

Intro: [00:00:01] Hello and welcome to 15 Minutes with Charlie. I'm your host, Charlie Mechem. I want to help you communicate more effectively and I believe the use of anecdotes can get you there. Explore this with me as I share anecdotes from my book, Total Anecdotal, and ask guests to react in relation to their own experiences and careers. My guest today is a good friend, Jay Ratliff. He's an aviation consultant to several major media companies, he's an advisor on stock day trading with a wide range of clients, and he frequently sits in as a substitute host for a number of major broadcasters and has arranged several important radio interviews for me to talk about my book, Total Anecdotal. I think you will enjoy my visit with Jay.

Charlie Mechem: [00:00:59] The first one is under the heading of Arrogance in the book, and it goes like this: "One night at sea, the captain saw what looked like another ship heading toward him. He had his signal man signal to the other ship and he said, "Change your course ten degrees south." The reply came back, "Change your course ten degrees north." The captain answered, "I'm a captain. Change your course south." To which the reply was, "I'm a seaman. Change your course north." This infuriated the captain, so he signaled back, "Dammit. I say, change your course south. I'm on a battleship." To which the reply came back, "I say, change your course north, I'm in a lighthouse." I'd be interested in your thoughts on that.

Jay Ratliff: [00:01:48] Some of the best leaders I've ever been around, they did more listening than they did talking. As I reviewed this in your book, which again is an excellent read, I'm reminded of the fact that as a leader you have to do more listening than talking. Most effective leaders recognize that there's a collective experience around them. That is an incredible asset. Unfortunately, many managers don't tap into that and they end up making a lot of problems or mistakes that they would otherwise not have made if they didn't have that arrogance strapped around their neck. So I mean, this is the anecdote. It's perfect for anyone that wants to avoid mistakes before they get made.

Charlie: [00:02:32] I couldn't agree more, and I've always loved the line that says "I've never learned anything while I was talking."

Jay: [00:02:40] Amen to that.

Charlie: [00:02:43] Amen. OK, the next anecdote is on page 38 of the book under the heading of Brevity. It's a limerick about Socrates. It goes like this: "Socrates lived long ago. He was very intelligent. Socrates gave long speeches. His friends poisoned him." Thoughts on that?

Jay: [00:03:05] The immediate thing that came to mind as I reviewed this one was, of course, you're a Yale man so I can make fun of a Harvard [pundit], Edward Everett. He gave a speech that was more than two hours long, a long time ago, and it was a speech before Abraham Lincoln. In the speech, the president was two minutes two hundred and sixty nine words and it still stirs the soul today as we know it as the Gettysburg Address. A lot of times saying what you need to in the shortest amount of words possible will allow it to stick in the minds of many. When you look at it, some people equate much speaking to much knowledge, and you and I both know that's not the case. In fact, for many of us the more that we talk the more evident it is the less that we know on a particular topic. I really think just out of respect for people's time, get to the point as quickly as you can and move on, because to me it's all about time management.

Charlie: [00:04:04] You're quite right. I learned early on that when you are putting together a speech, or just comments of one kind or another. If you will look at what you've written or prepared to say, almost always you can find it's very easy to shorten it without losing anything. In fact, you gain something.

Jay: [00:04:26] Absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

Charlie: [00:04:28] The next anecdote is under the heading of Dealing With Diversity, on page 49 of the book Total Anecdotal. It's a bogus Latin phrase, but I've always thought this was funny. "Perhaps the most important thing in dealing with adversity is to never give up. Here's a great take on the Latin phrase, non illegitimi carborundem est, and the loose translation is 'Don't let the bastards grind you down.'"

Jay: [00:05:01] Absolutely.

Charlie: [00:05:03] What are your thoughts?

Jay: [00:05:05] My thought is to never give up. I mean, it's an easy thing to say for a lot of people, but I think really only a few seem to really understand that hard work and determination can create opportunities for success. There's some people that say, "Hard work guarantees success." That's not the case. Hard work guarantees opportunities, but it's still left up to us to take advantage of those opportunities and I was blessed to be around as I was growing up, my dad who was the hardest worker that I've ever seen, and and also you. My dad made it clear to me how long your days were, the sacrifices you had to make, and the obvious success that you were able to enjoy. That was by no accident. There's a lot of people that don't understand that if you want to succeed in life, if it's personally, professionally, a charitable organization or whatever it might happen to be, success demands a paycheck. You have to work hard to get there. Unfortunately, in these days, so few people really seem to recognize that.

Charlie: [00:06:03] Amen to that. The next anecdote I want to get your take on is on page 52 of the book, and it's under the heading of Ego. It's the story of a Texas rancher. Now this could be a Wyoming rancher, or an Ohio rancher, I'm not trying to put the finger on a Texas rancher, but that's what the story says. "A big deal rancher from Texas was traveling through the countryside of Vermont when he spotted an old farmer plowing his field nearby the road. He stopped his car walked over and introduced himself. He then said to the old farmer, "How big of a spread have you got here, old man?" And the farmer, in a classic Vermont twang, said "About 70 acres." The rancher replied, "Do you know that in my ranch in Texas I'd get up in the morning, get in my car and drive all day and still not be at the other end of my land? What do you think of that?" The Vermont farmer thought a minute, smiled, and said "Is that so? I had a car like that once." Thoughts on that?

Jay: [00:07:15] In our eyes, we're all irreplaceable. I think that the reality, and this certainly reminded me of that, is that we are all irreplaceable parts. I mean it is easy as we look at ourselves to give ourselves the impression as we talk to ourselves that certain organizations couldn't go on without us, but the reality is many of them could and in fact some of them might even go on a little bit better. It's just unfortunate when we allow that to slow us down. Life's too short to let your own ego get in the way, but unfortunately for a lot of people they tend to do that.

Charlie: [00:07:51] Yes. Too many, and unfortunately they're the last ones to recognize that they're doing it.

Jay: [00:07:57] They're the last one standing, unfortunately.

Charlie: [00:07:59] That's right. OK. Next anecdote is on page 88, and it's a great quote. This is in the chapter on Passion. "It is critically important for success to make every goal a stretch goal. If you get there, fabulous. If you don't, you're still going to get a lot farther than you would have had you not set that lofty goal in the first place. The great showman P.T. Barnum put it this way, "If I shoot at the sun, I may hit a star." Your thoughts on that?

Jay: [00:08:32] If your goal doesn't scare you, get another one, because success demands that we stretch in every aspect of our life. I love being in meetings when someone will float out an idea and everybody looks at each other like, "Oh my gosh." You were personally around the individuals that were part of the Apollo space program. That was something that when it was announced, they could barely put a satellite in orbit let alone get someone to the moon and back safely.

Charlie: [00:09:01] Right.

Jay: [00:09:02] To me, an organization that stretches, nothing is impossible. It also teaches everyone within that organization to think outside of the box in order to make those things happen, and when you've got a team of individuals that think that way, "Anything can happen," I just wish we had more organizations like that.

Charlie: [00:09:20] Could not agree more. The final anecdote I want to throw at you, Jay, is on page 91 of the book under the chapter on Patience and Forbearance. This is, to me, a wonderful story. It goes like this: "A man had a good friend who owned a cabin deep in the woods. Occasionally his friend would allow him to stay in the cabin for a week or two to enjoy some rest and solitude. Late one night, the man heard a noise at the door. He opened the door but saw no one until he looked down on the door mat and noticed a snail. He reached down, picked up the snail and threw it back into the yard. Several years later he went back to the cabin for another visit. Once again, he heard a noise at the door. He went to the door and opened it, and looked down and saw the

same snail. The snail looked up at him and said, "What was that all about?" Now, that is patience.

Jay: [00:10:17] It is. Unfortunately, patience in these days is an endangered species. We're in a world, as you know, of instant gratification and unfortunately that teaches business owners to manage their affairs in an impatient fashion. My business approach is, "Look. You may not be my customer yet, but I'll work for as long as I have to and as hard as is needed for you to at least give me an opportunity to win your business." Unfortunately most business individuals, the owners, if they don't get someone's business immediately they write the individual off not recognizing that they might be six months, a year, or three years away from an opportunity where the window of opportunity is going to be open and they'll have a chance at landing business before that they wrote off. Patience to me is one of the most important aspects to a successful business leader, and I'm so glad that you included it into your book, because it's a reminder that everyone needs to have with regard to something that to me is a real component for a business leader who's successful.

Charlie: [00:11:19] I totally agree with that. I also learned in my own life, it's a very hard trait to develop. We all are impulsive, we all want to move faster probably than we should, so patience takes some real work but it's critical as you suggest to success.

Jay: [00:11:40] To me, when I made the decision to start my own business, I sold what I had and moved into a motel room. I thought I would be there six months. I lived in that motel room for 10 years before I was able to come out on the other end with a very successful business. Now, if you had told me that's how long I was going to live there at the beginning I don't know that I would have been tough enough to stick it out, but sometimes the goal requires patience that before you never really believed that you had. But it's there for people that really want it.

Charlie: [00:12:13] Well, finally, let me just ask you the obvious question. How did you like the book?

Jay: [00:12:18] I'll be honest with you, when I got it I thought "This will be a fun read." But as I got through it I couldn't put it down. It's an easy read, it has a lot of beneficial things. I'll tell you, if I had a sales team of 50 people I would buy a book for every single

one of them and I would ask them that they review it at least once a year, because there's things within there that they can use. It's like your golf clubs. You always have a favorite club, and you can't use your favorite club on every shot, but you can use certain clubs at certain times. I think that's what these anecdotes are. They are different clubs in a golf bag. Like, "This is a great time where I could use this club, or that club. I think that the lesson is that these quotes teach are certainly things that people can use in a variety of fashions, and I'm really glad that you put the time or made the time to put this together. My only selfish request is that you write a second book that can dovetail with this one, because it was a great read and I'd love to see it.

Charlie: [00:13:19] Well, thanks a lot. And as a matter of fact, a number of people are urging me to do another book. I didn't think I had the material, but I began digging around and I just might do it.

Jay: [00:13:29] I hope that you do, not that you ever stay still for any length of time, but I really hope you find the time to do it.

Charlie: [00:13:36] I'm gonna try, Jay. Thank you so much.

Outro: [00:13:44] Thank you for joining me for today's conversation. If you'd like to listen to more episodes, please visit CharlieMechem.com, or search for 15 Minutes with Charlie in your podcasting app. If you're enjoying the show you should check out my book, Total Anecdotal. A fun guide to help you become a better communicator. Learn more at CharlieMechem.com/book.