 million butterflies appear, a butterfly explosion.

Its scale and success is in part down to the efforts of the man dubbed China's butterfly father, who has dedicated 25 years of life to protecting the butterflies and helping a once impoverished town become a tourist destination. And it's a rare ecological success story in an era dominated by concerns about the impact of climate change. Our China media analyst, Kerry Allen, has been fascinated by this story, and she told us about the butterfly father.

The butterfly father is called Yang Zhengwen, and he works as a curator at a butterfly valley museum. I should mention there's an area in China, in southwestern China, that's become known as the butterfly valley. It's in Yunnan province, and he's been working there since 1998. And what he does is he goes out at the break of dawn to an observation point in, well in a valley, and he sprays nutrient solutions that basically feed butterflies. He goes out wearing camouflage clothing and just basically looks after butterflies in this valley. How significant is the butterfly population of China? It's very significant. So in the world, there are around 20,000 species of butterfly, and China is home to around 2,100 of them. And most of them can be found

in this region now. We're talking very rare ones, very large ones, very small ones, ones that you're not going to find anywhere else in the world. And obviously this valley has good geography, and the climate is right. But how significant is his achievement over the last few decades? It is so significant. Going back to 2010, there were only about 20 kinds of butterfly specimens in this region. Now there are hundreds.

There are an abundance of natural resources at China's butterfly valley.

We've discovered around 300 species from 11 families. Butterflies are a very important species for the ecosystem. And in this area, because there's so many different types, that proves that the ecosystem here is pretty good. Many different living things are protected. And we have to factor in that this is during an era of climate change, where there is a real threat to species of creature, animal, all over the planet. So he's actually really been credited with really helping out in this region and preserving these creatures. And he says that decades past, there were concerns that butterflies could threaten food crops and people viewed them

as pests. But actually, they're very useful for the ecosystem. They transmit pollen. They also promote the healthy growth of bamboo shoots, which is good for pandas, obviously, and many other things.

They play a very important role. So yeah, this has been really good work that he's done for this region. I've been watching a few media videos on him, and you can just see how much he loves his work. Being able to go out and spend time with butterflies, he obviously knows many different kinds. He's talking about them in video footage. He absolutely loves his job. It's beautiful. And especially around May and June, that's when the butterflies burst from their chrysalises.

And he says that every year now, for the last three years at least, there have been around 100 million butterflies that just burst forth. So there have been these gorgeous videos of all these butterflies just all exploding at once and flying around the valley. That was Carrie Allen. Now, here's a question. How could being a fish help counter online abuse? Two musicians from the U.S. state of Tennessee became an overnight internet sensation earlier this year after releasing the Fish Song celebrating distinctiveness and self-acceptance in a digital world where hostility is all too commonplace. Since then, their whimsical tune has been released as a single, streamed by millions all over the world. Harry Bly has been speaking to one of its creators.

I would describe it as a little joyful anthem of self-acceptance.

This is Kareen Savage, better known as Karook, a musician from Nashville, Tennessee.

Karook and fellow singer Olivia Barton wrote this, the Fish Song, and uploaded a 50-second clip to TikTok.

As the video's caption states, it's a song to remember the joy in being different, and it was written in response to receiving abuse on the internet.

I was having a really hard day. I was dealing with a lot of hate comments on the internet.

I was talking to my girlfriend, Olivia, who I wrote the song with, and she said, let's harness this, let's make something out of it, and let's write the weirdest thing you can possibly think of. What's the weirdest idea you have? I said, well, I think if I were a fish, people would like all the things that I am more. She was like, well, that's weird. Let's go with that. With its quirky and creative lyrics, and a message that many can relate to, the Fish Song provoked a huge response online, with fans and other content creators uploading covers.

My were a fish, you caught me instead, look at that fish.

Their own versions.

If I were a worm and you caught me, say look at that worm wriggling in the ground.

And even parodies.

And say look at that fish, it implies the existence of fish opticians and complex marine society.

And it struck a chord with people of all ages.

There's a wonderful video I saw on TikTok, and it's of a mother in a car and she's playing your song. And she has a son in the back. I think you might know which one I'm going to talk about.

It's my favorite video.

And he goes, is this about me?

How does that make you feel, that kind of internet reaction?

So, specifically when the kids are singing it and the kids are reacting to it, I just, it makes my heart swell, you know.

It also makes me just so sad that a child that young is thinking about comparison in that way, you know. And yet, it's also a beautiful thing that they have this song now to, you know, kind of step back and accept themselves with.

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Following the success of the TikTok video, which currently stands at more than 18 million views, Karouk and Olivia Barton released the fish song as a single, where it became even more of a global hit and receiving international radio play.

I am speechless. The fish song is about to premiere on BBC Radio One.

So if I said to you the fish song, would that mean anything to you?

You know, I think this song is me doing my best to accept myself regardless of those comments.

And I couldn't ask for any more.

The singer-songwriter, Karouk, ending that report by Harry Bly.

And that's it from us for now. But remember, if you would like to email in your happy sound like I did, the email is globalpodcastatbbc.co.uk.

And indeed, anything else you'd like to contribute to, really.

You can also find us on Twitter at [globalnewspod](https://twitter.com/globalnewspod).

This edition was mixed by Graham White, the producers were Anna Murphy and Tracy Gordon.

Our editor is Karen Martin. I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time, goodbye.