

## **Book Journeys Author Interview - July 12, 2012**

**Dr. Angela Lauria with Dr. Mark William Cochran, Holistic Health Doctor, Chiropractor and author of *Oby's Wisdom! A Caveman's Simple Guide to Health and Well-being***

*"The most powerful things that we have available to us for healing and health and well-being are the things that have already been given to us by nature." ~Dr. Mark William Cochran*

### **Angela:**

Well, hello everybody and welcome to another edition of Book Journeys Radio. I am your host, Angela Lauria from Journey Grrl Publishing, and each week on the show, we talk to an author about their experience – writing and publishing and promoting their first book. I am super excited today. We have Dr. Mark William Cochran, who is a good friend of mine, a wonderful author and also professionally trained as a chiropractor, right?

### **Mark:**

That's correct.

### **Angela:**

Do you still practice as a chiropractor?

### **Mark:**

Yes, I do.

### **Angela:**

Excellent! Mark's book is called *Oby's Wisdom! A Caveman's Simple Guide to Health and Well-being*. I spent a little bit of time with you and I know you don't remind me at all of a caveman. Why don't you tell us a little bit about the book and the title?

### **Mark:**

Well, first off, I'll say a little bit about my own background and that's that I suffered for many years - most of my adult life, in fact... It was a chronic debilitating inflammatory arthritis to the point where it ended my first career as an officer in the US Marine Corps. It continued to progressively get worse, you know, over the course of the number of years to the point where I actually became virtually crippled. And I was able to turn that around to the point where I became a triathlete and a marathon runner. It was quite a journey, many years long. What I learned on that journey is that the most powerful things that we have available to us for healing and health and well-being are the things that have already been given to us by nature. Things that are really the most simple.

Medical science is useful and there are good things that have come out of that but they are not the most important, not the foundational, not the most powerful thing we have available to us. Once I realized that, I decided I needed to get that word out. Then I wrote the book and I used the caveman as a metaphor to illustrate my points because, you know, the prehistoric people, they

didn't have complex health care systems and things like that. What they had available to them was that which nature provided and the simplicity of that which nature provided. That's why I decided to write the book and used the cave dwellers as an illustration of that point.

**Angela:**

Interesting! I said the name of your book really quickly is Oby's Wisdom. But I should spell that for people – it's O, B as in boy, Y, S as in Sam, Wisdom – O-B-Y-S-Wisdom.com, if you want to take a look at that. Where did the word "Oby" come from? Who's Oby?

**Mark:**

Personally it's the main character that I weaved throughout the book and his official name, his full name is Obsidian J. Stone. It's just kind of a play on words [Angela chuckles]. Obsidian was the stone that, you know, prehistoric people used to make stone tools, and Oby is his nickname, of course. I used Oby and his wife, Fern and their son, Scooter and some of his friends – you know, I weaved them throughout the book to illustrate the points that I'm making.

**Angela:**

Why that approach? That's kind of an interesting and creative approach; I'm picturing the Flintstones teaching me about health and well-being. Why have that element and not just write up recommendations?

**Mark:**

Well, actually that was one of the evolutions that happened while I was writing my book. When I first started writing the book, and this is quite a number of years ago, I was going to be doing just what you've said, just a list of recommendations. I realized in that process that I was writing a really informative book but a very boring book. So I decided that I needed to make it a little bit more interesting, a little bit more fun and that's when I came up with the caveman concept. My intent has been to make a simple, easily read, entertaining book that's still addressing pretty thought-provoking concepts.

**Angela:**

I can also see that attracting people who may not want to pick up a book that has maybe some similar information about health and well-being and nutrition. Just 'cause it does seem a little lighter and more maybe... No, I'm sorry, I want to say, accessible. They're not going to be preached to.

**Mark:**

No. Personally, it's definitely not going to be a preachy book at all.

**Angela:**

When people come to me – when I mostly talk to people, they are really excited about writing a book and they have this idea of what the end product is going to be like. And then as they're working on it, obstacles come up – it might be different ideas, or they started to feel that their

book is boring, or somebody takes a look at the chapters and says, "You should do something fun, like add cavemen," and that sends them into some sort of, I don't know, anaphylaxis or something; they can't quite get out of their own way. Then the project stalls, and then they started beating themselves up because they can't finish the project.

One of my goals with this radio show and with the work that I do is to help people finish-- to have these great ideas and a lot of times, they don't finish the process because of those obstacles. Did that happen for you at all? Did you have obstacles between when you came up with the idea for your book and when you actually worry about the whole bit in your hands?

**Mark:**

Yes, of course. The process of being in publishing and marketing the book is just a gigantic process that takes so much time and dedication. Of course, anytime you're engaged in the process like that, there are going to be obstacles, speed bumps, things like that. Yeah, that did happen for me.

I think the most important thing that I did was at the very beginning, as it came very clear on exactly what I wanted to accomplish by writing the book, in getting the book out there-- the thing that I was clear on my vision was that I wanted people to understand that the most important, most powerful, most foundational aspects of health that we must all incorporate into our approach to health is that simplicity is the most important thing. Nature-- what nature has to offer is the most important thing.

There has been a lot written about getting back to natural things and things like that. It's been written as a -- for the most part, it's been written as something that is a different approach to conventional medicine. I didn't want to put up something after -- that said conventional medicine is bad, natural medicine is good. You have to leave one behind and adopt the other. What I wanted to make sure people understood is that concepts I have in my book -- for the most important foundation, whether you follow natural medicine, whether you follow conventional medicine, or whether you have some sort of combination of the two-- these are likely the most important concepts people have to know about their health. That simplicity is what drove me -- that was my vision, making it simple for people because healthcare today is extremely complex. It's frustrating...

**Angela:**

Anything but simple, I can tell you that [*chuckles*].

**Mark:**

Yeah. That vision stayed clear even though, you know, I changed the books, I ran into roadblocks, things like that. Being able to stay clear on my vision is what allowed me to overcome all those obstacles.

**Angela:**

That's great advice. Now, we have your sense of your vision, what was your "why" behind that? What was the goal you were driving towards?

**Mark:**

Again, like what I've said in my vision, I wanted to make it simple for people because I spent a lot of years-- in my upbringing, well into my adult life, the only thing I knew about was conventional medicine and It's really complicated – conventional medicine is. Our healthcare system today is extremely complicated...

**Angela:**

Were you thinking I'm going to write this book and other people that are in a similar—maybe not with arthritis or something, but in a similarly difficult place with their health will read this and take that advice away and that will be the whole relationship? Or were you trying to build a business or get clients? Or, I don't know, become a speaker? Like did you have some other "why?" or some other goal for writing a book?

**Mark:**

Well, my main "why" was to get the information out there to as many people as possible, because whether somebody is going through a serious disease like I was, or whether somebody is already very healthy and is just confused about what comprises a healthy diet or is confused about what they should do as far as exercises because that world is complex too.

The book is for healthy people as well as unhealthy people who are dealing with complexity, or confused who don't know what to do. So it's not for just sick people, it's also for people who are overwhelmed by complexity, to make things simple for them. That's my why, just a simple why.

**Angela:**

Sounds like you're really focused on helping people and not necessarily making a full time career as an author. Or was that also one of your goals?

**Mark:**

Yeah. That's also a goal. I mean, you know, I'm in a private practice as a... you know – I like to call myself as a holistic health doctor rather than as a chiropractor because people don't really understand.

When you say chiropractor, a lot of people have an image on their mind but that image doesn't really depict me accurately, so I called myself as a holistic health doctor. And, there are lots of chiropractors who aren't holistic chiropractors. But, you know, I am in a private practice as a holistic health doctor and I intend to remain in private practice, so I am part time. But I definitely want to have a career as an author and a speaker. And I had already done professionally speaking within my profession, within my own profession even before I started writing, you know,

so I am already a speaker. That's really an important thing for any author to be able to do is speak, I mean, writing and speaking go together hand in hand.

**Angela:**

Yeah, for sure.

So you have this idea—sounds like picking the topic was pretty easy for you. You had a pretty compelling story and experience; you knew what you wanted to write. Had some obstacles come up in writing them, but it sounds like you're very clear about your vision, and that was part of how you got to having a finished manuscript. But let's just talk a little bit about – since your goal was really to get this information out to as many people as you could help, I'm sure that's still your goal. Let's talk about the promotional side. I knew you had a really unique publishing story; I want to make sure we talk about that. But let's start with an agent. Did you have an agent? Did you plan on writing a proposal and going the traditional publishing route? Where were you at the beginning of your publishing career journey?

**Mark:**

You know, I didn't know anything about the publishing world, and I ended up learning an awful lot about the publishing world. But you know, early on, I just thought of myself going the traditional route, getting published by the traditional publisher and being in bookstores and things like that. Yeah, I learned an awful lot about how to...

**Angela:**

Did you start with writing the book or did you start with writing the proposal? How did you handle that?

**Mark:**

I had started by writing the book and I didn't have a finished book when I started trying to find a publisher and an agent. But I did have enough of the book and a clear enough vision about the book that I was able to put together a pretty good proposal. One of the things I found is that every publishing company and every agent have a different format for what they want the proposal to look like...

**Angela:**

*[chuckles]* It's a good thing to know going in, a lot of people are surprised by that so I think that's, you know, good forewarning for people that – especially that are trying to go the traditional route which a lot of people have the vision of – they really want a traditional publisher and realizing just how much work getting the proposal that someone's even looking at your book.

**Mark:**

Yeah. It was kind of a shock to me. "Okay, I'll put a proposal together and send out 200 copies of that same proposal" and one thing that I've learned is there are a lot of authors that do that and when a publishing company gets a proposal or an agent gets a proposal that's not according to

the format that they want, they would dispose it, they will not even look at it. I spent an awful lot of time crafting queries and proposals, you know, custom tailoring them to the requirements of every single publishing company and agent that I queried and proposed to.

**Angela:**

Is this when you had an agent? Or is this before you had an agent?

**Mark:**

Well it's in the process on landing of getting agent, but just in the process of getting there. You know, I did an awful lot of work and I ended up managing to land an agent, kind of a small time agent. She was small but she was successful. And, so I did get an agent and she spent a little bit of time and I didn't feel like she spent nearly as much time as I want her to spend on me. She seems to give up pretty quickly after just a few months.

**Angela:**

Were you locked into 6 months or a year? Something like that?

**Mark:**

No. We didn't. No. The only stipulation there was that either one of us could terminate the agreement. We had to give each other 30 days notice. But if she had – even after we terminated, like, if I had terminated the agreement with her, if a potential contract came out of a publishing house that she had already sent one of my proposals to, she would still get that contract.

(**Angela:** I see.) And I'm fine with that.

**Angela:**

That's not a terrible deal. I know a lot of people that worked really, really hard to get an agent or even a publisher. Then, that relationship doesn't go the way that they had hoped and they end up in a situation where they're locked in for some amount of time, some people even permanently, in the case of the publishers. Sometimes it can be hard to even buy your rights back. So they are stuck, you know, not being able to really have access to their own work.

So that you know, I know that agent didn't go – that relationship didn't go maybe as well as you would have hoped, but at least you weren't locked in. And I think that's a good lesson. You know, people that are hoping for an agent, "I'm just a writer. I'm going to have the agent do the heavy lifting and I'm going to pay them 15% or whatever it is. I'm going to pay them for but they're going to get the contract." You know, being really careful about getting into long-term contracts, I think, is a great lesson. (**Mark:** Yes.) And in the end, your publishing story probably turned out a little different than you originally imagined. What don't you tell us about that?

**Mark:**

Well, this agent did manage to get some publishing companies interested in the work, even including a couple of major ones, Touchstone Fireside, which is an imprint of Simon and Schuster, as well as Llewellyn Publishing. (**Angela:** Mmm. I love Llewellyn Publishing.) Anybody

that's interested in medical books. Both of them, and some four other small publishers that were interested as well. Six publishers expressed interest but none of them bought the book.

I got to the point where I didn't even know what to do; I didn't even know where to turn. I knew I was not going to give up. But right about that time, a couple of friends of mine who are fellow authors, both published authors -- In fact, one, who is more than a million-selling author in the romance genre. They had become frustrated with the traditional publishing world themselves. They had been published in the traditional publishing world and they wanted to get away from that and they decided to start their own publishing company. They invited a handful of other authors to join in. Six of us together, I guess that was eight in the beginning, got together and decided to start our own publishing company and we spent several months like wringing our hands and gnashing our teeth and pulling our hair out trying to figure what the heck to do; then things just kind of gelled and at the end of that, we came up with Bitterroot Mountain Publishing.

The Bitterroot Mountains are a mountain range near where we lived. I lived in Northern Idaho, all of us lived in either Northern Idaho or Eastern Washington, so we named it after this local mountain range. And we came up with our own publishing company. We've been together for about 3 years now, I guess...

**Angela:**

You take on other projects? Or you only published books by the owners, like it's a consortium?

**Mark:**

Yeah, we do take on outside projects. Basically, it was just projects from within our own circle. We wanted to get our own books out there. We do have our own very vigorous editorial review process to make sure we're putting out books, as we like to put it, of impeccable quality. Certainly there were micro-publishers, and there are lots of micro-publishers, who -- they just generate stuff and it's not necessarily that good, but we're really putting a lot of work into making sure that we put up quality stuff, you know, credible stuff.

Our business model is kind of unique and that we have this editorial review process and then the publishing process itself, and the authors actually put up the money for that process. It's you know, relatively inexpensive; It's a lot less expensive than -- If you were to go self-publishing and try to hire these, you know, high speed editors and things like that... But there's a bit of an outlay... The big difference between us and the major publishing companies is once the book is out there, the author gets close to one hundred percent of the profits from the book, whereas if you went through a traditional publishing house, they would get almost all the money. They would get a lot of it, the agent would take a cut, and then the author ends up getting, you know, a few pennies per book.

You know, we -- anybody who gets published, and it's a huge surprise to me early on-- I just assumed that if a publishing house took on your book, they're going to do a whole lot of marketing for it, but that's just not true. One of the things they want to see in a proposal in a

publishing house is... what they wanted to see in a proposal is what your marketing plan is... how are you going to sell your book if they published it. And what I kept running into is, I didn't have, you know, the platform that they want. So you know, somebody published this through us, in Bitterroot Mountain, they need to do all the marketing but that's no different from what it would be like in the traditional publishing world. The big difference is that when the author sells books, they get the money for-- most of the money, and in the traditional publishing world, they would get very little of that money.

**Angela:**

I think what I've seen, numbers-wise, is between 7 and 10 percent usually for paperback, and if you're lucky, 15 percent for hardcover as opposed to like you said... you know, depending on how you channel up to 100 percent if you self-publish, or work in a micro-publisher. Of course, there are expenses that come out of that, *[Mark agrees]* but it's much closer to a hundred percent than 10 percent *[Mark agrees]*.

That's kind of interesting journey. Most people don't start writing a book and end up in a, you know, publishing collective with three other buddies, or five other buddies or something... so I think that's really interesting approach and it just shows some of the crazy things that come out of the dream of writing a book *[Mark agrees]*. You go in with one image and you come out with another, it's not necessarily better or worse, but a lot of times, some unique things come out of having a book. What about for you? What's the best thing that comes out of having your own book?

**Mark:**

The best thing that's come out is having my own book. I mean, just that in itself is a source of huge satisfaction, but one thing that comes with having a published book is there's a lot of credibility... it gives me credibility within my profession, you know, within the chiropractic profession. A lot of chiropractors know me because of my book. Anytime I want to do any sort of speaking like for example, there's going to be – probably most of your listeners has heard of TED Talks and I'm sure you have. *[Angela agrees]*. I'm going to be doing a TED Talk in Spokane, Washington next spring. When I first heard of that – I approached the organizers, I said "yeah, I'd like to talk." The fact that I had a book, that I was a published author lent a lot of credibility to what I had to say.

Probably the big benefit is credibility. I mean, if you're a published author, automatically, you know, they'll look at you with – you know, you're very credible. And rightly so, because there's so much work and research and knowledge that ... you know if you're a published author, you really have done something. I mean, even if you're a self-published author...

**Angela:**

Yeah... I do think that there is work and knowledge but I also think that there are lots of people including maybe yourself, before you finished the book, that have the same amount of knowledge that haven't gone through the effort of writing it down on a book with their name on it. And even if

you have this knowledge, you could've written a hundred magazine articles that, you know, would have equaled a 300-page book and you still won't get that same credibility, you know. "Author of a blog with over a hundred posts" doesn't have the same ring you get as, you know, "author of a published book." (**Mark:** That's true.) I'm not sure why but it does seem to hold a certain weight. So, I think that's interesting.

What was different for you than, you know, than what you expected? What didn't go, maybe, the way that you thought it would?

**Mark:**

The amount of time that I was going to have spend on marketing, the time, the energy and the money that I had to spend on marketing.

Even when I learned that I was going to have to do my own marketing-- that the publishing company wasn't going to, I had no idea how much you have to put in to that. At first, I got really – I didn't like the idea but the more I've learned about marketing, the more I've really enjoyed marketing; I enjoy it more and more. I realized that marketing is a form of service. I mean, if you're selling people your book, you're serving them because you are giving them information that is going to be able to help their lives and change their lives.

Another interesting thing that I've learned is that any author is probably giving away a lot of books because you just do that. When you give away books, very few people actually read them. They'll say, "Oh thanks! It was really cool!" and then they'll stick it on their shelf somewhere. When people buy a book, they read it for the most part. That is a big revelation for me, and that's why I am really focused on selling a lot of books not just for me to make money, but that's when people are going to read my books. When there's actually an exchange of money, they're going to be more motivated to read the books. So, I want to sell a lot so that a lot of people will read it. I don't want to give away a lot because very few people will read it. And you do have to give some books away for promotions and things like that, and it is beneficial.

**Angela:**

Right. I think that's the great distinction because there is another unexpected thing – I think people think, "Oh, I'm going to write a book and people are going to read it." And that's seems like a pretty basic assumption but getting people to get a book in their hands, to buy it or even to be given it is one step; getting them to read it is another part of the process, and certainly, paying for it is one of those steps.

We've got a few minutes left, and I'd like to end all my interviews-- there is a chance for you to get up on your soapbox and take a minute for us and talk to, you know – think of yourself just before you started your book journey... as the beginning of your book journey and leave us with some advice. If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently? What advice would you give to a young Dr. Mark?

**Mark:**

The first piece of advice is something that I would do the same as when I started out, and that's "Write the best book, the highest quality, the most appealing, the most entertaining book you could possibly write." You know, you have to put a good quality product out there, and that has not changed.

A lot of people say, "Oh, it doesn't have to be perfect" and maybe it doesn't have to be perfect. There's some people who say, "Oh, it doesn't have to be that great a book, because a lot of people put books out there of mediocre quality that sell a lot" and that's true too. But, you know, I feel that you want to put the best possible book that you can put out there.

The thing that has changed for me is, if you don't have a positive attitude about selling and marketing, realize that it is a positive thing. You have to have a very positive, proactive attitude about marketing and realizing that when you're marketing to somebody, you're serving them especially if you're marketing a high-quality product. That is a form of service, and approach it from that perspective.

**Angela:**

Yeah, I love that. I think that's a great perspective because you approach this in a way – so many of the people that I worked with said, which is, "I just wanna help people. I've learned that hard, painful lesson and I just have this feeling in my heart that it's not – this lesson can't just be for me [chuckled]. I know I'm not the only one; I know I can help people."

And then, when it gets to marketing, they freeze up, and they're like, wait, I was there to help people. Yep, you were and this is what it looks like. Sorry, it doesn't look like sitting alone in your room writing a book. This is what helping people look like. I think that's really powerful.

I really appreciate your time talking with us. Your journey with Oby's Wisdom has been an interesting one. I know that you put up a first version, got some feedback, and put up a second one. One of the things that I have learned from you and watching your journey is to be open to feedbacks. I heard so many things that you have learned and heard and changed. I think that my lesson is to be open to feedback, to be open in changing things but also to stay true to that original vision on why you're doing it. **(Mark: Yes. Definitely. Yes.)**

**Angela:**

Any final thoughts? You got about 30 seconds left.

**Mark:**

Well, I'll direct people to my website, [obyswisdom.com](http://obyswisdom.com). That's O-B-Y-S-Wisdom.com and they can learn an awful lot about the book there. Of course, it's available on Amazon.com

**Angela:**

I'm going to say, check it out and hopefully there's a link to Amazon. It really does have an advice that's practical for everyone. I have read it and I think I've reviewed it somewhere. There's a video review of me somewhere reviewing your book because it's a great one and it's definitely a major service to the world.

Thanks for being here today. Thanks for everything that you do, Mark.

**Mark:**

Well, thank you Angela.

**Angela:**

Buh-Bye.

**Mark:**

Bye.