

Transcript for Mike Rowe | The Way I Heard It (Episode 597)

Full show notes found here:

<https://theartofcharm.com/podcast-episodes/mike-rowe-the-way-i-heard-it-episode-597/>

MIKE: Hey, it's Mike Rowe from *Dirty Jobs*. This is called The Art of Charm with Jordan Harbinger, but between you and I, it's disgusting.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm. I'm your host, Jordan Harbinger. Today I've got a -- I'm super excited about this guest, I've been excited about this guest for a really long time. I've watched and read just about everything that he's created. He started in the Opera, believe it or not, to get more popular with the opposite sex, and that was a back door for him to get a SAG card, Screen Actors Guild, to make some money. Because when I think ladies' man, I think falsetto in a viking hat. But he went to the opera, he went on Home Shopping network, and made fun of the products, and he's done just so many really interesting things on television and beyond.

One of the central tenets of this show is that no advice may be given unless that person has direct or nearly direct experience with the same or similar situation. And one reason I admire this man so much is because he's getting the experience the whole time. It's not a documentary, where he's filming poor schlubs doing something he'd never subject himself to. He's in it, often literally, and I think there's so much here. By the way, if you're new to the show, we'd love to send you some top episodes and the AoC Toolbox. That's where we discuss concepts like reading body language and charismatic nonverbal communication, attraction signs, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm.

Check that out at theartofcharm.com/toolbox or in our iPhone app at theartofcharm.com/iphone. Also at theartofcharm.com/podcast you can find the full show notes for this and all previous episodes of the show. We're glad to have

you with us here today at AoC. There's no need for further intro. Enjoy this episode with Mr. Mike Rowe of *Dirty Jobs*.

My dad, when he find out that I was going to interview you, he said, "You know what you should do, is wear some dirty clothes because you're interviewing the guy from *Dirty Jobs*," and I thought, --

MIKE: Dad, come on man.

JORDAN: "That's why he's no longer the chief creative director of The Art of Charm." That was the last straw.

MIKE: It was a bit too on the nose.

JORDAN: Yeah, it was a little bit much. He's a Ford guy, by the way. He wanted to make sure that you're still driving that truck they gave you for --

MIKE: It's 11 years old now.

JORDAN: Is it really?

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: Oh, okay, I thought it was --

MIKE: I got it. It's parked right downstairs.

JORDAN: Oh, no kidding.

MIKE: I've never in my life, bought a new car. Ever.

JORDAN: Really?

Mike: And I haven't purchased a piece of clothing, probably, at least fifteen years, maybe more.

JORDAN: Because you keep getting things for free or because --

MIKE: No I steal. I steal them.

JORDAN: -- you just like shoplifting.

MIKE: No I would never do that, but there's sort of this unspoken thing on a -- like on a commercial shoot. They bring in wardrobe and nobody knows what you're going to wear but I always wear the same crap. You know, I put it on, and they bring alternates and everything else and at the end I just take them. I mean they don't care.

JORDAN: They don't care.

MIKE: No they're so happy we had a good day. "You know what, take -- keep the clothes." So that's why I'm almost always dressed in an outfit that millions of people have seen me in.

(laugh)

MIKE: Almost always. And it's weird.

JORDAN: That's why you're so recognizable.

MIKE: It's part of it.

JORDAN: You're wearing the same thing.

MIKE: I went without the hat today though, which is a bold departure, I think, for me.

JORDAN: Well we were going to bring you a hat, and we were like, "Oh, we forgot an Art of Charm hat." And then we thought he's got 150 hats at home.

MIKE: I don't have any that same Charm though.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: Tell me about your podcast. What is this? What is The Art of Charm that you're looking to unlock?

JORDAN: So essentially what we do on the show is we ask brilliant people, such as yourself --

MIKE: Ah-hah.

JORDAN: -- interesting questions, and try to make their wisdom available to everyone. So, we've had people like Larry King talk about interesting conversations. We've had General McChrystal come on and talk about making tough decisions, because he's made a lot of those.

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: General Hayden came on, talked about some of the ethics involved in surveillance and things like that.

MIKE: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: And we've had body language experts, and hostage negotiators come on and talk about negotiation and things like that. So, we thought that something that people can apply, rather than just be, quote unquote inspired. Because inspiration's kind of cheap. It's more like, "You can do it," but can you do it?

MIKE: So you've redefined charm to include elements of challenge, inspiration, obviously, but rooted in a broad based level of overarching practicality.

JORDAN: Exactly. That's -- I thought that's what I said five seconds ago but I guess --

MIKE: You did but, I just --

JORDAN: Yeah, you know --

MIKE: -- I don't feel like you used any of those words.

JORDAN: No I didn't. I didn't really. I'm going to next time though.

MIKE: Okay.

JORDAN: So when we edit that part out and then I say it again on camera, it's going to sound really good.

MIKE: It'll sound good but it won't be charming.

JORDAN: Ah.

MIKE: See what we just did was charming. What you just described, would be polished. In many ways, I believe, the enemies of charm are deliberateness. In much the same way, I would argue that the enemies of authenticity are production.

JORDAN: Yes.

MIKE: We put barriers in front of that which we declare to be our objective. We do it all the time. We do it with everything. In my humble view.

JORDAN: Yeah, I agree with that. When the show first started, it was about taking off the social mask, the representative that everyone meets, when you first put yourself out there. And when I was in law school it was like, "Yo in order to get a job what you need to do is this, this, this, this, and this --"

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- in the interview," and I thought, "Wait isn't that not going to work when I'm spending 25 hours a day with every single person in this office?"

MIKE: Right.

JORDAN: They're going to figure out pretty quick that me coming in dressed in a certain way, speaking a certain way with perfect eye contact and a firm handshake, only lasted 40 minutes --

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- on a good day.

MIKE: It just proves you read the manual.

JORDAN: Yeah, which is maybe what they want when you're becoming an attorney.

MIKE: Yeah. Protocall.

JORDAN: But not good for spending time in airport lounges with other people who are equally miserable.

MIKE: No but therein lies the dichotomy. This idea that if you're in compliance, then you're in good graces.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: It's sort of like with OSHA, with safety. The idea that if you're in compliance, you're out of danger.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: It's fundamentally specious. It's not true.

JORDAN: That organization must have multiple issues with what you've done over the past few years, I would imagine.

MIKE: We inspired what I called an army of angry acronyms. Left in the weight of *Dirty Jobs*. I mean, OSHA certainly fired off more than a few strongly worded memos, the EPA was constantly at high alert, angry. PETA was probably the biggest source of congenital predictable rage. Humane Society was right there. Even the FBI, I heard from the FBI on a couple occasions.

JORDAN: What did they want?

MIKE: Eh it was a crime scene clean up thing and they just --

JORDAN: Ah.

MIKE: -- they heard some things that -- See the thing is today, as you know, the interwebs, they're populated almost entirely by correctors. The world is standing by now to tell you that you got it wrong.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: And thanks to our devices, we can immediately find proof that we're right and the other person is wrong. Of course they can find proof too because there's no end, right? There's just no end to the sources that can gainsay the other source. And so we've just become this extraordinarily pedantic people, and I think we've confused noise and sound and argument with conversation and communication.

JORDAN: At first it was like, "Wow, this Mike Rowe guy is really funny." And then it was like, "Wow his fans are," including us, "even more ridiculous at some points." I mean the letter that you got from Fleet Week, that was like, "It's just annoying I can't see the water on this day." And it's like, "Because there's a battleship in front of you full of veterans --"

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: " -- who just came back from a war zone, sorry."

MIKE: Yeah, you know. Just kind of risking our life for you.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: You know. That's all. I know it must be very annoying, very distracting --

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: -- messing up your view.

JORDAN: Sorry your dog gets scared when they do flyovers in fighter jets from pilots that have been getting shot at --

MIKE: Oh, God, people.

JORDAN: It's just unreal.

MIKE: People. You just love them. I mean, it's enough to make you crazy but the truth is, you have to keep reminding yourself. If everybody saw it your way, I mean really, whether it's politics, or social, or whatever it is. If everybody agreed on everything, uh, why get out of bed.

JORDAN: Sure, yeah I mean, we'd be in North Korea so --

MIKE: Basically.

JORDAN: -- you'd have to get out of bed for other reasons. If you had a bed.

MIKE: And it's cold up there.

JORDAN: It is.

MIKE: And they all talk different.

JORDAN: They do. They talk different.

(laugh)

JORDAN: That part's definitely true.

MIKE: Have you been to North Korea?

JORDAN: I have. I have been there four times.

MIKE: Why?

JORDAN: First time I went because I thought, "This place is weird, I've got to go check it out." This was almost 10 years ago. The second time I went was because I talked about it on this show that we're doing right now and people said, "Wait a minute, you can go check that place out?" And I said, "Yeah, I can -- we can go on tours and you can see it for yourself." So I brought a group of show fans and friends with me to North Korea, talked about that on the show as well. And that filled up another trip and then another trip. But when I go there, I bring people to talk and see the culture and engage with the people because, as you might imagine, there's a lot of normal people there that live in a regime, that they know at some level is not working out for them.

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: At every single level. When you go there they ask for things like, "Hey, that camera that you're using, how does it work?" And you're explaining things to them like iPads, cameras, phones. They're looking at videos and they can't believe it and they've heard of Facebook but they've never seen it. And every time we go there the guides will say, "Do you have any games on this?" Because they maybe never played one. And so they'll sit there and play all day.

MIKE: You know, I used to read all the time, like back in the twenties and thirties, accounts of civilizations or tribes being discovered. You know who had never seen anything post industrial revolution. And obviously it's harder and harder to find that today but -- I remember like 15 years ago I was hiking from Cusco to Machu Picchu.

JORDAN: Oh, my dad did that.

MIKE: It's a great hike, we were headed up to Titicaca but along the way, we took this side hike. You know, we hired some, they're not sherpas over there, but we just hired some help because we had a ton of gear --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- and you know, we were lazy and we were just slumming it. These kids humped our crap for about four and a half days and they were just amazing. I mean they would run -- they would sleep in. Like we'd start around 7, they'd get up around 10 and pass us around 10:30 or 11 and then make our lunch by the time we got there.

JORDAN: With all your stuff.

MIKE: With all our gear, in sandals, running -- I can still hear them running behind me, it was like, "Compromiso (sp), compromiso (sp)." And they'd run by. Anyway, we tipped them, obviously, but I had this old Walkman, this old Sony Walkman and Soundgarden had just come out --

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

MIKE: -- right?

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: So, [*Superunknown*](#), right?

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: First album. And I had been listening to that and I put these headphones on this kid and I said, "Hey, what do you think of this?" Because he like, played the flute, you know [0:10:12:2]

JORDAN: Right, some sort of wooden thing.

MIKE: So this is the first time he ever heard an electric guitar. It's the first time he ever heard that big screeching tenor harmony. It's the first time he ever heard a drum kit like that. And you could just see his head exploding. He couldn't have looked at me with more wonder, had I pulled my own head off --

(laugh)

MIKE: -- and presented it to him while it was still talking. So, I said, "Look, keep it," you know, "Just keep it."

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: "Enjoy the album, enjoy the thing." but then when I left I was like, "Oh, crap, what have I done?" You know like the --

JORDAN: Colluded the --

MIKE: Well it's like the Prime Directive on *Star Trek*, you know? You messed with something. And what happened when the batteries ran out? Or like, is there a giant monument now there somewhere that looks like a Walkman?

(laugh)

JORDAN: 1989 --

MIKE: You know?

JORDAN: -- first version one, Sony Walkman with like the futuristic looking digital fun on the front?

MIKE: Right, so like, you know, the ultimate arbiter of knowledge is Chris Cornell, right?

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: We have to consult the --

JORDAN: The oracle.

MIKE: -- the records.

JORDAN: That's like the boy scout rule, what, "Take only pictures, leave only footprints." And possibly a Walkman, with a Soundgarden cassette in it.

MIKE: Take all you want, eat all you take.

JORDAN: Yes. 10 years ago, or over 10 years ago now, I'm watching TV in my friend's basement, where essentially I was living and studying for the BAR exam. And I'm miserable as can be studying for the New York BAR exam. And I see this guy sticking his hand deep inside some animal, and I remember thinking, this is really cool. I mean, how do I get that job? And at this point, you have your hand up a bull's ***, so I should have probably taken a cue about my career choices from that. Thinking, you know, doing the whole compare contrast back then.

MIKE: Sure.

JORDAN: In retrospect, 20/20 hindsight. And it seems like, now that we've come full circle, AoC Art of Charm is very big on pushing outside the comfort zone, making sure that we are always pushing that bubble, and you've got that same thing as well. You've got the Peripeteia.

MIKE: Anagnorisis and peripeteia, that's right.

JORDAN: I only got to the last part.

MIKE: Well it's, you know, Anagnorisis is a greek word for discovery. Peripeteia is a form of discovery. Aristotle basically argued that all insight comes through a series of discoveries. And great narratives are informed by anagnorisis that lead to a peripeteia, and that's a discovery that changes the direction of a narrative. Right so when Bruce Willis realizes, at the end of The Sixth Sense, that he's dead, that's a peripeteia.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: Right? Now, along the way, he has all these anagnorises but when he makes that kind of realization, that's when the narrative of the story changes. That's when his life changes. You know, just like when Oedipus realizes, you know -- he has an anagnorisis, Oedipus does in act 2 when he meets this hot older chick and they start to make love and fall in love, and then they have babies, you know? And then they're married. All anagnorises. Act five, he realizes the hot older chick is his mom.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

MIKE: Peripeteia.

JORDAN: Right.

(laugh)

MIKE: It changes the direction of the narrative.

JORDAN: So mine would have been, sitting in an office in Manhattan checking for commas in an 800 page document, and going, "I wish I had my hand in a bull's butt somewhere like Mike Rowe."

MIKE: Yeah, I mean, look, people would look at *Dirty Jobs* and find whatever they were seeking.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: You know?

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: You can look at that show. You can look at that segment, and see a big cautionary tale, you know? And a lot of people did. A lot of people watched it with their kids to say, "See, could be worse. Could be that guy." But, equally, passionate, among the

viewers, were the people who watched and said, "See there's dignity in that." You know how important it is to put your hand up the bull's ***? It's kind of critical, because that's where you insert the probe that stimulates the prostate, that ultimately triggers the ejaculate which allows you to artificially inseminate a hundred cows. You take artificial insemination out of modern agriculture, and McDonald's isn't feeding billions and billions.

JORDAN: Right. Sure.

MIKE: This is not going to happen, so -- You know that show, was a hot mess. It was a scatological romp. It was exploding toilets and misadventures and animal husbandry but we were always able to find a peripatetic moment, either for me -- I mean that was really my job, you know? It wasn't a host, I was more of this avatar. A guest.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: It was very, very liberating, not to have to tell the viewer the truth of a thing. You know, not to be judged by one of the correctors we were talking about. But rather, try it. As an apprentice would on the first day --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- and do your best. Maybe you're right, maybe you're wrong.

JORDAN: What do you think when people say things like, "Oh, yeah I watch your show with my kid so I can tell him what happens if he doesn't go to college." I mean that at some point, if I were in your shoes then, I would be annoyed by that.

MIKE: I mean, you can't afford to be. I mean, the *Dirty Jobs*, first and foremost was an entertainment proposition. So, when people stop me because they know me, or they want to talk about the show -- I've never looked at them as fans, I've looked at them as

my boss. You know, so like when your boss stops you, to talk about your work, you better freaking listen.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

MIKE: You know, you may not like it --

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: -- but you have to listen. You know, I used to tell this story, in Newark, I got off a plane. I was walking through the terminal and the first guy that stopped me, he was on a ladder, up in the ceiling, and he came down from the ceiling and said, "Hey man I just got to tell you, my wife and my kids and I, we watch your show, and it's just so great because I can show them opportunities that they didn't know existed. And I can use what you're doing as proof positive that opportunity's not dead." And then 15 feet later, a guy in a Brooks Brother's suit, stopped me. Wall Street type, you know --

JORDAN: I know the type

MIKE: And he said, "Man, watch your show with the wife and kids every Tuesday. It's so much fun, you're very funny. And I can point to my kid and say, 'See? See what happens if you don't go to college?'" And so, look, in the end, that's showbiz.

JORDAN: Yeah the boss analogy works great --

MIKE: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: -- because in truth if you treat fans like they owe you something, you won't have them for very long.

MIKE: Nobody likes a kiss-***

JORDAN: Right, and then you're in trouble. Why are you always running towards the thing that makes you uncomfortable? I mean that's

something you've mentioned in some of your posts and in some of the shows. Why is that sort of a personal motto?

MIKE:

Well, it's not really, to be honest, in real life -- that doesn't inform my every position. But in TV it does, because in TV I believe -- certainly in 2001, the Discovery Channel was completely reliant on a nonfiction model that elevated the host and the expert to a level of absolute primacy. Right, so if you saw somebody on Discovery, it was because they knew what they were doing, they knew what they were talking about. It could be Jacques Cousteau, it could be David Attenborough, you know, it didn't matter. But fundamentally, they were an arbiter of accuracy. In the wake of that, my feeling was, they had an opportunity to be an arbiter of authenticity. That's a different model, it doesn't require a host, it requires a guest. It doesn't require an expert, it requires an apprentice. So the idea of saying, "Look, I want to do a show that fundamentally challenges the underlying perception you have of your own brand," that's a tough sell. But, they gave it a try, to their credit, because *Dirty Jobs* is still fundamentally rooted in curiosity. So we're still satisfying curiosity, but I had assumed this different sort of mode. This cypher of sorts, and that changed everything. It just means I didn't have to ever be right.

JORDAN:

Did you come up with those kinds of rules for the creative process or was that something where they were like, "Look we need somebody who's going to do it this way," and you just nailed it.

MIKE:

Oh, well it certainly wasn't that. And as much as I'd like to tell you is the result of a well executed plan, I kind of Forrest Gumped my into it. I knew I didn't want to be held to the same standards as a host. And I had been freelancing as a host for 15 years before that, here in San Francisco at Evening Magazine, you know? I mean that's what I did for 10, 12 years. I would go out and I would host the show from a restaurant or a winery or some place. And hosts and reporters, they're -- with respect, they're empty suits.

JORDAN: Commodities, in [0:18:13:4] of talent.

MIKE: Yeah. Well we're interchangeable. I mean, why do you imagine the news looks the way it looks, in every market? Why does FM radio sound the way it sounds in every market? Once you codify the system and then you start putting humans in it, all they can really do, to find certainty in their life, is something derivative. They have to imitate something that they saw before that makes sense to their brain.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: So pretty soon all the DJs talk like this.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: What the hell is that? Why does that happen? Well as a host, I was doing the same thing, you know? "Hi San Francisco, Mike Rowe here, tonight on Evening Magazine, blah blah blah." I listen to those old tapes, I'm like, "Jesus, what were you doing?"

JORDAN: Yeah, a little painful.

MIKE: "What are you doing? Why are you wearing makeup? Why do you look at a prompter and read it in an attempt to convince someone you're not reading it?"

JORDAN: Yeah, it doesn't make sense.

MIKE: Barriers to authenticity, right? So anyway, all of that sort of informed the first episodes of *Dirty Jobs*. And once people started to watch it, it became for sale.

JORDAN: Why the emphasis on authenticity? I mean this is something that we focus on at AoC all the time. It's all about authenticity, becoming more authentic, trying to ditch the performance aspect of things. Even the show that I do, all the time, the intro, nothing has got to be scripted because it just comes across as plastic and people want to get to know -- nowadays people

want to get to know you. It's not 1940 radio where you're a disembodied talking voice, or a TV host with *The Evening Magazine*. It seems like you swam upstream in some ways trying to become authentic in a market that wasn't necessarily that they wanted that at the time.

JORDAN: Yeah I did, but don't confuse it with like, you know, bravery or foresight. I swam with the salmon.

JORDAN: I was going to say, you're the salmon of showbiz.

(laugh)

MIKE: Well before *Dirty Jobs*, I was right in the middle of the herd. It took me 15 years of sort of mastering my toolbox, you know? And understanding what worked and what could get me paid. You know I was basically paid to impersonate a host for 15 years. And I became facile at it. I was never properly acquisitive. Like I know Tom Bergeron and you know Tom hit it big as a host. I went as far as I wanted to go as a host. Dick Clark hired me. I worked for a lot of guys, but to me the most interesting thing, doing the traditional route, was to approach hosting and TV like a tradesman would a project. So short term, small bites, don't get stuck with a hit. God knows you don't want a hit. Then you're going to be -- you're just sucked in forever.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: Yeah, I felt really smart and clever for about 15 years working on jobs and projects that were so doomed, so poorly conceived, that no amount of luck or talent could possibly salvage them. I would attach myself to those projects. Essentially like the Titanic looking for an iceberg, you know? And I knew they would fail, but I would do the best work I could and so I never took heat for it. And in that way I was able to work and take a lot of time off, and feel all clever about it. *Dirty Jobs* was just a miscalculation.

JORDAN: Right you accidentally made something that people really liked, that went on for a long time.

MIKE: Yeah. I made a deal with the network that allowed me to narrate their big tent pole shows, you know? Like Planet Earth and big brand friendly shows, and go on these various expeditions and they said, "Let's do something, you know, to introduce you to the viewer." And I pitched, what as at the time called Somebody's Gotta Do It, which I did here in town. And they said, "Well let's call it *Dirty Jobs* and see if anybody cares." They had no idea anybody would watch and they were horrified when they did, to tell you the truth.

JORDAN: Why?

MIKE: For the same reason the GOP was horrified when Donald Trump was standing in the middle of that stage. For the same reason. Because there's a cognitive dissonance and big brands hate that. So Discovery, in 2004 -- this show went on the air in 2003. It rated through the roof. They took it off. It was off brand. It scared the heck out of them. And I went back to going to Alaska, and Egypt, and doing these other shows. But then, about eight months later, this -- you can't make this up. They had Steve Irwin and they had the *Mythbusters* and they had a bunch of new talent and a bunch of old talent and they wanted to get a sense. They had like 18 new shows in development. So they sent them all to Vegas, and locked like 500 people in a room for a weekend and made them watch everything. Big focus group.

JORDAN: Focus group, ugh.

MIKE: Somebody, somebody at Discovery took an old episode of *Dirty Jobs*, off the shelf, and threw it in this pile of stuff. Really just as fodder, you know? The results, after the focus groups, were deeply disturbing to people who were in the business of predicting results.

JORDAN: Oh, right.

MIKE: *Dirty Jobs* was by far the number one show and I was rated very, very favorably as a host, which in my world is avatar, guest, that kind of thing. That's when they ordered the series.

JORDAN: What were you thinking when they said, "Look we want to do more *Dirty Jobs*?" Were you elated when they wanted more *Dirty Jobs* or were you like. "Oh, crap, I'm stuck with this now?"

MIKE: Yeah. It was very much a careful what you wish for moment. Because remember my contract, you know, it just had three 1-hour versions of jobs and then all the other stuff, that we really made the deal for, that's where the focus was. You know, *Dirty Jobs* happened because my mother called me, here in San Francisco, she was in Baltimore. And my granddad was 91 or 92 at the time. He was dying. And this was the guy who could like, build a house without a blueprint, you know? He was my inspiration as a kid and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. He only went to the seventh grade but master electrician, a plumber, steamfitter, pipefitter --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

MIKE: --welder, mechanic, right? So he's dying, and she calls and says, "Michael it would be so nice if your grandfather could turn on the TV before he goes and see something that looks like work."

(laugh)

MIKE: To see you do something that looks like work. So that's why it started. It was very personal. I was doing jobs that I knew my -- that would make my grandfather laugh. But of course that's exactly why it worked, because when it aired, people saw those jobs and said, "Oh, man, you should talk to my brother, sister, uncle, cousin, grandfather, dad, mom," right? And it just became very, very relatable, overnight. And so, when they ordered more, I was flattered that people would like it but that show was hard. Right? I mean --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- you can't cheat on that show. The big advantage I had, was I didn't have to be competent and I didn't have to be correct. But I had to try, which means, you know, you shoot from sunup to sundown and sometimes you're swinging a mallet and sometimes you're dangling from a bridge and sometimes you're testing a shark suit and, you know, sometimes you're making big rocks out of little rocks.

JORDAN: You've got to be in it, otherwise yeah, it's like Entertainment Tonight, where they're standing in front of the video playing behind them. You've got to stand up on the wind power thing in the wind with the guy going, "Oh, yeah yeah, don't step back any further." And it's like you should have maybe said that --

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- five steps ago.

MIKE: Yeah. You go in the hole.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: You don't talk about what's at the bottom of the opal mine shaft, you go in the shaft. You know, you have to go to where the work is. And so that was the great trade and the beauty of *Dirty Jobs*. You know, I had one job. To try my best. And then right under that was say things that would amuse your best friend if you guys were watching this together. So most of what I said was an attempt to amuse myself, and most of what I did was an attempt to keep up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: You're very anti-bromide which is one of the reasons why I thought you were a really great fit for the show because clichés and these little bits of advice and things like -- that are meaningless in my opinion, are things you like to pick apart,

and that we like to pick apart, and shoot the platitude down, dissect the frog, and find out that it has no guts.

MIKE: Mm-hmm.

JORDAN: I think one of the most common bromides that we hear, especially my generation, in my field of with the entrepreneurship field or whatever. You here these things like, "Follow your passion. Follow your gut. Follow your dreams. Don't ever quit." I know that you don't agree with that as much as I also don't agree with that. That's my pet peeve essentially.

MIKE: Well look, any time wisdom becomes conventional, and then written on a piece of parchment, and then framed in some cheap mahogany, and then hung in some Godforsaken conference room, that's where you've crossed over. You know, now you have a platitude, a bromide, a trope. People are so desperate to have a playbook that they gravitate toward one. But of course, it doesn't exist and following your passion -- we did a special on *Dirty Jobs* called *The Dirty Truth*, where I essentially -- I walked through an old office building, and hung all of my least favorite bromides on the wall and then essentially tore them apart, one at a time, using *Dirty Jobs* as proof. You know, to contradict the conventional wisdom. Never follow your passion. Always follow your passion was the first one I remember. It was like a rainbow and a flower, or like, maybe some butterflies and a waterfall and a -- I didn't know what the hell they're talking about.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: You know?

JORDAN: Passionate waterfalls and butterflies.

MIKE: But this idea, whether it's in work or in romance, you know. The idea that your happiness is contingent upon finding the job that will make you happy. Your dream job, for instance, is not so

different than finding the girl that will make you happy. You know, your soulmate.

JORDAN: The one out seven billion --

MIKE: Yeah she's out there.

JORDAN: -- designed for you.

MIKE: She's out there and if you're not really enjoying your life right now, you just have to find her and it'll be okay.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: Having a bad day at work? It's not you. You need your dream job. So never, ever give up on your passion. That's what we tell people. And look, there are times when it's excellent advice. There are times when it's the worst advice in the world. And that's why it becomes a sacred cow that's fun to push against. American Idol has to be one of the most amazing shows ever. There's so much about it I hate but one of the things about it that I loved was, early in the season, you know the early auditions, where they go to a town and thousands of people show up. Thousands of people show up, following their passion. They've always wanted to be a singer, a popstar. And they're going to give it a shot. And it's not alarming that they can't sing. What's alarming is that they discover it, so often, for the very first time, on national television, at 20 years old. Their whole life, they've been told, "Look, if you want it bad enough, it's going to work out. If you're passionate about it, it's going to work out. You're my precious little boy. You're going to be great. Go for it, go get them!" I just think it's a massive disservice to tell people that the proximate cause of their vocational happiness is contingent upon their ability to never change course.

JORDAN: I can't agree more. I mean, I think the fact that we are telling people -- young people this is especially alarming. Because, when we get older and we find out the hard way, depending on

how, I guess plastic you are with the ability to adapt to the truth, you can find yourself in a world of hurt. You can find yourself in a real world of hurt. Even if you're a good hard worker, and you can outwork people that are smarter than you, which was my competitive advantage growing up, essentially. You still find yourself swimming with sharks when you're a lawyer and you go, "Oh, my God, not only do I not want this but I worked so hard to get here, " and maybe your passion shifts. There were a lot of people in my class who thought, "I want to be a lawyer for sure," and two years later they're emailing me, "Hey are you hiring?"

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: "Because this is terrible." So even when you get what you want, you're not always going to want your passion.

MIKE: There's a terrible inertia around passion. And really just around living, you know? Way leads onto way, as Frost said, and I love that because it indicates a crooked road. But this idea, you know, real inertia, that just pushes you further and further down the path that you're on. And so, if you're not sure what you want to do with your life, and you're 18 years old, well you've got a problem, because society today is going to tell you, "You need to decide." And then they're going to say, "Well you need to go to school." And then they're going to say, "Not just any school, you need to get a four year degree." So you decide at 18 or 20 or whenever it was, "I'm going to be a lawyer." Where'd you go?

JORDAN: Well actually I went to undergrad at Michigan and then I tried to get a job at Best Buy. They said, "No, you have to sell CDs, you can't build computers," even though I was building computers at the time for neighbors and friends. They said, "You've got to sell CDs first, then you can move up later," and I thought, "Well the answer to this is clearly more education." So then I applied to law school and I went to Michigan Law and I thought, "I don't really want to be a lawyer but more education is for sure the

way to get around that. You know, I'll be able to do anything with this great law degree."

MIKE: What'd it cost you?

JORDAN: Counting undergrad, plus grad, at least \$200,000. Minimum.

MIKE: So there it is. You're how old at this point, when you get out of --

JORDAN: When I got out of law school, 26 years old, I graduated with a -- just soul crushing amount of debt.

MIKE: This is what we're doing to our kids, man. And it kills me because, why in the world would anybody ever be forced to decide what they have to do when they're 20 years old? It's -- I'm still figuring it out.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: And it's just an unhealthy, unrealistic, unnecessary amount of pressure. That pressure becomes inertia because once you decide, then you declare a major, and now you've written the first check. And the first semester is behind you, and then the second. All right, so now, with every passing day it's harder and harder to call an audible, and go, "You know something? Maybe I'm pissing up a rope here. Maybe this isn't for me." But no, 30 grand, 50 grand, 80 grand, 100, 120, 1 -- bang, bang, bang. \$200,000 in the hole, looking for a job now. As you described, in a shark tank --

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: -- essentially.

JORDAN: Now those jobs don't even exist anymore.

MIKE: They don't exist. But, the thing that kills me the most, isn't the fact that people have to live with the consequences of their decision. But, it's the money. It's the debt and it's the pressure

to borrow an unlimited amount of money. We're 1.3 trillion dollars in the hole. 1.3 trillion. There is by no metric, anywhere that I've seen, a shortage of lawyers. But there are 5.8 million jobs right now that exist that people aren't trained for. That don't require four year degrees, and they're sitting there. And we are so completely out of whack with the opportunities we're encouraging, and the opportunities that exist.

JORDAN: Surprisingly none of those 5.3 or 5.8 million jobs that exist -- none of those were discussed in our orientation at the university.

MIKE: No because, to our earlier point, those jobs are optically, cautionary tales. Very, very few people -- very few parents who didn't work in the skilled trades, go to bed at night thinking, "Gosh, I sure hope Johnny turns out to be a plumber or a welder." They don't wish it for them. Guidance counselors don't wish it for them. We've had dozens of guys, going through our program, welding, making over 100 grand a year and can't get their stories out. And when people read them they don't believe them. And when they believe them, they still go, "Eh. That looks really hard."

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

MIKE: So, you know, it's a problem. It's a mindset. It's societal, and it's systemic.

JORDAN: You know who can weld?

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: This one right here.

MIKE: Yeah? TIG? MIG?

FEMALE: MIG.

MIKE: MIG welding, yeah. Well, I mean, opportunities for women welding are huge right now. Small hands --

JORDAN: That's right.

MIKE: -- very precise movements. Yeah, no I hear that all the time.

JORDAN: But unfortunately she followed her passion and learned how to weld, so, there you go.

MIKE: Well there you go.

(laugh)

MIKE: And now you're sort of a camera woman.

JORDAN: That's right.

MIKE: Sort of.

JORDAN: Today. Someone's got to do it. Literally, today, someone had to do it.

MIKE: Trust me.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: I know.

JORDAN: So follow your passion. The verdict of this it seems like, is you're just not a fan of that little dingleberry of faux advice.

MIKE: Well. Thank you for that word by the way. It's got to get back in the lexicon.

JORDAN: I agree.

MIKE: Here on The Art of Charm, if we do nothing else but reintroduce 'dingleberry,' into the vernacular --

(laugh)

MIKE: -- you know, I think we can take some credit for that. No, I would never simply go out and say, "Oh, passion is no good." You know I would never say, "Don't follow your passion." What I said was, "Don't follow your passion, but always bring it with you." Because the truth is, why in the world would you want to do anything you weren't passionate about? See on *Dirty Jobs*, example after example. This is the reverse commute, this is the salmon we're talking about. You know, the salmon aren't following their passion, although they are trying to spawn I suppose, so you could make a case for it.

JORDAN: There's some passion involved.

MIKE: There's some passion. But when I -- when I think about, you know, like the septic tank workers I met, there was a guy in the first season. Les Swanson was his name, up in Wisconsin. I wound up in a tank with him. One of these pumping stations on the side of the road. Like up to our nipples in other people's filth, knocking cholesterol off the side of the walls in about 120 degree environment. It was truly heinous.

(laugh)

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: And I looked at him at one point and I said, "Les. let me ask you something man. What did you do before this? How did this happen to you?" And he said, "I was a -- I was a guidance counselor in high school. And then I was a psychologist." And I said, "You've got to be kidding me. Why this?" Without missing a beat he said, "I got tired of dealing with other people's ****."

(laugh)

MIKE: But, you know, aside from the obvious laugh line, the joke is really on the rest of us. Because, back to his house, at the end of

the day -- his summer house, by the pool, with the margarita machine, and his two trucks, and his five employees. You know, once again, a guy doing a thing most people don't want to do, creating not just a job for himself, but a business. And his whole rap to me was, "Look, this was never my wish fulfillment, but I got to a point where I said, 'Let's just put the opportunity before what I want or what I even think I want.'" And, again, I don't want to say it with certainty because then it will sound like a bromide, but the idea, when I say the reverse commute, what I mean is, start with the opportunity, figure out how to be great at it, and then figure out how to love it.

JORDAN: So the passion comes from becoming great at your craft.

MIKE: Yeah. Or deciding that you're going to love it. Look I mean, I know that sounds glip. This is a bit of a stretch, but why are the divorce rates among arranged marriages so much lower than in the West?

JORDAN: Yeah I mean, there's a lot of theories about that but I think the reason is because in cultures -- well one of the reasons is because in cultures where they have those arranged marriages, they realize, "Look, this comes before the love part, and the love part comes into the marriage later. And we build that through hard work instead of just hoping that it falls from the sky, from the ether."

MIKE: So I don't mean to say that anybody can marry anybody and live happily ever after. Chemistry matters. That thing we call passion, that basic attraction, that basic willingness to do a job. That has to be there. But this idea, that that person is responsible for your happiness, or that that job is responsible for your success, that's a nonstarter. It's a trap.

JORDAN: That's true. Yeah, we just got engaged actually a few months ago. We're getting married soon.

MIKE: Congratulations.

JORDAN: As part of it, since she and I are such big fans of your work, I thought, "What do I have to do to somehow involve Mike Rowe in this particular element of the story?"

MIKE: Am I going to marry you guys? Is this what's going to happen?

JORDAN: Oh, well since you're offering, I think it's a great idea. I think that's a great idea.

MIKE: Well where do you want to do it, here?

JORDAN: It's around here.

MIKE: If I can't actually perform the nuptials, a recorded song?

JORDAN: Perfect. Yeah.

MIKE: A heartfelt message? Something like that.

JORDAN: She's so excited now. That, by the way, was not planned. You've hit the big time, if I can throw that world around there, relatively late for a lot of showbiz people. Where -- you -- this all hit off in what, your early forties maybe?

MIKE: I was 44 when Jobs actually went on the air --

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: -- in an aggressive way.

JORDAN: To what do you attribute that, if not, "Well I'm following my passion, the TV thing," or were you doing just that and it happened to work out.

MIKE: Again, there is a real element of Forest Gump --

JORDAN: Got it.

MIKE: -- in this, you know? But, I'd come to a point in my life where I was actually -- my smugness, with respect to my business plan, regarding touching everything like it's hot, right? Like I was doing infomercials. A lot of them. I was doing guest spots on soap operas. I was, you know, doing animated projects. It didn't matter. I didn't care what it was, and I didn't want to know what it was. None of that was germane. I just wanted to get paid, and do good work, and then forget about it. And the truth is, that can only last you back to passion. You know it's just -- my passion was in figuring out an overall lifestyle and congratulating myself for having five months off a year where I could do stuff I really cared about. The switch that flipped on *Dirty Jobs* just meant that there was no more time off. So now, the thing I'm working on, it has to satisfy both a bank account and it has to satisfy my time, which is now completely consuming, and I have to love it. You know? So I didn't have to work love it because there was enough contrariness in the show, like -- Again, here I am remember, back to the GOP and Discovery. I'm the guy at Discovery, with the show that Discovery does not want you to like, in the same way the GOPs look at those 17 people on stage going, "Yeah look, this is the Jeb Bush show. We want you to like him and maybe that guy over there, and maybe her. Anybody but him."

(laugh)

MIKE: "Not the guy in the middle." *Dirty Jobs*, for the first season, really was like that. And it was so much fun to go to work every day and know that I was in this place of real cognitive dissonance. It was a fun show to promote, it was a fun show to do, and it just gave me permission, really to weigh in on any kind of work, because we tried it all.

JORDAN: So *Dirty Jobs* was the Donald Trump of Discovery channel.

MIKE: Your words, not mine. And there have been others since. 32 shows have come out of *Dirty Jobs*. Like you can draw a straight line back to --

JORDAN: The garbage pickers, and the Alaska --

MIKE: Sure, swamp people --

JORDAN: Ice road truckers.

MIKE: All that stuff. Ax men, those were all segments on *Dirty Jobs*. Even Duck Dynasty.

JORDAN: Yes. Yeah.

MIKE: Now Duck Dynasty fundamentally different format but all of a sudden Duck Dynasty shows up on A&E? No one knows -- I mean what? It was confusing enough with Dog the Bounty Hunter. Where's the art? Where's the entertainment, right?

JORDAN: Right, true.

MIKE: So this tension between brand and program, and brands who fall deeply in love with their own bromidal (sp) version of themselves, always interest me. Because that's when they're most -- that's when they're most vulnerable, you know? The GOP knew exactly who their constituents were going to vote for. Except they were totally wrong. And Discovery knew nobody would watch a show with a middle age smart Alec making poop jokes in the sewer.

JORDAN: Whoops, yeah.

MIKE: Oops. Now what? Better stick your hand up a cow's butt --

JORDAN: Yep.

MIKE: -- see what happens.

JORDAN: Season 12.

(laugh)

JORDAN: Still reaching into mare's stuff.

MIKE: Feces from every species.

JORDAN: That's right.

MIKE: Heh.

JORDAN: That's right. I made the mistake of watching the lamb testicles episode shortly before prepping for this. Yeah, it's one of the most memorable episodes, at least for me. Because it caused a visceral fetal position. Not repeated convulsion, just kind of a dry heave...

MIKE: You recoiled.

JORDAN: I recoiled.

MIKE: Yeah. It's normal. Anytime someone removes the testicles from a creature with their teeth.

JORDAN: With testicles, yeah.

MIKE: You have to step back and take stock. That was probably one of the most important episodes that we did.

JORDAN: Why's that?

MIKE: Because it was my first attempt to do everything right, you know? I mean I'd had this really passive aggressive relationship with the network, they were getting flooded with complaints from OSHA and Humane Society and PETA, and we sort of had this detente, you know. And we're going to keep the show going but I'm going to be a better team player. Right, so I go in and I say, "Look, I want to do this story on lambing, you know? And I want to do all the parts of lambing, and part of that's going to be castration." And they said, "Well what's that involve," and I said, "Well let me tell you what I did, I called the Humane Society, and PETA and they both told me the same thing. They said, 'The

approved method of removing the testicles from a lamb, is to take a rubber band and put it around its sack, thereby retarding the flow of blood to the testicles. And then they turn black over a couple days and then they fall off." I'm like, "Oh, my God, really?" And I'm like, "So that's the PETA approved way?" And they're like, "Yeah, that's the way we do it." And I said, "Okay." Now in my mind I'm thinking, you know visually, this will be good TV. Weird, but I've never put a rubber band on the testicles of anything. My species or anything.

JORDAN: Sure you haven't.

(laugh)

MIKE: So we get there, you know, and we basically get all the lambs together and we start the process. And Albert, the rancher, he pulls out a knife, and he grabs the scrotum between his thumb and his finger and he pulls it toward him, and he cuts the tip off the scrotum and then he pushes it back and these two pink thumbs emerge from this fleshy sack and he -- before I could stop him or do anything, he just bends down and he bites them and he snaps his head back and he rips them out by the root.

JORDAN: Oh, here comes that singular convulsion.

MIKE: Yeah. No, but look, but imagine me. I've got three cameras rolling.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: And I'm standing here thinking, "You know something? I -- this is not what the Discovery Channel has in mind," so I'm like, you know, "Okay stop, Albert. You're doing this thing, right, that people do in reality TV, you're trying to shock me."

JORDAN: Hamming it up.

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: You know, he was a great guy, big old mustache. His wife Melody, the two of them they're just like, "What are you talking about?" I'm like, "You can't bite the balls off a sheep, dude. We're in a family show. We're in 220 countries!" He goes, "Well what do you want us to do?" I'm like, "Use the rubber bands." He goes, "Oh, God, the rubber bands?" I'm like, "Well yeah, the rubber bands." He said, "Okay." So we put another sheep up there, Melody spreads the legs and Albert goes in puts on the rubber band with this special device that widens it and then you put them over the scr-- ugh I can still see it in my head. Anyway they put the lamb down on the ground and he looks at me exactly -- with the exact expression you would have if you were a lamb that had a very tight rubber band around your nuts.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

MIKE: You know it's troubling. And he staggers, takes a couple of steps away and then stops and looks back at me over his shoulder. And then he walks to the corner of the pen, you know, makes a circle and then just lies down and starts quivering.

JORDAN: Aw.

MIKE: And I say to Albert, I'm like, "Jesus, how long is this going to go on?" "He'll be in hell for about two and a half days."

JORDAN: Oh, that's terrible.

MIKE: Meanwhile, the one he had just, you know, bit down on --

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: -- prancing around. This is literally two minutes later. Not a care in the world. No blood, you know, hanging out with his mom and trotting around. So, that episode was important because right there, on international television, we had proof

that you know, the business of being in compliance, but not out of danger, all that stuff we were talking about before --

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: -- there it is. I went to the expert. I was told precisely how this works. Precisely what to do and I was absolutely wrong. The way Albert had been doing it, for generations, was kinder to the animal, it was more efficient in the field. You needed two people instead of three. It was a long list of logical reasons, to bite the balls off sheep. It's actually more sanitary too if you can believe it.

JORDAN: How can that be true?

MIKE: Because dude, those testicles, they're in a thing called a scrotum. They've never been --

JORDAN: Oh, sure. Yeah, sure, yeah.

MIKE: -- exposed to the air. You don't linger down there. You get in, and you know --

(laugh)

JORDAN: You get in, you get out.

MIKE: You get in, you get out. Poof, Bob's your uncle. Anyway, a peripeteia.

JORDAN: Yes.

MIKE: It was a peripatetic moment when you realize, you know, once again, "Everything I thought I knew about removing the nuts from a lamb was wrong. What else am I wrong about?" And if you can ask yourself that question, honestly, then you're going to find answers.

(laugh)

JORDAN: I'm sure, yeah. I'm sure if biting the testicles off a lamb is wrong, I don't want to be right.

(laugh)

MIKE: T-shirt.

JORDAN: A t-shirt or a hat, or both possibly.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Why'd you insist on doing the show in one take. Is that true? I heard you do it in one take.

MIKE: Yeah, I mean, we did look back specials where I was actually doing a version of wraps, and I would occasionally circle back and get those and we -- of course we shot lots and lots of footage that was never used --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- so when you see outtakes at the end of the show, that's always what that is. But, I insisted on two things. The first was never a second take because the second take, by definition, has to be a performance.

JORDAN: Right, sure it's just redoing something that happened but --

MIKE: Yeah.

JORDAN: --towards slightly to the left.

MIKE: Or, you know, clean up your language, stuttered a little bit there, some bullcrap direction thing, right? That's what TV does, take 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 15, until somebody somewhere says, "Ah, it's perfect." Yeah it's perfect but it's a performance. So, I wanted the show to be a love letter to take one. That was the thing. And you know, the argument was, "Well, what if we have a technical

problem? What if a plane flies over?" I said, "I don't care." So we got a thing called the truth cam, which was just an extra camera man with a behind the scenes camera who always stayed wide. So if Doug's camera broke, or Troy's or somebody somewhere had a problem, I could always turn to the truth cam. Step out of the scene, and sort of narrator chronicle the issue.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: We didn't use it in every scene but we used it in every show. And toward the end, we used it -- we relied upon it, because, you know, that camera proved -- this was before you saw the behind the scenes --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- stuff.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: So the second thing was -- it tied to that. I need the crew in the show. They don't need to be the same crew. It doesn't matter, but we're in the process of shooting a show. And so to pretend that we're not, that's a fundamental fiction with the viewers.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: The best way to make sure that take one is used, is to contemporaneously make sure the crew is allowed to be in the shot and that way you don't have to say, "Ah I have to shoot it again because I got," you know, "I got Troy's leg," or "I got, you know, Jones' boom was in the shot." I don't care if his boom's in the shot, you know? We're in a sewer. We're up on the Mackinac bridge, 600 feet up, you know, changing nuts. I mean it's like, what matters? You know, what matters is the -- it's not the shot. It's the work.

JORDAN: Speaking of the sewer shot, when you're in the sewer in San Francisco in these super old little brick round tunnels. The

episode -- there's a rat that like, crawls over your leg or something like that, and you just kind of freak out a little bit, and I thought, "Why is it a stinking sewer rat that cracks the heretofore impenetrable Mike Rowe veneer of cool?"

MIKE: You're talking about a scene that's cut into the open of the show, it goes by in about a second. The truth is, that episode, was the first one we did. And that moment, you know, that's something I talk about all the time around the country, when people ask. My transformation, my peripeteia, from a host to a guest, happened in the sewers of San Francisco. I was trying to host Evening Magazine down there. The very first episode of Somebody's Gotta Do It, which became *Dirty Jobs*, that's me in the sewer, trying to look to the camera, and welcome the viewer into the sewer. But at every turn, I was thwarted, you know? I was thwarted by a lateral that exploded next to my head, and covered my cameraman with crap and the side of my face.

JORDAN: Oh, man

MIKE: I was thwarted by roaches the size of my thumbs. Thousands, tens of thousands of them, everywhere. And the final moment, that rat appeared on my shoulder. It was a big rat man, it was like the size of a loaf of bread.

JORDAN: Yeah it was a big rat.

MIKE: It was a big rat.

JORDAN: I'll give you that.

MIKE: You know it dove off of my shoulder into my lap and I was wearing these thigh high hip boots. And if you squat down in thigh high hip boots, they gap, right? So the rat goes into the gap, and starts burrowing in a southbound direction.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

MIKE: I jump up, scream, hit my head on the ceiling, a shower of roaches comes down, I fall faced forward into this fast moving chocolate tide --

(laugh)

MIKE: -- of truly disappointing effluvium and face first in it, you know? And I push myself up and I spit something out of my mouth that never should have been in my mouth, and I turn to the guy I was working with, Gene Cruise, and he said in that moment, the thing that changed my career. He said, "When you're done screwing around with the local wildlife, why don't you come over here and give me a hand?"

(laugh)

MIKE: And so that's what I did, rather than host the show, we replaced rotten bricks in the sewers of San Francisco.

JORDAN: I was watching that episode and another one in that airplane recently and this woman three rows or two rows behind me goes, "Yeah I've seen this guy before. How does he keep his fingernails clean?" So the public's got to know, how do you keep your fingernails clean? I mean, how do you go to dinner after that and go, "Man, am I hungry?"

MIKE: Yeah, you don't.

(laugh)

MIKE: When we were shooting that show, it really and truly was -- it was a band of brothers kind of thing. We didn't go to nice places. We stayed in Motel 6s, we stayed in Super 8s. We stayed in hotels with numbers in the title. If you see a number in the title of a hotel --

JORDAN Like Four Seasons --

MIKE: Like no, four is cool, if the number is spelled out.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: F-O-U-R.

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: Great. But if it's the 4, the number 4, no. Don't go in there. The Super 8, the Motel 6. Numbers, for whatever reason, don't scream 5 star luxury. But I lived at Super 8, Motel 6, for years shooting that show and I can't tell you how many times -- not to your point about dinner but just, you know, you come back to the room and you just smell like *** man. Or something worse.

JORDAN: Or worse.

MIKE: I would leave my clothes and my shoes in the tub and I would sign a headshot and leave 20 bucks and a letter of apology for the maid because I couldn't take them home. You know? There's no way I could take those --

JORDAN: Oh, you left them there for disposal.

MIKE: Oh, yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

MIKE: Yeah. Oh, man. No that's why I was saying, I haven't bought clothes in 15 years.

JORDAN: So if you're in a Motel 6, and you saw a feces covered, or worse covered pair of jeans and boots, and a headshot and you're wondering who the squiggly autograph was from --

MIKE: It was me.

JORDAN: -- it was Mike Rowe.

MIKE: It was me. The tasteful letter of apology to the maid.

JORDAN: Oh, my gosh. Celebrities get a lot of perks and you know, free food, free travel, free clothing. A lot of my show's fans wanted to know what the biggest perk was. But I seem to recall you being granted some special VIP porta potty privileges on short notice.

MIKE: Are you talking about the show or are you talking about about a very disappointing -- Oh, I know what you're talking about --

JORDAN: Yes.

MIKE: Sick *****, why would you? I went for a jog, back when I used to care about exercising. This was probably seven years ago. I left my apartment, in Cal Hollow, and I jogged across the Golden Gate Bridge. This what -- is this what you're talking about?

JORDAN: This is what -- yeah, I wanted to just get a rare glimpse into the iconaclass with this one.

MIKE: So what happened, for me, was I jogged across the Golden Gate. I had done my normal routine in the morning. I had as much coffee as you can sanely drink, and I had a big old breakfast and I, for the past couple of days had been, not struggling, but aware of some disappointment in my lower GI tract. Nothing that would preclude me from taking a jog, but I was aware of it. Anyway, it was a beautiful day. I jogged across the bridge. I was halfway back and it felt like an icepick was stabbed into my lower abdomen. A couple steps later, I felt it again, and it knocked the wind out of me. And my knees buckled, and it was so horrible, you know I -- All I could think of was, "God *****, it's so -- it all comes down to the O-ring, you know?"

JORDAN: Like the gasket.

MIKE: The dignity of the species. It all comes down to your ability to control this tiny little sphincter and I'm doing the math in my head. You know, at this point, I'm two miles from home. It's like labor pains. The stabbing is now coming every 90 seconds. So if

I run seven miles an hour, I'm two miles away, da, da, 20 minutes. You know, I'm just not liking any --

(laugh)

MIKE: -- I'm not liking any of the numbers but I've got to get off the bridge. Because, you know, a B list celebrity who soils himself on a national monument, that's the kind of press you don't need.

JORDAN: You don't recover from that too easily.

MIKE: I got off the bridge. I came around the -- down the Presidio and I realized I'm not going to make it. I am not going to make it. I am -- the ultimate humiliation is going to happen right there on Lombard and I walk right around the corner on Scott. And I honestly don't know what I was going to do. I didn't know if I was just going to stand there quietly and crap my pants.

(laugh)

MIKE: Or actually pull my pants down. I didn't know what to do.

JORDAN: Yeah.

MIKE: It was -- I'd lost my peripheral vision. I was hearing a buzzing in my ears --

(laugh)

MIKE: -- like nothing mattered except keeping that **** O-ring closed. But, like from Providence, you know, there was three construction workers, putting in, amazingly, a sewer line. And they had a porta potty next to them, and it was locked. Because in San Francisco you --

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: -- they lock the porta potties.

JORDAN: Somebody will live in there if you don't lock it.

MIKE: Yeah, people are dying to get into those things. So I said --

JORDAN: Case in point.

MIKE: I'd have done anything. You know? I didn't have any money on me or anything but I just said, "Guys, could I please get in here?" And the guy looked at me and said, "Hey, you're that guy." "Yeah," I'm like, "Please move quickly." He opened that thing, I got in there, and I mean, it was as close as close can be. But it just sounded like Bastille day, you know, and I came out and they were waiting for me, with their cameras. You know, so three selfies with three sewage workers, who really saved whatever dignity I have -- I've left at this point. But completely saved me.

JORDAN: And three selfies is a small price to pay, I think.

MIKE: I'd have paid anything.

(laugh)

MIKE: I'd have given them a finger.

JORDAN: Are you okay with the fact that you're a role model to so many people. I mean intentionally or unintentionally, through Facebook, television.

MIKE: Doesn't matter.

JORDAN: Has that changed your behavior at all in real life or online?

MIKE: Oh, I guess it has. I guess, yeah. It's odd because, so much about *Dirty Jobs* was subversive. You know, but that was 10 years ago. I'm not sure how funny it is for me to be as silly and irreverent as I was. You know, I run a foundation now --

JORDAN: Right.

MIKE: -- and I do some other things now, so I -- People don't really know exactly yet, what the default position is for me. Like, on this podcast I'm doing.

JORDAN: Sure.

MIKE: The way I heard it. I did one the other day, on the guy who invented a famous food. And he was a preacher. A reverend. And his entire world was errant against masturbation.

JORDAN: Ah yes.

MIKE: Right. So, I told this story of this man and the way his beliefs informed his diet and the way his followers ultimately adhered to what it was he was getting at. But in the course of telling the story, you know, you have to say the word masturbate like 50 times and --

JORDAN: Right, sure.

MIKE: -- and I didn't want to do that because --

JORDAN: It's a little crass.

MIKE: It's not crass, it's just -- the problem is, it's neither crass nor proper. It's clinical.

JORDAN: Sure, sure.

MIKE: So it's like testicles today make people weirder than balls.

JORDAN: Right, right.

MIKE: Because it's like, there's just something horrible about the specificity of it. So I just came up with, you know, every euphemism there was, you know? For corking your own bat, or polishing the spear, or burping the worm, or whatever you call

it. Spilling your sin sauce, you know, a thousand of them. And these get peppered through the entire thing. Well, my podcast is patterned after the late great Paul Harvey, who would really never talk about spilling one's heathen stew, right? And so -- so I got a lot of calls, people going, "Hey, maybe not so much with the, you know, with the masturbating anymore."

JORDAN: Really? We listened to that one several times.

MIKE: You would. Dirty --

JORDAN: You got us, nailed us there.

MIKE: -- dirty couple.

JORDAN: She would pause and go, "Wait, okay I get this one, what does this one mean?"

(laugh)

JORDAN: I mean, we knew that they meant that and I'm explaining the physics of like, corking a bat --

MIKE: Corking a bat, yeah.

JORDAN: -- for example, yeah.

MIKE: Look, my goal with that podcast -- I have several but bringing young lovers closer together, as their nuptials approach, through short stories, fraught with self abuse, that's certainly an aspirational goal. A consummation, devoutly to be wished.

JORDAN: Top three purpose of the show for sure. Yeah, we'll link to the show on the show notes, as well, for people who are listening to this and want to listen to Mike Rowe's podcast. But tell us about the foundation as well. Tell us what you're doing with that and why it's important, first of all.

MIKE: It's called mikeroweWORKS. It evolved out of *Dirty Jobs*. In 2008, as you might recall, the economy kind of crapped the bed.

JORDAN: I remember. I got laid off. Best thing that ever happened to me.

MIKE: There you go.

JORDAN: That's why I'm doing this now.

MIKE: So, by 2009, unemployment is 9, 10, 11 percent, all over the country. Every single day, that's the headline. Every single day, all these people can't find work and the narrative became: it's because opportunity's dead. On *Dirty Jobs*, everywhere I went, in every single state, I saw help wanted signs. Just everywhere. I mean all 50 states. And I just started to feel like, you know, I think maybe there's another narrative, unfolding here, that nobody writes about. And you don't have to dig far. Back in 2009, there were 2.3 million jobs that were wide open, and we had a skills gap. It was an inconvenient truth for the prevailing narrative. Because how can opportunity be dead if companies can't find 2.3 million people to do the jobs they have? Clearly opportunity's not dead, something else is. So, mikeroweWORKS began as a PR campaign, really, to call attention to jobs that actually existed. And that's really all it was ever supposed to be but then fans of the show started writing in all these apprenticeships and all the job training programs and things that existed in their state. So we built a trade resource center, where anybody could go in 2009, 10, 11, and see what opportunities in their state exist that you're never going to hear about or read about. And then, we started awarding work ethic scholarships to people who wanted to avail themselves to those opportunities. So I started putting the arm on big companies, I started selling crap out of my garage. Collectibles, rare, and precious.

JORDAN: C-R-A-P, the acronym of course.

MIKE: Our CRAP auctions, you know, kind of a throwback to my old QVC days. And we raised and gave away close to 4 million dollars so far.

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

MIKE: In these work ethic scholarships, so -- I mean I hate to say legacy because it just sounds precious. But mikeroweWORKS evolved out of *Dirty Jobs*. Its main function today is to provide work ethic scholarships, and make as persuasive a case we can -- as we can, for the jobs that actually exist. That's what we do.

JORDAN: What kind of jobs exist that people weren't finding? Welding and same sort of trades that we were discussing before?

MIKE: Sure. You could start with welding. I work with a school in southern Illinois called MTI. They got a call from Newport News, right? Ingersoll Rand, ship builders. "How many can you get us this month?"

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

MIKE: "We got 50."
"How many do you need?"
"800."

JORDAN: Oh, my goodness.

MIKE: So it's that. It's all day long. All day long. We think about work, and we think about jobs in this country like, you know, they're these static things that exist in a vacuum. Jobs might, but opportunity is not that and so many of these jobs require you to do a couple of things that are really out of favor. Like retool, retrain, reboot. But mostly relocate. They're not right there, necessarily, waiting for you. And it's really, you know, not to bash on millennials by any stretch, because whatever bad thing you have to say about them, it's just simply a product of the people who raised them.

JORDAN: Sure. Yeah, absolutely.

MIKE: But, this idea that the job of your dreams -- the idea that it even exists, is fascinating. The idea that it exists at a pay rate that will satisfy your lifestyle is doubly fascinating. And the idea that it will exist at a pay rate that satisfies your lifestyle in your current ZIP code is the height of madness.

JORDAN: That's what people expect a lot of the time.

MIKE: I run into it all the time. "Yeah, look this opportunity sounds great but what do you want me to do? Move to North Dakota?" Sure.

JORDAN: Yeah, how soon can you get here?

MIKE: I got dozens of people who'd do it. Every month. "What, do you want me to go to the Gulf?" Yeah. That's where they're making \$140 an hour right now, welding.

JORDAN: Wow.

MIKE: I mean so yeah, you're going to have to go there. And here's the thing, it's hot. And it's cold up there. We're not in San Francisco.

JORDAN: Right yeah, where it often is cold and hot -- at the same -- sometimes it's in the same day.

MIKE: Totally. So we call them work ethic scholarships because we make our applicants make a case for themselves. You know? You've got to make video, you've got to write an essay, you've got to provide references, you've got to sign a sweat pledge. I wrote a sweat pledge. 12 point statement of belief one night, after I drank a bottle of wine. And if you're not willing to sign it, then it's entirely possible this pile of free money, might not be for you.

JORDAN: Before we wrap Mike, I've got a story for you and the format may seem a little familiar. This is based on a letter from a fan of

the show one Mr. Matt Pennisi (sp) who found out through out boot camp, the school that we run in L.A., that I'd be interviewing you, and I thought you might appreciate this. The letter reads as follows: "Dear Jordan, congrats on interviewing Mike Rowe. However, I've been harboring a secret vendetta against Mike Rowe for years. I think once you read this you'll understand why. In fact, I'm quite interested in what he has to say for himself, if you get the chance to tell him the following story. In the year 2010, I was the intended recipient of a pair of World Series game 1 tickets, courtesy of the company for which I worked. Originally, my friend's father, one of the company's executives, had planned to go. But at the last minute, something came up and the tickets were once again available. I called my friend to see if he was up for the trip, if we could somehow play hookie from work and pull it off. But by the time I went to claim the tickets, I was informed they were already gone. After a bit of prying, my friend's father told me that he had given them to his friend Mike Rowe, who already lived in San Francisco. I of course objected on two counts. One, it was not made clear that the ticket lottery was open to anyone outside the company, and two, I'm sure if Mike Rowe wanted to go to the game, he could have gotten his own **** tickets."

MIKE: That's reasonable.

JORDAN: "It's important to note that I harbor no ill will toward Mike Rowe, and in fact my wife and I only donate to the mikeroweWORKS foundation every year, because it's the only organization we can both agree to give money too. Signed, Matt." But, there's more --

MIKE: Sure.

JORDAN: -- also from Matt. "Hey Jordan, quick update. Hope this makes it in time. First, I've called my father to get more details for you, and it seems, that the story about Mike Rowe getting those World Series tickets is actually not true. As it turns out, the tickets were actually given to the brother of the CEO. The reason he told everyone that he gave them to Mike Rowe, is

because everyone thinks so highly of Mike, nobody would be angry about him being the recipient of the tickets. In other words, the tickets were sniped and he used Mike Rowe as a cover to make that happen. Sorry for the confusion, I guess you don't have a story for Mike Rowe after all, and I apologize for that. But au contraire, Mr. Pennisi (sp), because Mike, as it turns out this time you were recruited for one final dirty job, the filthiest of them all, serving as a scapegoat, for a ticket hustle, perpetrated by a mattress company executive. An executive, who in a past life, served in another highly esteemed position. That of your college roommate, Mr. Mike Thompson. Anyway, that's the way I heard --

MIKE: Good grief. Mike Thompson, unbelievable.

JORDAN: This is from Mike Thompson's kid's friend who happened to be a fan of The Art of Charm. And I said, "I'm interviewing Mike Rowe," and he goes, "I've got a bone to pick with that guy."

MIKE: Good grief that was a long run for a short slide, as we call it.

JORDAN: Yeah.

(laugh)

MIKE: Mike Thompson's kid, goes to Bucknell, I think. And so his friend probably does too, I don't know. But that's -- hard to know what to say to that except last time I heard Mike Thompson's name -- we talked a couple years ago. He reached out of the blue, but he was a guy -- he used to work for Black and Decker in Baltimore, Maryland. And this guy he was a freak of nature. He looked like he fell off a Wheaties box and he also looked like every quarterback for every winning college team you've ever seen. I always looked at him with something akin to naked envy. I'm happy now he's in the mattress business. Good for you Mike.

(laugh)

JORDAN: Mike, thanks for coming on.

MIKE: You're welcome. Thank you.

JORDAN: I appreciate it. Great big thank you to Mike Rowe. He's got a podcast, The Way I Heard it. If you haven't heard it, the format will sound just like the way I ended this show, wasn't that clever. But really, such an awesome interview, such a cool guy. I just -- I want to be Mike Rowe when I grow up. The problem is, I don't think I'm ever going to grow up. And if you're really inspired by what Mike is doing, the mikeroweWORKS foundation is amazing. A very, very worthwhile charity if there ever was one. That's at mikeroweworks.com. Again, we'll link that in the show notes. It's a very worthwhile charity. Jobs that actually exist, whodathunkit? If you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Mike on Twitter, we'll have that linked in the show notes as well. Remember you can tap the phone screen, the show notes should pop right up. If they're not, then tell me why. I also post a lot of stuff on Twitter that never makes it to the show. There's a lot of articles, insights, and other ways to engage with me and producer Jason. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Our boot camps, our live program details, those are at bootcamp.theartofcharm.com. If you come to boot camp, you'll join thousands of other guys who've been through the program. They'll become your network for life. They're all around the world. A lot of people have gone backpacking through Europe, with other AoC alumni. They've gotten jobs at AoC, they've met up with other AoC alumni while traveling. I do that all the time. They've couch surfed with them, even gotten jobs and formed lifelong friendships. I just love the program. It's the central part of what keeps AoC, AoC. So definitely check that out. And remember, we sell out a few months in advance, so if you're thinking about it a little bit, get in touch with us ASAP. Get some info, plan ahead, find out what we're all about. And I also want to encourage you to join our AoC challenge. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge, or if you're driving or walking, you can just text the word charmed, C-H-A-R-M-E-D to the number 33444, that's charmed to 33444. We'll send all that to your inbox. It's about improving your network and connection

skills, inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you, and like I said, I'll send you the Toolbox episodes as well. Lots of practical stuff on reading body language, having charismatic nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, mentorship, persuasion tactics, and everything else that we teach here at The Art of Charm. I also throw videos with drills and exercises in there. The idea is for that to make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's theartofcharm.com/challenge or text charmed in the U.S. to 33444. For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to theartofcharm.com/podcast. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor, and the show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or share it on the web. Word of mouth is everything, so stay charming and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.

