

# AT Banter Podcast Episode 263 - Ken Brandt

📅 Thu, 11/18 4:30PM ⏱ 53:56

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, parachute, vision, parachuting, life, thought, hear, book, adventure, skydiving, blind, plane, landing, jump, big, skydivers, ryan, rocks, rob, flying

## SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Ken Brandt

---

 Rob Mineault 00:45  
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

 Steve Barclay 00:50  
Banter, banter.

 Ryan Fleury 00:52  
This is of course the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. My name is Rob Mineault. Joining me today is Mr. Ryan Fleury. Hello.

 Rob Mineault 01:09  
Hey, there's Mr. Steve Barclay.

 Steve Barclay 01:11  
Where? Where?

 Rob Mineault 01:12  
And joining us once again this morning. Lis Malone.

 Lis Malone 01:17



LIS MALONE 01:17

Greetings from Down Under ... Canada.



Rob Mineault 01:23

Well, listen, you would not want to be under us today cuz you'd be getting really wet Yeah, we're going through some stuff.



Steve Barclay 01:35

We have an atmospheric river.



Rob Mineault 01:38

Okay, can I just pause for a second? And so what's the deal with this? Is this just me or are they just inventing new weather terms? Like heat dome? Then we got Weather Bomb and now we've got atmospheric river? What what's with all these? What's with all these new terms?



Ryan Fleury 01:59

Yeah, that's right.



Rob Mineault 02:00

Yeah. What's what is going on?



Lis Malone 02:03

My favorite is Sharknado



Rob Mineault 02:05

Yeah, we're waiting for that.



Steve Barclay 02:09

I believe as as the great Canadian band once put it, it's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine.



Rob Mineault 02:16

Wait .. REM is Canadian?

S Steve Barclay 02:19  
Isn't that to Barenaked Ladies?

R Rob Mineault 02:21  
No. Isn't it that's REM?

S Steve Barclay 02:23  
Okay. Well, nevermind. So great American band.

R Rob Mineault 02:31  
Did you hear about this thing in Egypt where there was a big storm there and then a bunch of scorpions came out of hiding, I guess and went because of all the rain kind of washed them out of their usual spots. And they went into everybody's houses. And supposedly over the weekend, there was like 530 people that had to go to the hospital because the scorpion stings. Crazy.

R Ryan Fleury 02:53  
Yeah, no, I guess at least we don't have that.

S Steve Barclay 02:56  
Yeah, I don't feel so bad now about just having a little bit of water in my basement.

R Rob Mineault 03:00  
I'll take flooding over scorpions. Yeah, we've got a pretty good Well, I wouldn't say we got a pretty good...

R Ryan Fleury 03:06  
But we do -- the city of Merritt, 7000 people had to be evacuated today. We have a pretty good we can flush our toilets and drink water from the taps.

R Rob Mineault 03:27  
So how are you Liz?

- L** Lis Malone 03:31  
I don't seem to have any weather issues at the moment. But you know, because what happens next week? Oh, I always I don't have issues. I have a subscription.
- R** Rob Mineault 03:40  
So oh, your is the area that you're in the I mean, do you guys get any sort of like bad weather every year or anything? Are you guys gonna in a tornado, tornado alley or anything? Like what's going on?
- L** Lis Malone 03:50  
I'm in North Carolina. So we get the hurricanes. Like our hockey team, the Hurricanes.
- R** Rob Mineault 03:55  
Yeah, that makes sense. Mm hmm. So when it's hurricane season?
- L** Lis Malone 04:07  
I think we actually passed the the peak of hurricane season. And it was, it was very, eerily mild. So I feel like we're going to get our asses slammed like any minute for some from something else. We're so due.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:21  
That is true. We did haven't heard of any big hurricanes this year. So yeah, I guess maybe the west coast, maybe it's our turn this year. Really weird weather.
- L** Lis Malone 04:32  
Just sharing the love.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:34  
Yeah, there you go.
- S** Steve Barclay 04:35  
Spread it around.
- R** Rob Mineault 04:36

Ah, all right. Well, hey, enough about the weather. Hey, Ryan,

R Ryan Fleury 04:43  
Rob.

R Rob Mineault 04:45  
What are we doing today?

R Ryan Fleury 04:47  
Today we are speaking with author and adventure seeker, as I will call him, Mr. Ken, Brandt.

R Rob Mineault 04:52  
You know, I'm always impressed. Ryan always knows what's going on around here.

R Ryan Fleury 04:56  
No. Not a clue.

R Rob Mineault 04:59  
Like you do the scheduling or something.

R Ryan Fleury 05:01  
That's what calendars are for.

R Rob Mineault 05:03  
No, so and he wrote a book as well, right?

S Steve Barclay 05:07  
He did. That's how you got the author part.

R Ryan Fleury 05:13  
On the ball

R

Rob Mineault 05:17

And is where I've gone wrong all these years, I did not realize that! Damn Well and how was it, Ryan like you because you've I believe you read it right?

R

Ryan Fleury 05:26

Yeah, I thought it was you know, some parts of it were kind of exciting you know, I did a bit of wishful thinking wishing I had kind of the the guts, the balls, whatever you want to call it, the courage to jump out of a perfectly good airplane and be some skydiving or, you know, be a certified diver and tempt the fates by diving underwater and not knowing where I am. Yeah, that was interesting in that respect.

R

Rob Mineault 05:52

So it sounds like he's lived quite the life.

R

Ryan Fleury 05:55

Yeah, let's I think you read it too, Lis?

L

Lis Malone 05:57

I did. I did. I think I'm with you. I'm just gonna live vicariously through Ken's stories. I'm not really into the whole being dragged between two horses thing -- that's just me. Just me personally. Maybe some people are into that. But yeah, I think I think I've outgrown that phase in my life.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:14

Yes.

R

Rob Mineault 06:16

I don't know if you guys can hear that. The my balcony is literally like a wind tunnel right now. Do you guys hear like a thud and a clank that's just my barbecue flying off the ninth floor.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:27

Isn't that the eerie sound before like something happens and like a murder scary movie or something? The bells

R Rob Mineault 06:36  
Yeah, can you hear the bells? My wind chimes are going crazy.

L Lis Malone 06:39  
Is he alone? Alone? Yeah. First the power is going to go out

R Ryan Fleury 06:47  
Then you won't be able to flush the toilet

L Lis Malone 06:49  
without soap that's way worse.

R Rob Mineault 06:52  
True, it's true actually. A couple months ago my building turned the water off and I guess I thought it was on the wrong day. And it caught me by surprise, and not be able to flush the toilet and you're not expecting it -- that's that's a bad day.

R Ryan Fleury 07:14  
Yeah, it well I didn't suck that day.

R Rob Mineault 07:17  
Yeah ha ha very funny. Yeah, you're on fire today my friend.

R Ryan Fleury 07:27  
I was just gonna say Steve's awfully quiet what's going on over there?

R Rob Mineault 07:36  
Ryan is giggly today? Oh nice.

S Steve Barclay 07:40  
He's had his Wheaties this morning I guess.

R Ryan Fleury 07:43  
His weedies? Maybe Hey, new marketing idea -- "weedies".

R Rob Mineault 07:53  
I know right? Trademark trademark copyright copyright!

S Steve Barclay 07:58  
"The edible that keeps you regular".

R Rob Mineault 08:11  
I'm cutting all of that out! Someone's gonna steal our idea! All right. Well, I listen. I'm excited to talk to Mr. Brandt and and talk a little bit about the book and some of these experiences that he's had because yeah, it sounds very interesting and crap that I wouldn't even do. And you know the Daredevil that I am?

R Ryan Fleury 09:16  
Yes.

R Rob Mineault 09:28  
We've had this skydiving discussion before Steve you would you said that you would never skydive ever?

S Steve Barclay 09:34  
No, no, no, that's not true. I have skydived twice.

R Rob Mineault 09:37  
What??

S Steve Barclay 09:38  
Yeah, yeah, no, I would. I would never bungee jump.

R Rob Mineault 09:41  
Oh that's what I'm thinking. That's right

Oh, that's what I'm thinking. That's right.

S

Steve Barclay 09:43

You see skydiving they give you a perfectly serviceable parachute. You jump out bungee jumping, that's just like simulated suicide. That's just crazy.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:53

Well, the parachute was serviceable when it boarded the plane. Correct. You don't know if it's gonna be when you leave the plane.

S

Steve Barclay 10:01

Well, that's why that's true.

L

Lis Malone 10:06

Your safety issue or a backup, what do they call it? Backup? Emergency? The "oh crap: chute.

S

Steve Barclay 10:16

That's the one. Okay. The backups, shoot the secondary, whatever you want to call it. You don't ever want to have to use it.

R

Rob Mineault 10:23

That's like a spare tire where it's like smaller and stuff and it kind of works

L

Lis Malone 10:29

It looks a little flimsy. It looks like a kite.

S

Steve Barclay 10:32

Yeah, they are. They're a fair bit smaller. And you do go down a little faster with them. So the landings a little harder. But, you know, having it be the alternative between that going splat into a pancake form on the ground I've called go with the secondary chute.

R

Rob Mineault 10:49

So let me ask you this question then. Would you bungee jump if you're wearing a parachute?

**S** Steve Barclay 10:54  
No, because there's no time to get one open.

**R** Rob Mineault 10:56  
Oh, yes. Good point. All right, fair.

**S** Steve Barclay 11:00  
Now, one of the things I discovered what you see, because I originally when I went to go parachuting, I was trying to overcome my fear of heights. And what I discovered through it was that when you're skydiving, everything visually is so out of perspective, and you're so focused on the process that you really don't have time to be afraid of heights. It's not like climbing a ladder or standing on a bridge or something like that. That then then you got plenty of time to take it in. Yeah, no, you don't like climbing ladders. You'd never get me to bungee jump. But yeah, I'll jump out of a perfectly good airplane.

**R** Rob Mineault 11:32  
Okay, well, jeez, that's a that's interesting. The human brain is interesting. You won't climb a ladder and get on your roof. But you'll skydive.

**S** Steve Barclay 11:40  
No, I have climbed ladders and I have got on roofs. I just really really really didn't like it.

**R** Rob Mineault 11:46  
Right.

**R** Ryan Fleury 11:48  
It's like you eating broccoli. Rob.

**S** Steve Barclay 11:55  
Right. That's the idea. I mean, that's one of the pillars of our foundation.

**L** Lis Malone 11:59  
like eating Broccoli Rob or eating broccoli, Rob?

R Ryan Fleury 12:04  
Broccoli, Rob

L Lis Malone 12:06  
Okay, got it.

S Steve Barclay 12:07  
Although I never did because I think pretty awful.

R Rob Mineault 12:10  
What is what is brought me Rob anyways?

L Lis Malone 12:14  
It's disgusting. It's like bitter, bitter

S Steve Barclay 12:16  
Rob made out of broccoli.

R Rob Mineault 12:22  
Hey, Ryan.

R Ryan Fleury 12:23  
Rob.

R Rob Mineault 12:24  
I hear a rumor. What's the rumor now? People can call a number and get hold of us.

R Ryan Fleury 12:32  
They can. If they have a comment or want to suggest a topic or a guest for the show. They can give us a call toll free at 1 844 996 4282

Call toll free at 1-844-990-4202.

**R** Rob Mineault 12:43  
Call us up.

**S** Steve Barclay 12:44  
And how long have we had this phone number now?

**R** Ryan Fleury 12:47  
Awhile.

**S** Steve Barclay 12:48  
And how many calls we had on it? You don't want to know.

**R** Ryan Fleury 12:54  
Lots. Yeah, we got lots. Yeah.

**S** Steve Barclay 12:57  
How many non spam calls have you had on?

**R** Ryan Fleury 13:00  
Well, define spam.

**S** Steve Barclay 13:03  
Anybody I don't want to talk to you.

**R** Ryan Fleury 13:07  
Joining us now is Ken Brandt. Alright Ken, thanks so much for taking some time to join us. I am Ryan.  
Joining me in the room is Lis Malone, Steve Barclay and Rob Mineault.

**K** Ken Brandt 13:19

Very nice to meet everybody.

**S** Steve Barclay 13:21

And we'll all talk at once just to confuse you.

**R** Rob Mineault 13:29

Well, listen, why don't we start out and just give us a little bit of background on yourself and maybe a little bit of information to about your eye condition.

**K** Ken Brandt 13:39

My name is Ken Brandt as you just said, I'm originally from America from most of my life in New York City. As you can probably tell from my accent, but since 2006, my wife and I have been living in Melbourne, Australia. We love we love being Americans and Australians and we if it wasn't for the pandemic, we'd be traveling regularly back and forth and visiting our friends and family in the US but for a couple years we've just been hanging out in Australia. My eye condition is I've had a sort of a roller coaster of vision throughout my life I was always born premature so I've had poor vision. Most of my life I just have less rods and cones in my eyes that's as happens with many premature babies but so always had poor vision very, very near sighted. But it's been a roller coaster I've had different ups and downs. I've had to cataract cataract operation in each eye detach right now operation in each eye to other operations. So I'm I'm at about 20/80 in my good eye and 21/60 and my other eye. Thanks to medical science, technology and operations and everything, I'm very, very, very grateful for I was legally blind for many years. So I've I've had the ups and downs. So that's my, my very quick summary and where my vision is.

**R** Rob Mineault 15:20

So the name of the book that you wrote is called "Positive Vision: Enjoying the Adventures and Advantages of Poor Eyesight". What prompted you to write the book?

**K** Ken Brandt 15:29

I had avoided discussion, any and all discussions about my vision for most of my life, because I thought it would, people would feel bad for me or try to help me when, in cases when I didn't need a hand, as I got to working age, I thought it would have a negative impact on my career. So I didn't want to bring it up and discuss it. So I avoided the whole topic. And then I retired. So I've had had a very good career in IT, and cybersecurity and enjoyed a lot of things. And in the US, and Europe, and Australia, and I thought, I have a lot of stories that people really liked hearing over beers and coffee and stuff. And many of them had to do with vision and poor vision and sort of getting into situations because of poor vision. And I say, well, you know, maybe I should just write them all down. And so I did, and it's worked out in a really sort of exciting and personally rewarding way. I've had a lot of positive feedback from two groups of people, one, you know, the vast majority of people who can see clearly and see fine, you know, they just like it for the adventures, and they anecdotes and the humor. And then a lot of people with poor vision, or people who are some people who are completely blind, they like it, because, you know, they just find it interesting. And I've gotten a lot of nice emails and stuff and book reviews about it being inspiring. So I think it's

helping people as well as you know, making people laugh and enjoy it. So I'm glad I wrote the book. Because, you know, now I end up talking about vision all the time, because I get the question, you just, you know, it often, you know, what, what is your vision anyway? So now, a bunch of people that I know realize I could see much less than they thought and you know, you just brings up a lot of discussion, some people I know. Turns out, they can see much less than I realized, because one of the things that happens when you do a poor vision is you don't really, it's harder to tell whether anybody else has good or bad vision. Now, a couple of my friends had glass eyes, and I didn't know I would never have none unless they told me you know, and apparently everybody else knew. So things like that.

S

Steve Barclay 18:05

I'm curious, you mentioned the advantages of low vision. What what do you view as the advantages?

K

Ken Brandt 18:13

Well, I think that there's a million advantages, you know, you get, you know, a list a few and then I'll tell you some, some stories about them. If if you would like fire away, thank you have you not think your other senses get better, but you pay much more attention to them and get more benefit out of them? I think you have better balance. I think you have better creativity and imagination, I think you can actually live longer. I think you're in this this last one is or not last one. This next one is a little bit controversial. Some people disagree with it, I think you have better hand eye coordination. And I think the world is a more beautiful place if you have a poor vision now for giving some examples of that last one. So if two people one with really good vision and one with poor vision, are standing next to each other, and they're looking at similar things, say they're looking at beautiful mountains or valleys, or rivers or oceans or beaches or forests, or they're looking at beautiful manmade things, cities, towns, artworks, giant statues, you know, or they're looking at people, you know, of all of those cases. What a person with a really good vision might not just be seeing the nice stuff. They might be saying, oh, wait a minute. There's a little graffiti over here. Ah, there's a little litter over there. Oh, wait a minute. There's a little rust over here. Oh, wait a minute, that person has a couple of scars and maybe some wrinkles? Well, yeah, people like, like me with poor vision, they might not notice any of that stuff. For us, the world is a more beautiful place.

S

Steve Barclay 20:16

That's an interesting take. So basically, you're constantly in soft focus.

K

Ken Brandt 20:20

it always seems confused, because people like ask how your, your vision varies from theirs. And and it's, it's very difficult to describe because you've you've never had vision like there's so you don't you're not really, I'm never really sure how to even begin to discuss it. Yeah, I think the the measurement things, you know, make a big difference, you know, when you can, when you explain to people what 20/80 or 21/60 means. But it you know, it's a tough thing, because every everybody's vision is different. Some people see in our, like, small parts of of this, of the scope of what they could be looking at that light perception, various color perception very so for me, personally, it's just very nearsighted. Now, but it varies for everybody.

L Lis Malone 21:17

So I'm curious to find out what your opinions are, when it comes to what the biggest misconceptions are. For those of us who live in blindness, or low vision.

K Ken Brandt 21:28

I think, sadly, the biggest things, our biggest thing is that people are not capable of many of the jobs that they can do. So they're not even considered not even interviewed. I think the number of low vision of blind people who are unemployed or or underemployed is a staggeringly high percentage, the more that can be done to change that perception. And then some of that switch, you know, and you guys are experts in history, some of that is just technologies is tremendously different than 5,10,20 years ago. So that's a big help. But a bigger thing is, a lot of companies wouldn't even it just wouldn't occur to them to interview somebody with really low vision or being completely blind. And the more that can change, the more lives of blind and low vision people can really significantly change.

R Rob Mineault 22:36

Yeah, it's interesting that you say that, and I feel like low vision is, is sort of a, it's sort of unique to it has its own unique set of problems, because it's sort of this in between area between, you know, sight, and blindness. And not I think, not a lot of members of the general public, really recognize the idea that, that blindness, and low vision, like it's all a gradient, and, and like you said before, it is very different based on, you know, what your condition is, etc. I mean, there's just, there's tons and tons of different conditions. And so it's not just, you can either see, or you have a white cane, and you can't, and that can really play into the the idea of like, you know, even having an invisible, invisible disability, because, you know, people will say, Well, you don't look blind, and so they don't, necessarily will recognize the fact that you might need adaptations or or need some sort of help, you know, technology wise, based on your vision, so it can it can really be a tricky balance to, to maintain. Did you come across that, like, in your career and sort of as you were growing up?

K Ken Brandt 23:54

Yes. So I agree completely. I mean, you know, starting with, you know, you get to the age where you cannot get a driver's license. I mean, it's very good for society. It's very, very good. It's saved, you know, who knows how many 1000s of lives that I cannot have a driver's license. But it changes things you know, you're limited in in, in where you can live and how you can get around and I would never bring up before a job interview that I didn't have a driver's license, I couldn't get one but it would come up sometimes afterwards and and it's I would be asked to, you know, go here rent the car drive this place, and I'd say well, I can't do that. I offered to resign basically on the spot if that was an issue. And they said, no, no, no, we will do a work around that. We can figure it all out.

L Lis Malone 25:01

So you won't be doing any deliveries for Amazon anytime soon.

...

K

Ken Brandt 25:03

For many reasons. I, I worked very hard in in it and cybersecurity where you'd walk around talking to people, and then you'd be the computer screen. And very thankfully for me, I can log large monitors and, and I can work with them so that that's work works great for me.

L

Lis Malone 25:32

Well, Ken, you and I are very similar in that I am legally blind, I have RP. So once I straddled that, I still straddled that line of being in two worlds. But there isn't any way I'm going to cross back into the non legally blind category. But it that has always been a challenge. What do you disclose at work? How long can you hide it? You want to modify your behavior. So it doesn't become apparent that there's something different about you in the way you're performing your duties. And for me, it became a challenge because I had to make that decision because I started to risk my own safety. So then I kind of had to say, look, okay, I have to out myself completely. But it's a very difficult emotional and fiscal decision to make.

K

Ken Brandt 26:29

Yeah, exactly. And it's, it's not. And that's exactly why I didn't write my book till it didn't even occur to me to write my book until after I retired. You know, it just wouldn't have done it while I was working. Now, that's why so you know, the, the more it can help other people, the better and I agree with everything you just said completely.

L

Lis Malone 26:58

I still think I can be an Amazon driver, if once I get the self driving cars, but you know...

K

Ken Brandt 27:02

Self driving cars, Nirvana technology!

L

Lis Malone 27:08

I can't wait, I can't wait. I'm on the edge of my seat for that.

K

Ken Brandt 27:12

Oh, yeah. A couple of weeks ago, I was in a discussion with Ben Felton, I don't know whether you ever heard of, but he is a blind, completely blind guy, right? 100% blind, he holds the world motorcycle blind speed record, I didn't even know they kept track of these things. So he goes out in the salt flats of Australia. And he goes 100 Now you know what, I could have this mixed up, it's a minimum, it's like 170 miles per hour, you know, his work. And to make sure it's fair, and that people with, you know, as you as one of you guys said that there's all gradients of blindness. So to make sure the record is fair, they spray paint the glass front of the motorcycle helmet, completely black. So So there's, there's no difference

between any of the contenders. And I mean, it's just tremendous. He was sighted until he was in his teens or something. And any, he was just always a motorcycle guy. And he didn't see any reason to stop when he became blind.

R

Rob Mineault 28:21

So, um, so I want to, I want to step back a little bit and talk about, because the book is really, really positive. And you know, it's really, you know, full of these really joyful anecdotes. And you can just tell by reading it, that you do just naturally have a very positive outlook and attitude. Which, you know, given that, given that, you know, you you sort of battled low vision growing up, where do you where do you sort of attribute that that positive attitude coming from and for that matter, your sense of adventure?

K

Ken Brandt 28:57

I would answer that. That is two separate questions, you know, where, where do I get my positive attitude? I think, you know, a lot of that's just, you know, some of it's how you're born, I think, you know, some people just have a more positive glass half full kind of outlook all the time, and some people don't, and almost doesn't matter what happens. There have been some interesting studies of, of people's attitude towards their life where they, they do surveys and stuff, and then some people have, they either hit lottery, you know, they get millions of dollars, or they have a horrible, horrible event happened, they're in an accident, and they and they become paralyzed or they lose half their body's movement or something. And it makes a big difference in their attitude and positivity for about six months. And then after that, it goes back to whatever it was. You know, people adjust, and they they go back to their norm. So I think there's a lot to, you know how you are now how does that happen? Is it? Is it genetic? It is, is it how you were brought up in your family? You know, how you were raised? I don't know. But I think people have sort of a set amount of that. I don't know how much of that you can change. It's, I think it's more internal than external. In terms of why am I adventurous? I actually hadn't thought about that question at all until I was asked to ask it while I was writing a book. And I think there's three possible reasons. One, maybe just genetics, and I had some relatives who were you know, had gotten medals in, in my father got a medal in the Marines, my grandfather got a medal in the army, my great grandmother traveled to, from Ireland to to Canada, and then to the US when she was 13. And ran away from the situation she was in, and just did all kinds of exciting brave things. She married some a guy, and they went from Boston to Yellowstone National Park by horseback. So there's something to that probably in my genetics. I think also, you have the, you know, I was brought up positive and to just go for it. That was my, my upbringing. You know, don't let anything stop you. There's no reason. Low vision should never be a problem. I was never, ever in a discussion with with my parents, were about any limitations related to low vision. And third, I think my theory is, if you have low vision, you're used to being old. You don't really know what you're getting into, because you can't see it. But you go for it anyway. So to some degree, you're always doing that you're walking into a room, you know what you're going out for a jog and doing something and you don't exactly see it as well as everybody else. So you're going to be bold? Well, if you do that, every day of your life over and over again, it's only a tiny additional step to be brave, where you know what the adventure or danger or excitement you're about to walk into and you go anyway. So those three things I think, have led me to be more adventurous than I like adventures.

R

Ryan Fleury 32:57

Hear that, Steve, you can still go bungee jumping. It's just a little step away.

S

Steve Barclay 33:01

Nope.

K

Ken Brandt 33:03

Exactly. Although that would not be such a great idea if you had a detached retina because I thought about that. I didn't want to do it. Yeah, point one of the adventures that that is somewhat similar to bungee jumping. I, when I was in college, I went to school in university at American University. I thought it might be fun to try parachuting. And the reason I thought that was I really like to go, I like going fast. I like running. So sprinting and in most places and open fields and stuff. All right, no problem. Bicycling. I liked bicycling, but I not that I'm a great bicyclist, but I can easily bicycle faster than I can see the potholes or dips coming up. So that's, you know, not really a great sport for me. And then driving cars we talked about before, you know, it's good for society that I drive a car. But parachuting, I thought, you're in the air, you're, you're, you're going really fast. It looks cool on TV and movies. You know, you're not gonna bump into anything. It's just air and you're really, really literally flying along. So I thought, all right, got two buddies together. And we went to Downsville Maryland. That's the real name of the place, Downsville, Maryland for parachute training. And this was real training. So it wasn't getting attached to somebody who knew what they were doing where they would lead everything. They would jump out of the plane, you're strapped to them, they would handle the parachute they would handle the landing and you are along for the ride. That's probably very, very cool. But that's not we were doing we were learning how to do everything ourselves. I probably should have thought about beforehand, but which didn't occur to me for some reason was I should have thought a little bit more about whether we When I was in the air, could I see the spot I was supposed to be landing it. But I didn't think about that. So we go to the training. And the training was really fun, you jump off boxes, you learn how to land, you know, you jump up very high things and you practice landing which is good, you learn all kinds of stuff. You know, if you're bad to land in a forest, cross your legs, you know, don't do that. So there's all kinds of things that you learn. And then we get in, we we get ready and we get in this little tiny plane. It's a very small plane, you can only fit the pilot who has a seat and the instructor and maybe three skydivers skydiver want to be trainees like me. So we get, we go through the plane into the get into the plane. And we are going through this opening, which is shaped like a door, but there's no actual door, it's just an opening, it's a little tiny plane with this opening on the side. And I'm sitting as we take off and, and fly around. I'm sitting inches away from this opening, which I have definitely not done before or since that those experiences where you know, the plane is flying. And you're planning on jumping out after a while, but the entire takeoff and flying around, you're really hoping you don't fall out because you're sitting right next to this space. But then it's my turn, we get over the right place. And you have to, it's not like in TV and movies where you just jump out. And instead we had to crawl out. And there are there's a space between the wings and the wheels of the plane. So you crawl out into that space. So your arms are holding on to this metal bar, just under the wings. And your feet are standing on a metal bar just over the wheel. You're holding on for dear life, because the wind is blowing, the engine is rolling the plane is flying and you're outside the plane. Very excited. So then the instructor yells, he can't tell what he's saying. But he yells to jump. So what else would you be saying? So then after holding on for with all your mind, you jump back and up. You, Man oh, and I should also mention this the first three times you jump. You don't have to pull your own ripcord, you're attached by this line. So it goes automatically, which is really good. Because you're really thinking about a lot of things the first couple of times, oh, jump. And even though you're connected, the plane is really, you know, it's flying. It's going fast. It's very far away before anything happens. And you start wondering, Well wait a minute, when is my parachute going to open, what's going on? And you start thinking about the backup parachute. All this goes through your mind very quickly. And you don't want to open your backup parachute. If there's any chance your main parachute opens, because they'll get tangled up and you're going to crash and it'll

be a big disaster. So I wait long enough. Finally, my parachute opens. And I'm telling you, it feels great. There's it's one of the best feelings in life when your parachute does open. So then I float down. And I realize well wait a minute, where am I supposed to land and I can't really tell exactly where I'm supposed to land. And so I do it by deduction and every place around looked like either there was one Highway. Okay, that wasn't it. And there were a whole bunch of fields, all of which were had crops in. So I thought all right. The one exception was this one brown field. So I'll aim for that. That's probably where we're supposed to land it closer, get lower. I could see All right, wait a minute. Yeah, that's it. That's where there's another plane down there. And it's get closer still. And I can see a big circle of people. Alright, that's it. That's definitely aim for the circle of people. And I get much, much closer and I could see the Frisbee sized target. That's what the aim is for and parachuting is physically as close as possible. So I come in, and I and I'm staring pretty well and judging the wind and everything. And I came pretty close. I didn't hit it, but I came pretty close. And thought, Alright, that's great. I can do this. Again, the vast majority of trainees once and out they didn't want to do it again. But I thought this is just a really great sport. So I had the option of either using a parachute that somebody else had packed or you could pack your own parachute. So I said, Well, you know, I love this sport. I'm going to do it again. I want to keep doing it. I want if you're if I'm going to take my life in your hands, I want to be fully responsible. So I said I'll pack my own parachute. So they explained how to do it. So you go out into the field is spread it out. And then because it was windy, you have to put rocks on it to hold it down into place. And then you fold it up the way they directed, throwing each of the rock all the rocks out as easily. So I think I'm doing just a great job. finished doing that go up on the plane a second time. Same thing. Next, the opening, same thing crawling out, same thing jumping out. This time, I was a little less nervous, but still very, very excited. And then my parachute opens. And it turns out, I've missed a ton of rocks that I should have seen when I was taking them off the parachute. Bam, bam, bam, bam, all these rocks are falling on my head and shoulders back. They had no really big ones, but many many small ones. And luckily, you wear a helmet when your parachute so I didn't get hurt at all. But it was a little embarrassing. And then I looked down, I couldn't see anybody. So I assume nobody got hit by any rocks. And I never heard any stories about that afterwards. So I learned that learned that lesson there and and did a much better job the third time I did it. Then my doctor told me that since I had a detached retina in each eye, that parachuting was really a bad idea because it a big knock to the head, which could happen in parachuting. I think about the rocks. If you get a big knock to the head, you could detach the retina again, but blind in one or either I so I reluctantly gave up parachuting in and I had, I was actually the captain of my university Parachute Team. So I had to give up the captaincy and parachuting. I stayed in touch with people for a long time. And I still recommend to anybody who doesn't have to worry about a detached retina, they should definitely try parachuting. So that that's sort of an adventure. And I think, by my giving up parachuting, which I definitely would have continued, that could possibly have led to me having a longer life. So there are certain activities that I would be inclined to have done where I said to myself, well, I either said to myself, or I was just limited by suggestions from my doctors. You know, you shouldn't do this. So I think I could be living longer because I didn't stick with skydiving.

R

Rob Mineault 42:43

Hey, so I have a quick question about that, though. So why don't why did they tell you to cross your legs if you're landing in a forest?

K

Ken Brandt 42:49

Well imagine if there's a you know, branches or no, and you get in between your legs. That would that would be really bad.

R

Rob Mineault 42:58

Right. Good point. Okay, that makes a lot of sense. Good. Good tip. That is a good pro life tip.

K

Ken Brandt 43:05

Yeah, well, and then generally not when you're landing in a you know, in a forest but it's fun is it is I've never had to do this but learning how to land correctly while parachuting is also the kind of thing if you ever had the jump out of you know, exposure on the third floor of a building and there's a fire and actually jumped out if you land correctly the way you learned in parachuting you know you might break some stuff but you're going to live you know you have a much better chance if you if you know how to land correctly.

S

Steve Barclay 43:43

I went through very much the same experience as you did for for skydiving went through the training and everything. Did it twice. My wife told me I had to stop after that. But with respect to the landings while I was doing my second jump there were was a group of competitive skydivers who were who were landing and this one guy came Boogie and down and he's doing all these loops and spins and stuff as he's coming down. He's getting really fancy with his parachute. And when he came close to the ground, he realized he was off his mark and he made a major adjustment and ended up landing square in a ditch so you you did better than the competitive guys.

K

Ken Brandt 44:30

You know, who knows how many dozens of other first timers and some people paid attention to training and sadly a few people didn't and you know, one woman got in a terrible accident she she power lines and a highway. It was terrible. And she didn't have health insurance. We all took up a collection for but it was you know, I'm sure it wasn't enough.

L

Lis Malone 44:57

Yeah, that that would have been me. minus the people donating and helping to pay for my medical care. But other than that, that would totally be me. If you don't mind me asking, in your book, can you seem to sprinkle jokes about vision and eyes throughout throughout your book? So was humor like a really big part of your life? And I guess your persona and your personality to help you in your own dealings with low vision?

K

Ken Brandt 45:28

Yes, I think that if you can't laugh yourself, your events around you, you're you're just missing a big part of life, you know, seeing you know, you get into stupid situations you make new make it miss judgments based on on looking at something with low vision, and it turns out to be something else. From simple things like it think it your cat or dog is sitting there. And it turns out, it's, you know, it's a sweatshirt or

sweater or something, you know it too. You know, just not recognizing people sometimes thinking somebody is somebody else, they don't have all of those things you can you know, you could get upset about that, or, or you could just think it's funny.

L

Lis Malone 46:14

Well, I think it's just so clear from after reading this book that can you are absolutely a glass half full kind of guy. And it's, it's very refreshing your perspective, it's definitely a contagious in a good way kind of attitude. No, no, you don't want to use that word in the time of COVID. But I think that the way you approach your own vision barriers, and how you've seemed to overcome all of them is extremely inspiring.

K

Ken Brandt 46:47

Thank you very much. I I hope your your listeners agree and want to pick up a copy.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:53

Yeah, and it's definitely a recommended reading. There was a passage in there that I'm not gonna give a spoiler to but I have to say, I was laying in bed reading it, and I just about peed myself. It was it was hilarious. And you did it twice. So I highly recommend people read the book.

K

Ken Brandt 47:16

Thanks very much. Yeah, it's it's available now. Just recently, it's it's become an audiobook I narrated the book, I narrated 98% of the book. And the other 2% was the person who wrote the foreword narrated the foreword, there's a funny or inspiring quote at the start of each chapter, and one person narrated all of those. And there's a joke or several jokes at the end of each chapter, all related, all the quotes and the jokes are related to eyesight and vision, at the end of each chapter in a different person who's actually a professional actor, and comedian, narrating. So it was a fun experience doing the narration. And it's available now. And not just as a hardcover, paperback and ebook, but it's available as an audiobook at any place that sells any any books or audio books or ebooks.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:11

Okay, that people want to find out more information about you, where can they find you?

K

Ken Brandt 48:16

They can find me on kenbrandt.com. And that also has links to social media. I'd be happy to hear from anybody on LinkedIn or Facebook, or Twitter. Or if they want to, if they're a Good Reads person, I'm on Good Reads also. So any of those would be fun. And I love hearing from people. So happy to respond anybody.



R

Ryan Fleury 48:46

Great. Well, we appreciate you taking the time to join us.

K

Ken Brandt 48:49

Thank you. And you know, thank you. Thank you, Liz and Steve, thanks everybody. It's been really great.

R

Rob Mineault 48:55

Man, well, that is one positive fellow.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:59

Yeah, I don't really know where you kind of get that positivity from,

R

Rob Mineault 49:05

You know, you we hear this, we hear that stories like this over and over again. And I really do believe that a lot of it comes from childhood.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:13

While that's where information and education are so powerful, right? You know, it's so easy for parents of a blind or partially sighted child to be searching for information to find others who are in similar situations. What is my son or daughter going to be capable of? You know, will they what kind of future are they going to have? So yeah, absolutely. You know, attitude is everything. And, you know, CNIB a great resource, Blind Beginnings, of course, podcasts like our own. There's a lot of resources out there for people so push them out the door. Let them experience the world.

R

Rob Mineault 49:53

Yeah, that's right. I think that you know, and you know, I'm not saying that I would be any different. I think that my instinct would be, it'd be just shelter or To protect, and that's not always the right. Way to go. Sometimes, yeah, you do need to let them go and try something and fall down and pick themselves up. And you know, that that really, I think is, in fact, you know, in terms of a lot of the people that we've talked to, that's what builds their their sense of adventure, or there's their sense of confidence later in life, and it's it's really important. And I think that that the sense that I get is that's sort of how can was brought up as well. So yeah, I think that that's this is kind of what happens, but really interesting guy. It books great. You know, we can we'll we'll link that in the show notes if for anyone who's interested in Yeah.

R

Ryan Fleury 50:50

And if you have any interest in doing some Adventure seeking, whether it be skydiving or deep sea diving, or bungee jumping. or even just starting small like I did. and do a zip line. Go for it.

or bungee jumping, or even just staring straight ahead, and do a zip line. So for us.

R Rob Mineault 51:07  
When did you do a zip line?

R Ryan Fleury 51:08  
My wife and I did a Zipline in Vegas.

R Rob Mineault 51:10  
Really?

R Ryan Fleury 51:11  
Yeah. Yeah. It's pretty cool. Yeah, bad. Yeah. Stepping off a platform and zooming through the air and not being able to see what's around you. But again, that's, I guess that's part of the thrill of it. Right? You have no idea when the end is coming. You have no idea how long line is? You just don't know until you get?

R Rob Mineault 51:32  
Oh, it'd be freaky to do that.

R Ryan Fleury 51:35  
Just step off the platform and away you go.

R Rob Mineault 51:38  
Well, who knew? See right, right. Write your book.

R Ryan Fleury 51:42  
Write my book. My memoirs.

R Rob Mineault 51:45  
Yeah, I can't wait for your that's gonna be --

R Ryan Fleury 51:50  
It'll be a disaster.

R Rob Mineault 51:55  
So Hey, Ryan.

R Ryan Fleury 51:57  
Rob.

R Rob Mineault 51:59  
Where can people find us?

R Ryan Fleury 52:00  
They can find us online at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com)

R Rob Mineault 52:04  
Hey, they can also drop us an email if they so desire [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com)

R Ryan Fleury 52:10  
And if they have a comment or suggestion for the show, they can give us a call toll free at 1844-996-4282, leave us your name and message. And if you give us your permission, we may play it on an upcoming episode.

R Rob Mineault 52:24  
You never know. They can also find us on all the social media platforms as well Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

R Ryan Fleury 52:34  
Yay. We're everywhere.

R Rob Mineault 52:38  
And yeah, and soon to be will be in the Metaverse, you can come use your virtual reality headset and

come talk to us in the in the virtual guitar dungeon. Stupid, stupid idea.

 Ryan Fleury 52:56  
We shall see what happens.

 Rob Mineault 52:57  
Yeah, well. Yeah. Anyways, I don't want to go down the rabbit hole. Alright, let's get out of here. Big thanks, of course to Ken Brandt for joining us. And yeah, we will see everybody next week.