# Really Specific Stories: Scott Willsey

Duration: 47:47

**SPEAKERS**
Martin Feld, Scott Willsey

**Martin Feld**  00:21
Thank you so much for joining *Really Specific Stories*, Scott; it's fantastic to have you on this podcast.

**Scott Willsey**  00:27
This is great! I think (if I'm not mistaken), I think this is the podcast where I interview you about *Hemispheric Views*. Is that correct, or no?

**Martin Feld**  00:35
You're turning the tables right upfront—that's interesting.

**Scott Willsey**  00:37
Maybe... I'm trying...

**Martin Feld**  00:39
Well, we'll see! Maybe over the course of the interview, you can, you can flip things around.

**Scott Willsey**  00:43
OK.

**Martin Feld**  00:43
But, first question, I'm going to reserve...

**Scott Willsey**  00:46
Oh no...

**Martin Feld**  00:46
...that position.

**Scott Willsey**  00:47
OK.

**Martin Feld**  00:48
Scott, how did you first get into podcasts?

**Scott Willsey**  00:51
I have thought about this question—and I meant today to look up how old this podcast was—but the first podcast that I ever remember listening to was something that I downloaded onto my fifth-gen. iPod, and it's called *Mac Geek Gab*. And *Mac Geek Gab* is still going today. And actually, Adam Christianson from *The MacCast* just joined *Mac Geek Gab* as one of the hosts, and so: it's Dave Hamilton; it's a friend of theirs, named Pilot Pete; it used to be a guy named John F. Braun, and John stepped out of it for reasons that I'm not sure about; and now Adam Christianson is there. And so, that was the first podcast that I ever remember listening to, and that's when I kind of got hooked. And I, I honestly, I want to say that was... it might have been 2005, but if it was, it seems like early 2005. That's my memory anyway, but I definitely started listening to podcasts in 2005 sometime.

**Martin Feld**  01:46
So from that answer, I can see that you're within the Mac fandom. That's part of your history.

**Scott Willsey**  01:53
Yeah.

**Martin Feld**  01:53
What was it like to discover podcasting at that time? What did it mean to you to start interacting with audio in this way? Was that natural? Tell me about that.

**Scott Willsey**  02:03
I guess it was, in the sense that, I have a lot of weird audio preferences and annoyances; I have very strong opinions about audio going into my ears and I don't know why. One of the things that I have strong opinions about is: I hate the radio; I can't stand the radio; I don't like radio voice; I don't like the way they do things; I don't like the ads; I don't like the terrible sound quality; I hate the radio. And so, when I discovered that I could just listen to podcasts and I didn't have to, you know, haul around endless buckets of music, because at the time, it was still CDs in my car (I believe), and I don't know, it was just, yeah it, for me, it was like kind of a relief, 'Oh, here's something I can listen to that I can get fully into topic-wise, and it doesn't have all the annoyances of whatever other audio is available to me at any given moment'. So, that was basically what it originally meant for me. That was pretty much it.

**Martin Feld** 03:02
I love that you're very particular about audio and I'm glad that you're on this show to explore that. You mentioned radio voice and how you're not a huge fan of it. By contrast, podcast voice has drawn you in. How would you define or think about podcast voice? What is it to you?

**Scott Willsey** 03:20
Well, obviously, with the advent of a lot of big names getting into podcasting, there is a lot of radio voice in podcasts now. But, for the most part, the podcasts that I listen to and the podcasts that I enjoy the most are either people having natural conversations and talking like human beings —not like people who know that there's a mic in there and their boss is, you know, peering through a little glass window and they're getting paid whatever to do it—or it's people who try something a little bit different with it. Yeah, they're still doing some, a little bit more elaborate creative attempt, but it's not the radio, it's something different. And so, that (to me) was appealing. That's where podcast voice is just more of a natural thing. And I guess it's the, what I, what I don't understand about the radio is: why do people have to do that? Why do they have to sound that pretentious? Why do they have to...? They, it's all the same, like you can't throw... you can spin the dial on a radio (assuming it was an old rotary dial and it just kept going), you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between 99.9 per cent of those people. That always made me wonder why. And, whereas, with normal conversations, OK, there's a certain way a lot of people talk, but it's more natural: it's how humans communicate; it's how you want to communicate. So that for me, is a huge difference with the types of podcasts that I enjoy and like to listen to.

**Martin Feld** 04:36
When you think back to *Mac Geek Gab*, what was it like to hear your fandom communicated in that way? How did it feel different from having read content about the Mac and the broader Apple ecosystem?

**Scott Willsey** 04:52
And podcasts is a voice medium: not only can people who know how to have an engaging conversation, and know how to tell stories and/or just have a conversation, you can tell they're invested in and they're not really worried about... they're just being themselves, those types of things just draw you in, like a conversation. That's, that's (for me) what the voice aspect gives. And that's the part that I really enjoy, is just, you're just listening to a conversation and hopefully, it's a good conversation. It's the kind that you might sit there at a table in a restaurant with your friends and have, but it's different people and you can listen to them all the time. And presumably, it's a pretty consistent show, and you know what you're gonna get and, and that's good.

**Scott Willsey** 04:52
Oh, you know, as I'm sure you know very well—having experienced it on both sides, I'm sure—voice is more intimate, it's more powerful, so you do feel like you're just sitting there listening to these guys have a conversation. And as you know, you and I, right now we have an asymmetric relationship, because I've listened to you, you know, I don't know how many hours and your personality has been defined for me by, by Jason and Andrew. So now I'm surely an expert in all things Martin. And, you do feel like you kind of know people. You can hear the voice, you can get a good sense of where they're coming from, so they might be saying something that, you know, you might take differently, if you read it on the page, or in my case, I have traditionally had a problem with words on a screen, where, if I'm not very familiar with those people, I don't always have any clue where they're coming from. For me, my biggest difficulties have come in text on the Web from people that I don't know very well.

**Martin Feld** 06:34
I love that you brought up intimacy, because that is something that comes up a lot in the conversation about audio and podcasts specifically. But, even more than that, I really enjoyed how you're basically suggesting or saying that you get to know people better, you know where they're coming from, whereas it might be different, or would be different with text. So, once you got to know those hosts of the *Mac Geek Gab*, where did podcasts go for you from there? What did you start to discover about the medium and maybe other personalities in that area?

**Scott Willsey** 07:07
So, of course, I tried to listen to the Adam Curry podcast, *The Source Code* [sic] (I think it was). Uh... somehow I wound up finding out about this guy who had a podcast page called the *Podcast Pickle* and he was promoting a lot of different podcasts. He was trying to help the lid up and help promote things. From there, I found some other podcasts that I would listen to. And very early on, I actually got into trying to make podcasts myself. And so, as early as 2005, I was making tiny, terrible podcasts that, you know, no one (especially myself) should ever listen to. But, I made some friends that way and one of those friends that I made way back then, is a current good friend of mine and we have a podcast today, and that's Peter Nikolaidis.

**Scott Willsey** 07:07
So, it was an interesting time, because only the geekiest, only the nerdiest of people were listening to podcasts. And I remember I'd been listening for a couple years already, when one day at work I overheard these guys talking about, 'There's this thing called podcasts and you can download them, and...', and I was like, 'Yeah...'. And I work at a tech company, and it just struck me as amusing that all these supposedly really hip-to-technology-type people were amazed about this thing called podcasts and I'd been listening to 'em for a couple years. So, it was definitely a certain type of people that were really listening to podcasts, and yeah... and so, I don't know, it appealed to me both as a, 'I want to try this' and exploration of a lot of early podcasts. Ah,

*MacCast* was definitely one that I listened to; I mentioned that with Adam Christianson. Boy, I can't remember a lot of their early ones. I'm sure I listened to some *TWiT* and so on and so forth, but there was also a lot of little stuff. Like, I think, oh... what is her name? There's, there's uh, *Grammar Girl*? Is that who I'm thinking of?

**Martin Feld** 07:55
Yep, the *Grammar Girl* site as well.

**Scott Willsey** 08:13
Yeah, and I believe she had a podcast way back then, too. If I could be mistaken. There was Mur Lafferty, there was a lot of other people. And yeah, those were the types of names of podcasts that I was getting into and listening to at the time.

**Martin Feld** 09:11
What did you learn when you started to go behind the microphone and recording things yourself? Did your view of audio change? How did that develop?

**Scott Willsey** 09:20
Well, the only thing that really changed was: I wanted to, well, I quickly found out that a podcast is much better when it has people talking together as opposed to trying to do it solo. You can do it solo and there are good solo podcasts, but you really have to be able to either not read off the page (or not sound like you're reading off the page) or you have to work very hard not to have a monotone. Even if you're not reading off the page, even if you're just saying thoughts to yourself, it's so easy to devolve into a monotone, where even you are rocking back and forth falling asleep, let alone the audience. And so, that was one thing I found, you know, trying to find people to the podcast with was difficult, trying to find people that said they wanted to podcast with you, and then actually meant it and would keep doing it for a long, long time—that was super difficult. And then it was just learning the audio stuff, like, I started with GarageBand. I started with not horrible, but not great mics, you know, weird little interfaces, I found out which ones would introduce noise into the line and all that journey that we all went on, and trying to learn how to get a decent sound and get a consistent sound.

**Scott Willsey** 10:31
One of the early ones that I did that was fun and got some good feedback was: it's one that I called *Audio Gaijin*. A *gaijin* is a shortened form of the Japanese word for 'foreigners'. And my family, when I was little, we lived in Japan for a total of eight years. It was like four years, a year and a half back, four years. And so I did a podcast with my dad, called *Audio Gaijin*, and we just recalled some of those memories. And um, I believe... I met, I think I met another one of my friends through that, through that one. He was a listener to that and his daughter was into Japanese culture at the time, so she had questions and, and so that one was a lot of fun. And that

was one where I learned especially through my dad, who at the time was on that podcast, he really hit it out of the park, he was doing good storytelling. And it was a good example of how having two people that complement each other with different styles and different memories about the same event worked out really well for us.

**Martin Feld** 11:24

That's amazing, thank you for sharing that. And I'm interested to delve a little bit more into that time you had in Japan...

**Scott Willsey** 11:30

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 11:31

...because you're living back in the US now, you said you're working for a tech company, engaging with podcasts. You, as I do, fit an audience or a community that lines up with this podcast, this exploration of the community, but surely you pick up some things in Japan, interacting with a different culture. What are some of the things that you experienced or that you took on, living there for such a while?

**Scott Willsey** 11:57

One of the things that I learned... well, when we went to Japan, it was the mid-1970s. I was a little kid and apparently I suffered from tremendous culture shock, it blew me away, I didn't know what to do. I also was kind of a strange kid, I lived in my own little world, like, I was in a bubble literally, I don't know what was going on with me. But I was impervious to the real world around me. And so, that was a real wake up, but the interesting thing was: Japan didn't have a lot of foreigners at the time. It's not like it was now. There weren't that many Americans, there weren't that many gaijin in general, and we wound up in southern Japan way down in, on the Kyushu island, way down south in a prefecture (and city) called Kagoshima, and right across the bay from one of the world's most active volcanoes, which was a lot of fun. But there were not a lot of Americans there, we were definitely strange, we were definitely followed around a lot, so that was one thing that I learned was: I learned what it was like to be a minority. Because obviously now in the United States, I'm not a minority type of person, I'm a... I have all the advantages of being a white guy living in a country that, you know, for some reason, some white guys feel like their rights are being eroded in, but they're not at all, trust me.

**Scott Willsey** 13:15

So, yeah, I learned what that felt like: I learned what it felt like to be an outsider; I learned what it felt like to be in the minority; I learned what it felt like to be judged, to be pre-judged as to your intelligence, your character, even whether or not you could speak their language, based on how you looked. And so, that was a good lesson, I'm glad I had that—I really am—because it taught me a lot about how people feel when they're surrounded by other people that don't look like them and people that may or may not be making assumptions about them. That's something everybody needs to know. And the only way to get that, unfortunately, the only way to be able to really understand that is to have that happen to yourself. And, you know, in most of our countries, we probably have a hard time getting ourselves into a situation like that. So that was something that I took away, that was really good.

**Scott Willsey** 14:04

And then the other thing about Japan that I feel grateful for is that it kind of took me out of having a solely American point of view, so that now I understand that, OK, some things that we believe are just cultural and they just come from living in a specific time and place and other things aren't, and it helped me to separate those a lot better. Whereas, I have a lot of friends who seem to think that 'right and wrong' encompasses certain things that I think are nothing more than: you learned that because you lived here, whoop-de-doo, it doesn't mean anything to me. And, being able to kind of get an ability to form my own opinion about which or which for myself, by living in another country, by living in another culture, by learning another language, that's something that I think is kind of invaluable.

**Martin Feld** 14:49

Great points, and thank you for sharing that. When you look at the podcasting community that forms around your fandom—this Apple interest that's shared through a lot of tech podcasts, ones that are being investigated in this very show—how do you think about that focus on American tech companies or culture, given your experience being an outsider somewhere else, as you said?

**Scott Willsey** 15:14

Well, it's kind of interesting, part of that is because a lot of the, you know, a lot of the biggest activity, a lot of the biggest products, a lot of, a lot of what goes on, for whatever reason—I mean, we could talk about why, but we don't want to hear—but a lot of it is American-corporation-centric. And so, by necessity, a lot of it does revolve around companies that are in the United States of America, a lot of it does revolve around policies of the United States of America, a lot of it does also get talked about that way, because the people who talk about it are, to some extent, often in the United States. And, you know, it's like uh... gosh, I don't remember if it was, I think it was somebody, I think it was one of the *ATP* guys, I think it was Marco, maybe, and they were just saying, 'Look, we know, we get that we're talking about things from an American point of view but that's where we live; that's what we know, that's the that's the only way we can talk; it's not that we

think this is the only way, this is the best way, we're better than you, it's just that that's our experience, we can't pretend... we can't try to pretend to be other people'. And that's what I think a lot of it is.

**Scott Willsey** 16:20
And so, is there a chance for more diversity? Absolutely and that's, but you got to be you; you can't pretend to be other people. So, the diversity really does have to come from real honest to goodness, other points of view coming into the conversation. And I think it has, I think there's a lot more interesting people from all kinds of backgrounds to listen to now than there were before, but there's also still—and guilty right here!—there's still a lot of podcasts that are a bunch of white guys sitting around talking around a mic, and that's, that's OK, too! But it definitely shouldn't be just that for sure.

**Martin Feld** 16:52
And you mentioned your podcast with Peter...

**Scott Willsey** 16:52
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 16:53
...what are some of the challenges or lessons that you've had along the way with that show, as you say, being an American doing a podcast in America?

**Scott Willsey** 17:05
Yeah, I think we're fortunate enough not to have any listeners, so I don't think we offend anybody with our Americanisms... but we're also both pretty open-minded, like, we're both open-minded to other cultures. Uh, one of the stories that Peter reminded me of (this last episode) was that he first got out of his sleepy little town in Vermont, when he went and stayed with friends in Brazil, and he stayed in Brazil for several months, and that was when he woke up and said, 'I can live other places and I am so tired of the backwards thinking and provincialism in this tiny, little town I live in —I want out'. And that's when he, you know, spread his wings and flew the coop, and he relocated his house to Boston, but he's also travelled all over the place since then, so... we both are kind of open-minded about, you know, yes, we live in the United States but we also understand that experiencing other things and opening your mind to other things, not only is super-important, it's just a lot of fun, too.

**Scott Willsey** 18:06
So, I don't know if I don't know what the challenges are from that other than we are who we are: we are two white guys; we are roughly middle-aged, give or take; we are both into tech; we are very different people but we do have some similarities. And so, from an audience point of view, I don't know how that comes across other than to say, we just try to talk about stuff that interests us and personally, like, we do talk about Peter a lot: 'What's going on with you? Blah, blah, blah...' I try not to let the conversation steer to: what Scott will see doing, what's going on? Because if it does, I want to talk about specific things that might be of interest to other people. Nobody cares about me, what I want people to care about is the topics that we're talking about: talk about something interesting; talk about something that someone else can relate to; talk about something they can download; talk about something that they can read, or whatever. I try to go more that way than anything. So, hopefully, it's not, you know, inward-looking all the time, and, and so forth. And I think that no matter who you are, if you're actually talking about some kind of topic, it can be interesting, even if you're not the most diverse set of people.

**Martin Feld** 19:12
How would you define your persona, on the podcast, given that you've just shared that very intentional way of sharing topics or talking or communicating about yourself?

**Scott Willsey** 19:25
Yeah, I think... it is a persona and I want to say that one of the intriguing things about podcasts is that when you listen to somebody all the time, you think you know them, and you do know a little bit about them, you do know a part of them. And I believe that most of the podcasts I listen to, those people are being genuine, but obviously you're not showing your whole self, you're showing a part of yourself, you're having a conversation also with specific other people all the time, usually and so you have that dynamic that's probably different from how you interact with other people. So, with Peter, I've known him for a long, long time and I'm very comfortable with him and he's comfortable with me. We have a good dynamic, and he doesn't mind when I interrupt him with my stupid jokes, and it's fun. It's a fun conversation that we can have and we can also get passionate about certain things or not. And we have a dynamic that's very, very real, but obviously, we're only showing part of ourselves, like, we're only... we're not talking about everything to do with his work. There's stuff that he just wants to keep off the air. We're definitely not, I've never mentioned my employer, and I won't—we keep that off the air. You know, certain things like that, but I think persona-wise, the way I joke with him, the way I talk with him, it's 100 per cent me, it's just that that's not the only aspect there is to me, but it is definitely a high aspect of how I interact with Peter.

**Scott Willsey** 20:45
So I would call it 'real', but it's a slice. And that's how I feel best about giving podcasting to people, is: do be myself, but they don't want to see every aspect of myself, because then they wouldn't listen, uh, you know? It wouldn't be good, it wouldn't be good podcasting and it probably wouldn't be fun for people. It's not, I don't want it to be about me, I want it to be about a conversation. So, that's basically what it boils down to, is: be yourself; be how you are with this person that you're talking to, but then try to think about what the listener wants to hear. Don't be so narcissistic that you think that they want to hear every little detail about your life, as opposed to having a conversation about some topic that they might enjoy.

**Martin Feld** 21:26
That's really interesting. And you just said the phrase there, 'what the listener wants to hear'. So as you've delved into podcasting, you came from those early days, you've developed your own shows, both the 'terrible' and the 'current', as you put it—

**Scott Willsey** 21:40
Which also might be terrible!

**Martin Feld** 21:41
Oh, well, we'll let the listeners decide, we'll, we'll have lots of links in the show notes to direct to everything that you wish!

**Scott Willsey** 21:47
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 21:48
What do you want to hear today as a listener? What's in your feed these days? What's engaging you?

**Scott Willsey** 21:55
Well, the people that I like the most are just people that have a little bit broader dynamic range as people, so to speak. So, OK, yeah, I do listen to some tech podcasts, but the ones that I enjoyed the most are ones with people who have seen a lot of things, done a lot of things and they can bring to bear experiences that might not seem related to give more colour, or to give more information to a specific topic that they're talking about. And anybody can have that, there's young people that have that, there's young people that have experiences and/or are very good at relating things to each other that might not seem related, but it's an interesting juxtaposition, or whatever. And that's the kind of people that I like to listen to.

**Scott Willsey** 22:36
And I've also heard podcasts, tech podcasts, specifically, where people are super-mono-focused, and, I don't know, it just feels like they're not super-deep in terms of being able to express themselves with regard to their topic, like, they just think about it in a certain way and that's all they're focused on, and it kind of gets repetitive, and so yeah, give me people who, the thing that they're talking about is what they're talking about, but it's not the only thing they know, they have other knowledge that they can bring to bear. They're people that think about a lot of different things, and, again, that can be any type of person from any background, of any age; there are people like that in the world and when they start podcasting, that's what makes it interesting for me.

**Martin Feld** 23:20
And you mentioned that you don't wish to share your employer when you do podcasting—which, totally respect, I won't be asking you that here—but it's interesting that you say that you work in tech.

**Scott Willsey** 23:30
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 23:31
So, how much of the time do you relate to things that you're hearing or how much did things resonate with you and match up with your own experiences working in technology?

**Scott Willsey** 23:41
Ah... less than you would think, because, you know, not surprisingly, a lot of what I listen to that's tech-related is about Apple-related stuff, or it's about computer-security-related stuff, or to some small degree, maybe AI or other stuff that's going on, but it's about things like that. Whereas, my job is in, is in the semiconductor industry and it's a very specific job that I do. It's very, very specific, so there's very little overlap. The only bit of overlap I would say is that right now, in my current job, I do help work on Windows servers. So, we do administer servers, we install servers, we do many painful things with servers and they do many painful things to us. And so, there is some overlap there in that, OK, there's some computer experience there and I, I get the security stuff and I get the, and also Peter actually has, um (or had) a consulting business, where he deals with clients directly about those kinds of things. He runs servers, he hosts sites, he sets him up with mail systems and all kinds of other systems and he deals with their security. And there's been times, where, just for fun, I've popped on and worked with him on things. And, you know, so from that aspect there is that overlap, but basically not a lot, not a lot of overlap.

**Martin Feld** 25:06
That's interesting to know and it speaks to that diversity that you were talking about before, not only in people, but maybe in the topics, things that aren't even touched on or...

**Scott Willsey** 25:14
Mm-hmmm.

**Martin Feld** 25:14
...maybe even explored in podcasts. And on that topic of diversity, as well, looking through the lists of Mastodon and people I know, I discovered that you at least followed and have listened to *Parallel* before, the show by Shelly Brisbin. And that's a great case study in diversity, and specifically, accessibility people's different experiences.

**Scott Willsey** 25:38
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 25:38
Can you tell me a little bit about having listened to that show, however much you have? What have you learnt or found valuable about that show, relating to the ideas of diversity or accessibility, as you've expressed?

**Scott Willsey** 25:52
Well, the thing about *Parallel* and Shelly Brisbin in general that I find interesting, is: hearing her point of view helps me understand, when we think of people who are disabled, or when we think of people who are blind, for example, we think of one bucket, we think of everybody fits into a certain bucket, whereas there are actually different levels of vision capability. And Shelly is a good example of that: she can do certain things, see certain things and then other things cause her a great trouble; she also is an absolute expert in accessibility on all platforms, but she's gravitated towards Apple, because over time, they've become really good with their accessibility initiatives. And it's really good to hear from her point of view, how it affects her and when she comes across something where the developer hasn't taken advantage of what Apple's offering, in terms of making their app (or whatever) accessible. And she's good at providing feedback to them and explaining exactly what's going on. She's, you know, talked in the past, in certain circumstances about here's how she's doing something with the user interface, here's how she uses her device, and it's fascinating to me, because I don't, I never have to think about that stuff, and so I don't. And that is both a blessing and a curse, because, yeah, there is great accessibility on the Apple platforms but sometimes, using some of those things, seems like a very tedious and slow way to interact with the device. But it's also the way to interact with the device if you're a certain person and it's super-important.

**Scott Willsey** 27:30

So, I really love the way, you know, she brings authority to the topic: she knows what she's talking about; she's not afraid to state her opinions; she doesn't seem to be suffering from any sense of imposter syndrome (nor should she); but I like the matter of factness and confidence to which she, you know, which she comes to the subject with. And she brings, and she basically is just educating and enlightening people, but she's also just interesting to listen to. And she's gotten better over time, just like anybody who practises a craft or does something over and over will do. And yeah, I just think she does a really good job of making something interesting that she's familiar with, and even though you don't necessarily have the same situation as her, she makes it interesting for you and she also just brings you right in, like, maybe she's directing at a specific audience, but you never feel like, 'Oh, this is for a different group of people, you never feel that'. It's really good; I really appreciate the work that she's doing.

**Martin Feld** 28:32

That's a fantastic response, and correct me if I'm wrong, but what you were getting at (at the end, there) was inclusion, specifically.

**Scott Willsey** 28:39

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 28:39

It wasn't for a specific audience; you as a person without those low-vision difficulties or any form of disability have been included, matching the message that she's been talking about, which is great.

**Scott Willsey** 28:50

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 28:50

And having been included in that way and listened to the show, are there any ways that it has influenced you in how you listen to other podcasts or interact with other media or produce your own things? How have, how have you changed or considered accessibility in things that you've interacted with?

**Scott Willsey** 29:10

Well, now, Martin, you've made me feel very guilty, because one of the things that I really need to do with regards to my website is to go through and make sure that things are accessible, and I haven't done a very good job of that, but—

**Martin Feld** 29:22
I didn't mean to make you guilty! I apologise.

**Scott Willsey** 29:24
No, I made myself guilty, you made me feel guilty.

**Martin Feld** 29:28
Good point, good point, OK.

**Scott Willsey** 29:29
But, but uh, yeah, so it has made me aware of things like that, like, this stuff does matter to people. And there are people who are wondering, 'Why can't, why can't you just take the little bit of effort that it would take to make it a whole lot better?'. Like, it might not be perfect, it might not be 100 per cent of the way, but with little bit of effort, we can probably work to make things way more accessible to people—enough that they're going to use it, enough that they're going to feel like somebody made an attempt and they're going to participate. And I'm not saying, I'm not saying activities are OK, not results; yeah, we want results, do it right, get the best you can, but it's a process, right? So, I need to go through and learn how to make sure that my site is accessible in certain ways, and that's going to be a process, it's going to be a little bit better, then it's going to be a little bit better, then it's gonna be a little bit better. But it is important and there's no reason for me not to do it. There's tonnes of amazing resources out there specifically for the Web, that are built upon the premise of: here's how to make your site more accessible for other people. So, I have no excuse not to start that process.

**Martin Feld** 30:34
I'm glad that you're so open and honest about that, because it takes a bit to admit where you can improve your own content. I'm always trying to be a bit of a perfectionist with my own thing and this show is one of those examples. On that, though, you mentioned that you run your own website and you also work for a tech company, you work in semiconductors, you produce your own podcast. All of these things are different aspects of you, like we were talking about before. Although you may feel guilty, how do you manage to fit all of these things in your life? What's it like to balance all of these interests and production responsibilities that you've adopted in your life?

**Scott Willsey**  31:16

I'm looking to see if my wife's listening. Um... yeah, it is a balancing act. It's like anything else, stuff goes in cycles. There are times, there's little, I call them 'short, little seasons', there's little seasons, where I'll focus on a certain thing and little seasons, where I'll focus on another. And that is why the podcast I do with Peter, called *Friends with Brews*, we were weekly, we were doing great and then we both got super-busy and things came up, so we said, 'Let's go bi-weekly'. And then, despite that fact, I just published an episode that was something like 19 days—oh, maybe 20, I don't remember—it was 19 or 20 days after the previous one. So, yeah, it does... there are times in life where you get busy and you do have a hard time balancing priorities. The other thing too, right now, is besides increased time that I've been spending on work-related stuff and uh, we also have two, we adopted another cat, we have a problem situation where we're trying to integrate them, that takes time.

**Scott Willsey**  32:17

But most importantly of all, I have a daughter that's a junior in high school. And oh my God, if you want your, you know what? If you're tired of your life, and you want it to zoom by, have a child. Your life will fly by! You won't know where the time went! You'll imagine that you're going to do and spend all this wonderful time with the kid, you're going to teach them all these amazing things, they're going to learn so much from you and you're going to have all these great adventures—and the next thing you know, they're in high school. I don't know how it happens. But anyway, my point is, I do want to prioritise being able to spend time with her too, as much as possible. So, it's definitely a balancing act, but the fact that she is in high school, the fact that I have been doing my job for a long time, even though I'm probably a couple years into the position I'm into right now, I don't know... I'm at a place where I can balance stuff like that. I do have time to do stuff like that.

**Scott Willsey**  33:09

And my wife and I give each other that space, like, we... I don't know, we've been together a long time. And we've got a good situation going, where we don't... there are certain things that we love to share and that are super-fun to share, but we don't have to share everything. She does not care at all about my tech stuff, and she watches the shows that I think are great, but I don't want to watch. And, so, there's times where we do things apart, and during those times, I'll do some of the tech stuff and it works out! It's, it's uh... is it perfect? No, but I think given all the things that we both have to do, I think we do pretty well. I think everybody's figuring it out as they go along, and right now I'm not stressed about where I'm at. I guess I'll just put it that way.

**Martin Feld** 33:57
It's great that you've struck that balance, and I'm interested to know, you did say that prioritising spending time with your family, your daughter specifically, is very high on the list (if not the top).

**Martin Feld** 34:08
Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 34:09
Within the tech realm or other personal interests, are there things that are calling you? What are things that you'd like to try, or that you'd like to learn or that you would like to take on that maybe don't quite fit or you might have to make some room for?

**Scott Willsey** 34:23
OK, earlier you gave me undue amounts of credit for admitting my failure, so I'm going to admit some more to you—hoping to get some praise from here, Martin! Um, one of the things that I did not do well at, when my daughter was very, very young, was I did not let go of that sense of FOMO, of: I have these things I want to do, and I really think they're important to me for some reason. Why? Now, looking back, who knows? But I wanted to do certain things, I wanted to learn certain things, there were tech projects I wanted to do. And, I don't know if I was letting them get in the way of my family time, but I was definitely letting them get in the way of my attitude about my family time and how it affected my wife. And, you know, looking back, it's so bloody obvious, it's hilarious, but at the time, I didn't see it; I just thought these things were super-important.

**Scott Willsey** 35:15
Now, I'm more.... one of the things that I have learned from some of the super-smart people that I work with, is (one person in particular), is: just to, OK, there's a lot to do, but he will still just take the time and even though he's working his way through something, he will take his time and enjoy the learning process. And that's one of the things that I have learned and that is different than the younger me, is: I'm not going to get to all those things before I die, I'm just not going to. There's endless fascinating things in the world, there's endless... and in technology, stuff's always changing. There's endless projects you can do, there's endless things you can learn. It goes on and on and on. And if I really think those are such high priority, then I'm never going to have time for 'em all.

**Scott Willsey** 35:58

The other thing too, is: it's not like I have something that all of a sudden I'm a genius out in the world is crowding around to watch me do it. I might have a different answer, if that was the case, I might be willing to throw my priorities to the wind and focus on those things a little more. But I don't, it's just hobbies, it's just things that I enjoy. So now it's a lot easier for me to say, 'I'm just gonna enjoy the journey of learning it', and it's fun! And when it's time to put it down, it's time to put it down. And I don't have to stress about it. I don't worry, I don't feel bad about it. And that change, is—I don't know how necessarily it came about—but it's very helpful. I'm glad that it came about, because that lets me try to balance my priorities better. It allows me to be more present with people when I'm with them. And it just allows me to enjoy all the different aspects of my life and not stress out about the things that I'm not doing. Although, if you're going to stress about things that you're not doing, let it be your family above all else, like, there's never enough time for family. You're never going to lay on your deathbed, wishing, 'Damn it! I wish I would have just had a few more moments in the terminal!' No, but you might wish you had, you know, a little bit more time with your family. So, if you're going to stress about one, stress on the family and go, but otherwise, I really do feel now that it's just: enjoy what you're doing at the time, and when it comes time to stop, stop!

**Martin Feld** 37:08

That's brilliant, and I totally agree with what you're saying about prioritising family. There's some good lessons in there. And to bring it back to podcasting more specifically, for a second, it popped in my mind, as you were speaking there, talking about being present, right?

**Scott Willsey** 37:23

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 37:23

So, you can be present with a person physically in the same room. There's also this term that comes up, 'co-presence', when you're maybe on a device or interacting with something with other people in the room.

**Scott Willsey** 37:37

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 37:37

With podcasting, it's a very individual experience, generally, if you have your headphones on. Right now, I'm speaking to you with headphones and earphones and we're blocked out from the rest of the world around us.

**Scott Willsey** 37:48
Yep.

**Martin Feld** 37:49
When you consume media like podcasting, and taking into account all of those things like family, work responsibilities and so on, do you feel present? What would you say about the experience of listening to this audio that you really enjoy, with respect to the rest of the world?

**Scott Willsey** 38:03
Maybe I should spend some time alone with my thoughts. Why is that so scary? You know, that's my attitude. And I'm 100 per cent on board with Jason on the 1x train—don't even! Because, I just... that's part of the same thing, right? It's like, I want to hear these people talking like they talked. I want people to do that for me. A younger me once told listeners to quit listening if they listened to me fast!

**Scott Willsey** 38:03
So, one of the things that I have here—here's one of my audio quirks that I talked to you about—I don't like to listen to background noise. If I'm working out a problem in my brain and there's background noise, eventually, I realise at some point that I'm irrationally angry. And then I realise that it is directly in correlation to how much background noise is going on. So, I'm not one of those people that listens to podcasts while they do stuff and lets 90,000 words go by and has no idea what they said. If I do, I rewind it and I listen to it again, because if I'm listening to something, why am I listening to it, if not to actually hear it? If not to actually understand it? If not to actually enjoy it? If I can let it zoom by me, why am I listening? I guess I don't really want to listen to those people at all!

**Martin Feld** 39:13
Really?!

**Scott Willsey** 39:13
I tried to fire my—yeah! I tried to fire my listeners. But I, I want to listen to them the way they're meant to be listened to, and that means I will hear fewer podcasts, it means I will have time for less stuff, but it means that I want my brain to actually be listening to what they put out there, as they speak. I don't want to, like, one person who I really admire and respect, but they said something that kind of freaked me out, and that was: 'After listening to podcasts all the time my significant other seems like they're talking so bloody slow', and I'm like, dude, that's a problem... you can't have that problem. So you can't get impatient with people. You know, you can't be doing this to people when they're talking to you in a normal voi-, tone or a normal speed—you cannot.

**Scott Willsey** 39:53

So that's how I listen to podcasts and then with respect to: what about my presence in the world around me? With my family walking around and I've got the AirPods in and I'm listening to podcasts, I do listen to him in the house a lot: I listen to him when I'm doing dishes; I listen to him when I'm doing chores; I listen to him when other people aren't talking to me, but yeah, there's definitely been times where people want to talk to me and all sudden, I have to try to stop it, or... what John Siracusa said in *ATP* about how when you're wearing AirPods, everybody just seems you can hear everything they're saying—that is 1,000 per cent true! That happens to me all the time! And that is something that happens with my family, and so I have to be very cognisant of when somebody wants to talk to me, so that I'm not suddenly a big jerk, you know? So, yeah, yeah, yeah, that does take some balance. And what it means is, if they want to talk, you're gonna talk, just stop listening to the podcast. And again, I don't want to miss it, I'm not there just for background noise, so I will stop it. If I can't give it all my focus, if I need to give focus to other people, even partially, the podcast has to stop. That's how I do it.

**Martin Feld** 40:55

I really appreciate that point of focus and I can relate to it as well. You put something on, you want to listen intently to what's being said.

**Scott Willsey** 41:03

Mm-hmmm.

**Martin Feld** 41:03

It could apply to music as well, different media. And is that the case for you? Does it apply to other media? You want to have that focus, whether it's visual, like film and television, or even music? Do you apply that the same way that you do with podcasts?

**Scott Willsey** 41:19

Music, not so much... like, if I'm driving, and I'm paying attention to what's going on around me, and I'm seeing some spectacularly idiotic example of motor-vehicle handling going on around me, I might not register every note of the song or every word, I'm not going to back up and relive that. But if it's a podcast or something like that, I will go back to get the parts that I missed. And if I'm watching video, I've noticed that in recent times, I've fired up YouTube to see if there's anything interesting and then I'm on my computer at the same time, if I notice that I'm not catching what's going on on YouTube, I just turn it off. I don't, I don't want it there for background noise, and so, the answer is 'yes' (with video), especially video with people talking, which is most video that I watch. Although, I did watch an interesting movie the other day that had almost no dialogue, but anyway... Uh, so yeah, the answer is 'yes'. Aside from music, I don't back up music to make sure I heard every single word; usually music is more about the feeling and the flow, and that's fine, that's music's role in life. And I do like to focus on it, like when I'm exercising, I will

actually pay quite a bit of attention to the music, but in general, no, I don't have the exact same approach with music, no.

**Martin Feld** 42:33

That's fascinating, so you're kind of switching in your behaviour, depending on what the medium is.

**Scott Willsey** 42:38

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 42:38

That's really good. I suppose my question to bring things together, because you've covered so much in a relatively short time. We've spoken about your media consumption and production habits, family, work, balancing everything, accessibility, technology... is there anything that I haven't asked you about or that you haven't mentioned, that you would like to explore, before we complete the episode?

**Scott Willsey** 43:00

Martin, that might be the most graceful way of saying, 'My God, you talk a lot!' that I've ever had said to me!

**Martin Feld** 43:07

Certainly not what I was suggesting!

**Scott Willsey** 43:08

It's good. I like it! I don't know, I think... I think I encourage people to... look, this is my own point of view, a lot of people disagree with me. I do encourage people to be intentional about what they're listening to, because I genuinely do think people are afraid to be alone with their own thoughts. If you're focusing on something, you're not going to listen to whatever it is that you're listening to or you're not going to watch whatever it is you're watching, just think about maybe turning it off and seeing what happens. Now, I know, kids, teenagers, my daughter, they're never going to live this way, but the older you get as an adult, especially if you're trying to develop some peace in life and get away from chaos, and not feel so jumpy and pulled in so many different directions, just give a little bit of intentionality a try. When you're listening to something, be able to give it your attention. When you're not listening to it, give what you need to give your attention and try not to slice your mind so many different ways. And I think you might find that you might lose some of the FOMO, I guess. Get rid of the FOMO! Don't have FOMO! You're never going to watch all the shows you want to watch, you're never going to get to all the podcasts, you're never going to read everything that goes by in social media. Get rid of the FOMO, and your life will be pretty good.

**Martin Feld**  44:23

That's an amazing point to end on and something that I should probably take on as well, in all honesty. I want to say 'Thank you', Scott, for taking the time to join me on *Really Specific Stories* and explore your own story. I hope the listeners have enjoyed it. Thank you so much for giving your time today.

**Scott Willsey**  44:40

Thank you, Martin. And by the way, thank you for inviting me on and yeah, I also have deep hope that the listeners enjoyed it, a little trepidation, but deep hope.

*[Musical theme between dialogue]*

**Scott Willsey**  45:05

Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait! What about you?! I, I never got the background on how... OK, how exactly did you figure out that your two co-hosts and you were going to meld so well when it came to *Hemispheric Views*, because dynamics do matter. Dynamics make or break a fun show, so how did you know? Did you have a sense already just from interacting with them on social media that it was going to be that way, or was it a big gamble?

**Martin Feld**  45:32

That's a great question, and you have turned the tables, so I'll answer that! Um, yeah, it's amazing. With hindsight, you know, you look back and it seems, 'Oh, it just clicked, it seems natural!', you know, 'It was meant to be!' or something.

**Scott Willsey**  45:45

Mm-hmmm.

**Martin Feld**  45:45

And I'm glad that you feel that we have that dynamic, because I'm sure you can relate to the fact that you're not really sure when you're doing it. Is this connecting with anyone?

**Scott Willsey**  45:54

Yeah.

**Martin Feld** 45:54

But yeah, my memory of it, being uh, one guy out of the three, is: we just kind of hit it off talking on social media, specifically the network Micro.blog, so that emerges, you create the dynamic in at least written text, and when I was starting to practise my own podcasting, they went, 'Hey, we like this, or can we get in on it?' And that's when the pilot happened, and then when you actually come together, perhaps you obviously can relate to this as well with your projects or with Peter, you go, 'Oh!' That feeling that you had in the text comes to life through oral communication and it was at that point we went, 'This is fun! Let's continue it!'

**Scott Willsey** 46:33

OK. It's interesting, because you can kind of get a sense of people's sense of humour from stuff that they write on social media, but it's totally different reacting with each other live, and you guys do have that sense of humour, you're able to, like, you'll say something and all of a sudden, they'll just jump on you about it, and they're just like, 'We knew it! We knew you were going there! Blah, blah, blah...' And you can't make that kind of stuff up, you can't fake it, so the fact that it worked out that well, I think, is pretty incredible.

**Martin Feld** 47:02

Well, that's very kind. Yeah, and hopefully people feel that kind of natural flow to it, because on your podcast, you're not scripting everything, are you?

**Scott Willsey** 47:10

Right.

**Martin Feld** 47:10

We aren't either, so, hopefully it brings some real conversation to life in a way that's more digestible on demand in a feed.

**Scott Willsey** 47:18

Excellent, well thank you!

**Martin Feld** 47:20

No worries! It's nice to, uh, be the interviewee, occasionally.

**Scott Willsey** 47:25

We might have to make a, we might have to do more of that. We might have to get that going.

**Martin Feld** 47:28

That's great.

**Scott Willsey** 47:29

You know what we can do? We can start a whole podcast where it's just different people each time interviewing you, the only constant is you, and every time it's a new person interviewing you.

**Martin Feld** 47:39

I'm not sure if that would be fun or become tedious quickly.

**Scott Willsey** 47:43

Ohhh...

**Martin Feld** 47:43

Although, I do have an opinion on everything, so maybe that would work.

**Scott Willsey** 47:45

Yeah! See?! It'd be great!