

Real Stories MKE Season 1 Episode 5 | Transcript

Joel Dresang

Welcome to Real Stories MKE, brought to you as part of Ex Fabula's work to connect Milwaukee through real stories. I'm Joel Dresang.

Kim Shine

And I'm Kim shine. Ex Fabula believes that everyone has personal stories worth sharing. So we coach storytelling workshops, where community members can build their storytelling skills and their confidence. And we also host StorySlams, where true stories are shared on stage. Today, we are bringing you three of those powerful stories.

Joel Dresang

Our theme of this episode is 'Names'. Our names are so personal, they can be ways to show affection, they can give us insight into culture and history. Every name has a story. In fact, when this organization was founded back in 2009, the founders chose Ex Fabula for three main reasons. First, it's Latin for 'from stories'. Second, the phrase 'ex fabula' wasn't already being used commercially, so they could create their own brand from scratch. And third, the web URL wasn't taken yet. So yeah, that's an important consideration.

Kim Shine

It's kind of hard sometimes to find those because somebody will take it.

Joel Dresang

So Kimberly, can you tell me about your name? You know that I have an affinity for your name because I grew up in the village of Kimberly, Wisconsin.

Kim Shine

What?! Oh, when I found out there was a Kimberly, Wisconsin. Do you know, I-I smiled so hard.

Joel Dresang

Oh, good!

Kim Shine

This is this place is mine. But no, I actually do I have a story. I don't know if it's true or not. And I need to confirm with my dad whether or not it's true. He may or may not tell me the truth with this. But I was told that my name was actually supposed to be my half sister's name. And her mother—we have different moms. And her mom wanted her name to be something else. So she named her what she wanted. And then when I came along, you know, you got another try. So you named me, Kimberly. And to be honest with you, I think our names fit us, our personalities. We are day and night. And I think Kimberly just kind of fits my lighter, you know, happy, bouncy personality, serious when I need to be. Um. But yeah, that's that's my story.

Joel Dresang

That's nice. I'm glad it fits you and you like it you. You don't mind your name?

Kim Shine

No, I actually really like it. But people..I should tell you another story because people call me like, depending on what they call me, that's how you know what part of my life they come from. So if they call me Kimberly, it's childhood. If it's Kim, it's, you know, one side of the family. If they call me Kim Shine, it's college and adulthood. Like, it's so much

Joel Dresang

So I have similar experiences.

Kim Shine

You gotta tell me yours!

Joel Dresang

My mom named me Joel, because she likes the name Joseph, but she didn't like the nicknames Joe or Joey. So everybody in my family has called me Joe or Joey, including my mom. And then when I'm about 13, I'm playing basketball in our driveway with my brother and a bunch of his high school friends. And one of them starts picking on me and calls me Jodie. Because I looked like somebody he knew named Jodie. Okay. And the other guys thought that was funny. So by the time I graduated from high school, everybody called me Jodie, even the principal at the high school. And, to this day, there are people in my life who call me Jodie and I don't I don't go by that name.

Kim Shine

Do you even like it?

Joel Dresang

I don't mind it. I answer to it.

Kim Shine

Okay.

Joel Dresang

But, but I don't know how they pick it up. And I've actually given up trying to figure it out. Um, so the only time my mom ever called me Joel was when she was upset with me. So that was good for her, I guess.

Kim Shine

Yeah, and you know, I tell you I don't think I've ever heard my dad called me Kimberly. And that his name.

Joel Dresang

Oh.

Kim Shine

I don't think he's ever called me the name. Who knows? Anyway, we got stories to talk about.

Joel Dresang

Our first name story comes from Eno Meier. She shared this story at our "What's in a Name?" public StorySlam in March 2019. Here's Eno.

Eno Meier

Hi, I am nervous. Anyway, um, ever since, speaking of names, ever since I moved to this country about 20 something years ago, my name has never been pronounced right.

Crowd

Boooo!

Eno Meier

But um, this story is not about my name. Um, started in 2005, I was out and about with friends in Milwaukee and ended up at the Red Dot, where I met the man that I ended up marrying. And I remember when we were dating, I had this flip phone and I had a name on it that said Asmara. And I remember him looking at my phone and saying, What's this? So I was like, that's my daughter's name. And it's not for...it's not up for negotiation. And he chuckled and thought, "whatever, crazy woman I'm not gonna pay any mind to her".

Fast forward four years later, we get married in September. And I'm hanging out with a friend in October, and we're celebrating her birthday, drinking, having fun at the Irish Pub. And I said to her, I just have this weird cramp. It's not going away. It's that time of the month. Sorry. Too much. But it'll be it'll be here. Soon as she looks at me. She's like, Babe, are you pregnant? And then I say to myself, "Oh, my gosh, she ruined my night." I, I couldn't drink anymore. So I cut...I cut the trip—our night short, and I went straight for Walgreens. And um, and I-I am in this aisle, and I'm thinking, "Oh, why do Americans do this?" All too many options. I just want one thing. And, um, so somehow, I grabbed something. I didn't take the test that night. But the next day I did. And sure enough, I was pregnant. And I thought I knew I knew I was going to have a Asmara. I knew I was having a girl. And um, fast forward. And she's here. And um I'll give you a little gist about that Asmara. Asmara is... I got this name from the same friend I was celebrating her birthday with. And she's from Indonesia. She talks about her family. And she had mentioned this name and I thought it's beautiful. What does it mean? She said it means love. I said perfect. So I have this baby. I named her Asmara. I love her. She's beautiful to me. And I just...but she takes me on this journey of discovering that love is not as easy as it is. It's exciting. It's scary there. The road is rough, there are highs, there are lows, and um, why, you need a lot of patience, a lot of understanding and I'm just like overwhelmed and she's still doing it to me. And I know she will never stop doing it to me. So that's my story.

Joel Dresang

So when we messaged Eno that we were going to air her story, she replied, this, these are all in quotes, okay, so. "I still feel the same way I feel about this story every time I think about it. I am going to cry when I listened to it with my daughter. Just as I am now. Being her mother and being who she is continued to make—to take me on this roller coaster ride of self discovery and healing. Asmara, you will always be my baby love. And I thank you for being a light in my life. XOXO. J'teime.

Kim Shine
Oh, I love that.

Joel Dresang
That's so sweet. I-I was there that night when she told that story.

Kim Shine
Oh, you were!

Joel Dresang
Yeah, yeah, I was so proud of her. So that's so cool. And I also have an apology to make because Eno's name is spelled E-N-O.

Kim Shine
Okay.

Joel Dresang
And every time I see that in my head I pronounced it ee-no. But it's not, it's ay-no. And Eno, I don't know if I ever mispronounced that in front of you. If I did, I'm sorry but I looked at it this way. It's like um, like Asmara, like love, pronunciation isn't always easy. It takes patience and understanding.

Kim Shine
See, it does.

Joel Dresang
It all comes around.

Kim Shine
And if somebody doesn't say your name right, just correct them.

Joel Dresang
That's fine. Yes.

Kim Shine
I'm okay doing that. Thankfully, you and I have pretty easy names

Joel Dresang
Oh, I get problems.

Kim Shine
Do you?

Joel Dresang
I get Jewel a lot.

Jewel?

Jewel. Like that's a real common name.

Kim Shine
Okay, well our next story was...was from that "What's in a Name?" Slam as well. Here is Julie Hoppe.

Julie Hoppe
Hi, I'm Julie. Um, so how many people here have been named after people in their family? They're you know, they've got ancestral names, there are quite a few. There's nobody in my family named Julie. So this is a story about how I became named Julie, and how a coaster wagon and the Nazi Party had something to do with that. So it goes back to my parents. They met in 1946. My father was from Milwaukee, he uh went to went to Washington High School, as he said, and then he went to UW Madison, and he was, uh, he was on scholarship for the US Navy because that was in during wartime. My mother grew up in the Upper Michigan in Escanaba, Michigan, and she was valedictorian of her high school class. Go mom, you know valedictorian in the 40s as a woman, that's, you know, pretty cool. The nuns gave her a scholarship to go to school, and she was looking at Madison and Marquette, and they really encouraged her not to go to Madison, because, you know, everybody knew in 1940s that that's where the Nazis were. So she picked, that's what they told her so that she picked Marquette University. So she's at Marquette University and she went out with some friends one night and one of her buddies friends brought a buddy along. And that buddy brought—that that buddy was my dad. So my mom finds out he's from Madison, she is nervous. She thinks "Ohh, no this is a Nazi". And so she's really worried. And so the front—a bunch of friends are out on Wisconsin Avenue, and they're walking around and, and she's keeping her her arm's length again, from my dad, and, and finally he figures out what's going on. And he explains to her: No, no, no, I am not a Nazi sympathizer. I was in the war. I fought against the Nazis. This is not a thing. Don't worry about it.

So then she of course made a really big impression on him. And they got married. They started having children. So my first—my oldest sister comes along her name is Jean J Hoppe. My dad being the great father of the 19th-late 50s now, buys a red, red coaster wagon, you know, those Radio Flyer ones? And he paints in white paint 'J Hoppe' on the side of this red coaster wagon. So that was great for Jean. And then John came along the next year. And Judy, and, and Jackie.

So. So now they have four kids under the age of five, and they're looking at each other and they're like, I think we got some going here. So they kind of came to a realization that they were really busy. So rather than not have any more children, they decided that the best way to lower the amount of work is to not ever paint that coaster wagon. So after Jean, John, Judy and Jackie came Janet, Joanne, Jerry, Jill and Jenny

Alright, so I'm gonna say those again, because there's some important pieces in there. Jean, John, Judy, Jackie, Janey, JoJo, Jerry, Jill and Jenny. No Julie yet, I was last. So at this time, right before I came along, uh Jenny was 4, Jeanie was 16. So the ages are 4 to 16. It's 1966. And by this time, my my siblings had all kind of gotten used to mom pop—having all these babies. And they had a, I don't know what, a tradition I guess, where they would all put in the names and they would vote on what the name of the next baby is going to be. And so so that was cool. You know, that's, that's a good way of doing it. You got ages four to 16, nothing could go wrong. So, so my mom would always like try to influence the kids. Well in 1965, the year before I was born, the movie The Sound of Music came out. And The Sound of Music was where the the handsome Captain von Trapp, who didn't want to be with the Nazis was there, and the beautiful Julie Andrews p-played his ah governess who took care of the children and taught them to sing and took them to the...you know, they hid in the nun house and they, she and at the end of the movie, she gets the man and she goes off into the sunset with all these children. So my mother had a great affinity for Julie Andrews. I think she thought of herself as Julie Andrews. She had she had the man who didn't like the Nazis and had all the kids! So it was only natural that her influence and and the fact that you couldn't paint over the coaster wagon, that I would be named Julie. So unfortunately, I don't think it worked out the way my mom wanted it. I don't sing. I haven't gone to church in years. I've been divorced twice, but that coaster wagon was never painted.

Joel Dresang

So Julie's story was actually super funny to me. Would you believe that that was her first StorySlam? Now she told us in quotes "I thought it would be about 10 people sitting around a table and that we had to tell a story. I thought about what I would say. And when I got to the venue an hour early, I put my name in a hat and left to go get some dinner. When I got back, I was super surprised to see about 200 people in the room. Then later, more surprised to be picked." I'm glad she was.

And you know, she went through the names of her siblings really fast.

Kim Shine

Oh my god.

Joel Dresang

I slowed it. I listened to it again and again and slowed it down. And I counted. So she's number 10 out of 10.

Kim Shine

That is just wild.

Joel Dresang
it's amazing. Yeah.

Kim Shine
And I loved the fact about the the little uh flyer. They never changed the J.

Joel Dresang
That's right. Yeah

Kim Shine
that was so great.

Joel Dresang
Right. I wonder if they still have that Wagan

Kim Shine
I know! Some UltraShorts?

Joel Dresang
Sure. So UltraShorts are ultra short stories that ah people at our events write on a little slip of paper and submit it to the emcees to read. Not everybody can or wants to get up in front of this, the crowd and yeah, tell a five minute story. But this gives a chance for everybody get to...get their voice in.

Kim Shine
That's right. Well, let me take the first one. How about that?

Joel Dresang
Okay.

Kim Shine
This is from anonymous. Every year, my great grandma would give me gear with the name Jennifer. Jennifer mugs, Jennifer pencils. Jennifer wristbands. My name is Stephanie.

Joel Dresang
Here's an UltraShort from Decoteau Irby and Decoteau is spelled D-E-C-O-T-E-A-U. I was at a bus stop in San Francisco. It was 2:15AM. The woman we met in the club asked me my name. I told her "My name is Decoteau". She replied, "I know a Decoteau, but he lives in Philly". I replied "That's probably me". She responded, "No, this guy goes to temple". I responded "So do I." Who knew?

Kim Shine

Our next UltraShort comes from Valerie. Valerie says: my father was born on Valentine's Day. His name was Val and I was named after him. When my two sisters and I were growing up, he would give us lovely small gifts on his birthday. Because we are all his Valentine's. He gave my mom an extra special gift. So since you can't see us, Joel, you know, kind of winked a little bit. We know what that gift is but... We all love love.

Joel Dresang
But well, it was written parenthetically

Kim Shine
It was!

Joel Dresang
So yeah, that's kind of telling um...

Kim Shine
Fill in the blank.

Joel Dresang
Here's an ultra short from Tomer. My name is Tomer I checked on the internet and there is one person in the state of Oklahoma named Tomer. He must be lonely. I was thinking of dedicating an 'It Gets Better' YouTube video to him, telling him that it will get better when he moves to New York, which has 69 Tomers, or California, which has 71 Tomers.

Kim Shine
Some of these UltraShorts are just funny.

Joel Dresang
Our final story comes from Clayborn Benson the Third. He's the founding director of the Wisconsin Black Historical Society and Museum where he held a 'Tell your Family Story' workshop, and then a story slam in spring 2019. Here's Clayborn.

Clayborn Benson III
Good evening, everyone. My name is Clayborn Benson the Third. And growing up as a kid, I didn't always know my name or what it meant or where I got it from. All I know is I was—and people began to change my name. They call me Clay and call me Jr. But they wouldn't call me Clayborn. I said my name is Clayborn. I didn't said I've got to find my daddy. My daddy is pretty important to me. Uh and so I remembered several little things, but none of it really brought my daddy to me. I remember that my dad and mom worked at the Mayflower Hotel. I remember crying iat two and a half, three years old, ah for my daddy. I just wanted some love. I wanted him to touch me or pick me up. And he wouldn't. I remember when my dad and mom separated. And I— at three in the morning, looking up at the police sergeant at this huge desk, and I'm way down here, and looking at the sergeant asking my momma, what does she want? And we was out on the street. I remembered those things but I still didn't have my daddy. And I

wanted my daddy. Um, so then I said to myself, I was about to graduate uh from college and my professor asked me ah, 'what gonna do? you just finish your undergrad in filmmaking and communications'. I said, I'm gonna start a museum. That don't coincide with being a filmmaker. But I'm still stuck. So where does that come from? I see it comes from a little kid...three o'clock, every afternoon coming from school, having a snack and watching a movie that doesn't mean anything. And asking that question: What am I doing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin?

And as I begin to search over the course of the years, I realized that I was gonna start a museum. And what does the museum director do? He teaches people about their history, and teaches people about how to trace their family and community history. I needed to find my history to make myself complete. As I ventured out, I asked him and I'm, I'm a young man at this at this point, I'm asking myself, Where is my daddy? I write letters to the Army, to the Navy, to the social security, to the Air Force, and nobody has an answer. I write a letter to the funeral homes, all of them in Washington, DC, and behold, I get a letter and a telephone call back and it says, I'm looking for Clayborn. I said, "This is Clayborn." She says that I'm your cousin. I'm your cousin. Ah, Mildred is her name. And so why don't you come home, we got family members here to see you. I said, at last, I'm going to see my family. And I'm going to see all of these people. I said I got—, I buy this expensive plane ticket and I get on the plane and I fly to Washington DC. And I get off the plane and I see signs and says "Welcome home, cousin Clayborn!" I see these signs and I'm so happy. And we get into this long limousine—I don't know where they got it, and everybody was in there. They was talking and playing and given drinks to me. I felt great. And we we come around the corner as we're driving and it says you live right around this corner and there was this huge sign that says "Welcome home, cousin Clayborn!" And the kids met the limousine as is going up the street. And they were running along with the limousine as it's moving up the street and it stop in front of all these people and the streets are full of people. They full up—and people begin to come out of this house. They're out of the windows, they come in out of the back yard, they begin to sing. You know, you know these limousines got these tinted rims..w-windows and I looked out the windows. And the people have bald heads just like me, and protruding tummies just like me. So I knew I was at home. They was my people. And, and the door open and a red carpet flew right under my feet. I said my goodness. And they started singing "For he's a mighty good fellow. For he's a mighty good fellow. For he's a mighty good fellow, which no one can deny!" And I stepped out and everybody embraced me and hugged me and and walked me up until they fed me. They fed me and I got so many white little slips of papers with telephone numbers. Some were names and some were not. I'm your cousin Jones. I'm George. I'm Mildred. All of these cousins and families you would not believe. I had searched all over. Because my name is Clayborn Benson the Third and I am looking for my daddy. And I still didn't find him, that I still needed to find my daddy. I realized I had two sisters. Neither one of them were there. But I had two sisters and I began to find and seek them out and get to meet them and I did get to meet them. So they're saying "you're saying: where is your daddy?" I eventually found my dad. He changed his name! He didn't like Clayborn. I love Clayborn! He didn't like it. He named himself Bruce Clayborn Bens—ah, Bruce Clayborn Bonds is what he changed his name to. Inn't that a shame? Made me mad. My ancestors just simply turned over with anger. Ah, but that was my...that that's my story. Finding my daddy. Thank you.

Joel Dresang

Mr. Benson is still working at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society and Museum, which is located at 26th and Center Street in Milwaukee. The museum periodically offers beginning and advanced genealogy workshops, as well as individual and group tours. Details are available at www.wbhsm.org.

Kim Shine

His story was hilarious.

Joel Dresang

You can—I mean, you can tell but he's got this cinematic background because images of the the children running alongside the limousine and yeah, it was a great story

Kim Shine

And everybody's singing. I was like, this is this is awesome. I um—it was really funny at the end though, maybe unfortunate, but his dad changed his name.

Joel Dresang

So I had a question about that. So does that move him up to Clayborn Benson the Second or Junior? Shouldn't that work that way?

Kim Shine

We should ask him. Maybe if he's listening, maybe he'll answer. But thanks, everybody for telling their stories because they're great.

Joel Dresang

So Kim, how about some more Ultra shorts?

Kim Shine

Yeah, I think it's time.

Joel Dresang

Okay. The next UltraShort we have is from Chris P. Starting in college or earlier, aware of women experiencing discrimination, but never really felt it myself, except some casually rare discrepancies. Just a few years ago, someone thought I was a man in an email conversation, I discovered the impact of a gender neutral name. So, so do you ever do you ever get that? I mean, Kim...?

Kim Shine

No. Most people most people know who I am. But I can—

Joel Dresang

Because of you! Because you're a force of nature.

Kim Shine

Oh, man. I just—I'm out here just wrecking everything making stuff happen. But I wonder what Chris wanted to get done in this email. And this whole conversation here.

Joel Dresang

Yes.

Kim Shine

Now I'm curious.

Joel Dresang

Let us know Chris.

Kim Shine

Yeah. Because men and women, they are treated differently, not to get too serious about this.

Joel Dresang

No yeah, it is serious.

Kim Shine

We need more equality in the world. I'm just gonna say it there.

Joel Dresang

Amen

Kim Shine

All right. Our last ultra short comes from another anonymous person. I'm getting all the anonymous people today, huh. My last name is Park and I was a camp counselor for years in my teens and 20s. One of the best parts of my job was that I made up a lot of stories. One of my favorites was that my family had invented parking your car. I told the kids that before my grandfather invented parking, people just use the slow down their cars and jump out. This was obviously very dangerous. I said that this was an invention that saved many lives, and that I was very proud of my family's contribution to the world. Some kids said I could have thought of that. And I would say but you didn't, did you? The only kids who doubted my story were kids who doubted that my last name was really Park. When I showed them my driver's license, they knew I was telling the truth.

Joel Dresang

Oh my gosh, I hope that I hope that person's not a politician.

Kim Shine

I love all of that. I will—I, even though we read the story, I would love to have that person tell me that. And I probably would just believe them just because it's just a crazy story.

Joel Dresang

That's all the time we have today for Real Stories MKE, but don't worry! We've been at this for more than 10 years and there are more audio and video stories available at exfabula.org.

Kim Shine

Very true. Our website lists upcoming storytelling workshops and StorySlams and we hope you'll join us at an event and maybe even share a story too. You can also connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Joel Dresang

Thanks to everyone who makes this program possible, including Ex Fabula staff, the storytellers of course, and audio engineer, say it with me, Sam Woods!

Kim Shine

We love you, Sam! For Real Stories MKE, I'm Kim Shine.

Joel Dresang

And I'm Joel Dresang. Thanks for listening.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>