

>> John Voliva, thank you so much for being here today on the Living the Pharm Life podcast. You have such a rich history both at Purdue and in the state of Indiana, first as a Purdue pharmacy student. And now as the owner of Hook's Apothecary, a private compounding pharmacy in southwest Indiana, thank you so much for being here.

>> Thank you for having me.

>> To get us started, can you tell us how you got started at Purdue?

>> Well, it was really kind of born into Purdue, if you will, so got a history of Purdue alums within the family, my grandfather was actually playing football here.

From what we always heard, he had the record for the longest fumble return for a touchdown by an offensive lineman in the Big Ten, supposedly. I don't know if that was actually true or not, but this is all back in the 20s and Purdue has just been in my life.

I went to my first Purdue football game when I was five or six months old. Just been at campus the whole time, and my parents said the whole time that I could go anywhere to college. They weren't gonna limit me to Purdue, they weren't gonna say, this is where you have to go.

But if I was gonna go into pharmacy school, it was gonna be here, there was no other options and I was not against that. Both my parents were ardent Purdue fans, we came up for football games all the time, a couple basketball games through my high school. And from an early age I knew I wanted to be a pharmacist, from 5th, 6th grade on, I was born into a family of pharmacists, a couple of sisters, a brother in law, my grandfather, my great grandfather.

And so, it was in my blood that I was gonna do pharmacy. I didn't know what I was gonna do with pharmacy, but I knew that this was gonna be the career that I had. And I don't know, that struggle of figuring out what you wanted to do and where you wanted to go, never was that for me.

So it wasn't just natural to come up here to West Lafayette and experience this, and what a great experience it was. And it's paid so many dividends going forward in postgraduate life, and doing the things that we do within our pharmacy and within the industry and within our community.

>> Do you come from a family of pharmacists?

>> Yeah, it's a pretty deep family of pharmacists, my great grandfather was John A.Hook. He established Hook's drugstores here in Indiana, in Indianapolis in 1900. He grew that from one store to quickly, a second store in 1902, 1903 that then ballooned to about 40 to 50 stores until his son, August F.Hook, took over.

And Hook's drug stores at its peak was about 350 to 400 stores throughout a five-state area here in the midwest, and so, strong, strong family history there. My grandfather August, who everybody called Bird, we knew him in the family as T-bird because he loved thunderbirds. He had a storied career here at Purdue, played football, played varsity football here in the 20s.

He actually played water polo, too, of all things, Purdue had a water polo team back in the day, and he had very, very strong ties to Purdue. And I think that's kinda

where my love of Purdue kinda started and kind of trickled down to me because he was very proud Purdue alumni.

His daughter, my mother, was a very proud Purdue alumni, and it just trickled down for me. So you won't catch me in Evansville without some sort of Purdue paraphernalia on. In the wintertime, I've always got a Purdue jacket on, summertime, I've usually got some sort of Purdue polo on, it's just gone all the way down.

>> And I heard you met your wife here at Purdue, is that correct?

>> Yep, we met here at Purdue, it was kind of interesting, we're both from Evansville. We both went to different high schools, at that point, we were in a lot of the same things in high school.

We were both in choir at our respective high schools, I was a bit of a theater nerd, she knew some people in theater. Actually, we come to find out, she had seen me perform at my high school. A couple of years later, we kind of realized all this, but in what is now P1, the first professional year is actually when we met and kind of typical thing.

We dated and went on from there, we got married in 2001 after we graduated and still together to this day. A lot of stories you hear from, especially in the pharmacy school, a lot of people meeting and meeting their true loves in pharmacy school and going on to marry them from there onward.

In our group, I think we've got two or three that are the same boat. So, yeah, we had a great history here, a lot of fun times, and that basis of that community of pharmacy love. We both love Purdue, we both love coming back to campus, we both love experiencing everything that has to go on with Purdue football games and everything like that.

So much so, our first daughter, our eldest daughter, is now a freshman here in the BSPS program, so we've kind of come full tilt from that standpoint. But our three children are big Purdue fans, and we're sitting there watching basketball games all the time, coming up for football games all the time.

So just a great sense of community we've always felt up here and continue to feel up here every time we come back up. So what about you, any history of family, of pharmacists, any parents or what kind of brought you into pharmacy? What was the precipice for you to pursue this as a career?

>> Yeah, no pharmacists in my family, but my grandmother was a nurse, she worked in pediatric diabetes.

>> Wow. And we used to talk about patient cases, and she used to talk about her work, and just the joy she felt from it was contagious. And she was a leading expert in her field, she wrote the book, quite literally,

>> On pediatric diabetes, so it was really great for me to see her kind of as this woman taking charge in this field that originally didn't have that many women leading the charge.

So she was a huge inspiration for me, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do within healthcare, nursing never really felt right to me. And then in my sophomore year of

high school, I took a chemistry class, and I loved it. I thought it was the coolest thing, I had so much fun, and I told my teacher's like, this is really great, I don't know what I wanna do, though.

She asked me if I had ever considered pharmacy, and I was like, yeah, I don't think so, I don't think so, that seems like a lot of standing. And a CVS or a Walgreens, I'm not sure if that's for me. And she was, no, no, there's so much more to it than that, that's a great way to go, but there's so many other things you can do, too.

And then from there, I'm a very Type A person, so I did all the research, I made myself a spreadsheet even, so I made a spreadsheet, it was a color coded spreadsheet, too. I actually still have it, I look at it every once in a while, and I'm like, wow.

My spreadsheet skills have really,

>> Advanced since then, but it was really like my grandmother's influence. And then my high school chemistry teacher that got me into pharmacy, and pharmacy got me here today.

>> Awesome, I've heard a lot of stories like that. It's not so much the family that's pushing you into pharmacy, or you see that history of pharmacy within the family.

But it's a lot of the love of chemistry, obviously, have to have that. But I've heard over and over again from students that there was that influential teacher that was in their life. Somewhere along the line that kind of gave them that spark and said, here's something you might be interested in, so that's awesome, that's great to hear.

>> Yeah, thank you, so who, Hooks Apothecary is a compounding pharmacy. Could you tell me more about what a compounding pharmacy means, especially in comparison to a traditional community pharmacy?

>> Yeah, so when we talk about compounding pharmacy, we're really talking about a pharmacy that is specialized in customizing medications for patients.

That's really kind of the broad 50,000 foot view of what we do. So from a day to day standpoint, what we work with is taking raw materials, raw chemicals, and transforming those into dosage forms for the patients that we serve. It's really kind of back to the future, if you will.

If we think about pharmacy practice in the turn of the 20th century, 1900s through really kind of the 1940s, that's what pharmacists did. They got powders from the drug manufacturers, and they would manipulate those drugs into tablets, into suspensions, into suppositories, whatever the prescriber wanted. Or in some cases, whatever the prescriber said, okay, this patient needs this drug.

Pharmacist you figure out what's the best dosage for them, and they would. When mass manufacturing came online with lilies and roaches and those manufacturers, that part of pharmacy really kind of fell away. But it was always still part of pharmacy practice. Even we went through up into the early 80s, it was always still there.

It just was practice on a much smaller scale. And in the most part, at that point became the manipulating of finished drug dosage products, tablets and capsules and

things like that, and making them into something that the patient needed. In the early 1980s, a company was started out of Houston, Professional Compounding Centers of America.

That really brought back to the forefront compounding as it was practiced at the turn of the century. And in those 40 to 50 years, now that we've been from the establishment of PCCA, we've got about, I would guess, good eight to 900 pharmacies across the country that just specialize in compounding.

And that's what we do at Hooks Apothecary. We don't fill what we call the traditional medications. We don't do what a typical retail pharmacy, community-based pharmacy would do. We are solely focused just on compounding. And from that standpoint, what that means is that we really have the ability to impact any facet of medicine that comes across, be it dermatology, gastroenterology, OBGYN, pediatrics.

Really, every day is a new adventure when we go to work, cuz we don't know what that next question is gonna be, what that next prescription is going to be walking in the door. And we really specialize in manipulating those drugs into dosage forms that are gonna be more specialized to the patient, either from a palatability standpoint or from a dosage form.

That's gonna be something that's gonna be more easier for the patient to take. Or in our case, one of the biggest parts of our business is veterinary compounding. As you can imagine with pets and animals, there's not a lot of dosage forms outside of tablets and capsules that are out there.

And these patients specifically need specific doses or they need a new dosage form. If you've ever tried to give a tablet to a cat, that's always an adventure of its own. So we do a lot of work with our local veterinarians to do transdermal medications for cats or liquids for dogs, or we've treated guinea pigs and pet rats.

And we work with the zoo and do things for the rhino and the elephants and the penguins that are there. So it's really a fun facet of pharmacy because you get to really touch a lot of different facets of medicine that I don't feel like you get to have that ability to do at a traditional retail pharmacy practice.

>> Yeah, that's really cuz I had no idea about the veterinary aspect of compounding, so it's really cool. Not only have you owned your own business, but you've worked in a lot of different areas of the pharmacy profession. Could you tell me what your career path has looked like?

>> It's not a straight line, for sure. So one of the stories that we talked about today within the leadership forum, just the ability to take your pharmacy degree and go wherever from that. And getting that experience within the pharmacy school early on and opening your eyes to what possibilities are out there is very important.

So when I started in pharmacy school here at Purdue, my main goal was to go work for Walgreens and climb the corporate ladder and be something in leadership in Chicago. And that was where I saw my professional life developing and going towards. I quickly realized in talking with people that came through Purdue that gave presentations and getting some experience into the community retail pharmacy, that probably wasn't gonna be a good fit for me.

I had an entrepreneurial bent to myself. I had that feeling that I wanted to own my

own thing and work in pharmacy in that capacity. So over the course of a year, I thought, well, Walgreens may not be, or any corporate job may not really be where I really wanna go.

And part of that too is I realized I was gonna lose that touch of patient care very quickly if I went that route. And so at my time at Purdue we had a professor of nuclear pharmacy named Dr. Stanshaw. And he opened my eyes to nuclear pharmacy and that felt like where I was wanting to go.

That was the opportunity to the possibility of owning my own radio pharmacy and operating in that space. And I love nuclear medicine, I love nuclear pharmacy. I loved everything about nuclear pharmacy except for the early hours. When that came on board and I learned about that, that was a deal breaker for me.

And my fourth year, what is the P2 year now, during the old master's program we had a couple come from Houston to present on compounding, Dave and Kay Sparks. Dave is still the CEO of PCCA and his wife who was in charge of training compounding within their facility and teaching pharmacists and technicians how to compound.

They came and visited and within an hour's talk my life changed. I realized this is what I wanna do. I get to the ability to run a lab if we wanna talk about it. It wasn't the traditional lab of organic and those types of things, but I get to run a lab, I get to play there and experience making different dosage forms and at the same time still have patient centered care.

I still be able to have that touch of patients and be able to really own my own destiny and run my own pharmacy and do what I wanna do from that aspect and not be working the corporate side of things. And so like I said, in the span of an hour my life changed and I knew that's what I wanted to do.

And directly after pharmacy school we started Hooks Apothecary with my sister Kathy in 1999, and ran that for all the way through 2012, 2013.. And at that point I decided to take a job with PCCA and we moved the family to Houston. Spent five years down in Houston and had many different hats down there.

Was working in marketing at one point for a couple of subsidiary businesses that PCCA owns, went to into the training department. So I actually stepped into case Barks's role and was overseeing the training of compounding pharmacists and compounding technicians and did that for a couple years. And then moved into legislative and regulatory affairs, always had a bent for the law a little bit.

I had a line that understood regs and law and being able to read that and synthesis. Size law and be able to communicate that effectively to pharmacists in a way that they would understand. That was kind of a skill that I had, and so I took that and we started a public affairs group within PCCA, which I was a part of, and I was dealing with state legislative and regulatory affairs.

Was meeting with state boards of pharmacy and state pharmacy associations about where compounding was and where it needed to go. And then spent one year with our trade association for compounding and was the executive director of that. Until that pool of Evansville came back and wanted to be back home and be back with family and moved back to Indiana and came back into the pharmacy, and that's where I'm at today.

>> Thank you so much for sharing, especially the moment when it clicked. I know for myself and for a lot of my peers, we have a lot of anxieties about am I going into the right thing, am I doing what I want to be doing? And to hear that sometimes things just click, that was great to hear.

What do you think are some of the current fields that students can expect to go into, like the growing fields coming up?

>> Well, that's a great question. There's a bunch of different ways they can take this degree and kind of really write their own story. And that's one of the things I'm hoping through the leadership forum today and what the students learned from that through this podcast, through these various channels.

That opening their eyes to just opening their minds and their hearts to the possibilities that are out there. It's not just clinical hospital pharmacy work. It's not just community-based retail pharmacy work. There's a lot of different facets that can go into that. But in traditional pharmacy, I can foresee in the next five to ten years a real shift in the way that we're practicing pharmacy.

We're seeing a lot coming down from Washington, DC, in the terms of reforms of various different things that I think will change the pharmacy practice model dramatically. And the ability for pharmacists to really be able to practice to the top of their license, to be paid for their cognitive services, to be paid for their patient interactions, and not be so tied to the dispensing of medications.

It's gonna really kind of swing towards more of what we can use our mind for, to be able to improve patients lives and improve their medication therapies going forward. Within the field of nuclear medicine, there's a whole new channel of that and radiopharmaceuticals and things that are just coming on board that is exciting.

And that book is still yet to be written of what exactly that's going to mean and what it's going to develop into. And so it's an exciting time to be into pharmacy. The current crop of pharmacy students that we have now that are graduating, the pre-pharm students that will be coming in the next two to three years, this is going to be a very interesting time for pharmacy.

I think it's going to be overall very positive, and I think we're going to see pharmacy moving into directions that, quite frankly, I don't know if we even can see right now. That's where our possibilities now, again, are. Unopened book, much like we've not seen in the history of pharmacy, I don't think we've seen for 40, 50, 60 years.

And so that's going to be very interesting. From your standpoint, from what the college is talking to you and the experiences that you're seeing, are you kind of coming to the same conclusions. Or is there something different that I'm not mentioned or seen or heard from today that the pharmacy is talking, that the school is talking about?

>> Yeah, I think definitely with the nuclear pharmacy, I think that's going to be really big. I do a lot of work with Dr Weatherman, so I might be a little biased, but I also think AI and just the advancing technology is going to play a really big role in the revolution of pharmacy.

And I don't know if we can truly understand what that looks like yet, but I think that's going to be a big deal, especially once it gets more refined. We've had a lot of class assignments where you ask AI different pharmacy questions and then rate how

reliable these responses are.

As of right now, they're not always the best responses, but in a couple of years, even one year, it's crazy to think about what that's going to look like.

>> And that was one thing I didn't even scratch the surface of today when I was talking with students.

Is that possibility of AI I almost hazard even talk about, because we just don't know what direction it's going to go into at this point. We're seeing such new things come out and then things kinda get reeled back in. It's like, that wasn't the direction we wanted to go.

We need to go in a different direction. So as a business owner, I'm definitely aware of AI. We've experimented with it a little bit, but we needed to come to a little bit more of what's a good word to it? Not fruition, but kind of needs to age a little bit more for us to really kinda see, I think, where those tools are really gonna be helpful for us.

I think from a business owner standpoint, from a marketing standpoint, being able to write marketing copy and do things like that, that's where I've really played around with AI more than anything else. And it seems like that's a really fantastic tool to be able to tell it some prompts and for it to lay out three to four paragraphs of information that at the very onset, it's 90% there and just needs a little more massaging to go from there.

That part is exciting for me, but as it relates to medicine at its core, it's gonna be exciting to see where that develops.

>> Yeah, thank you, I really appreciate your insight. So switching gears a little bit, I know we talked about how you started in Evansville, went to Houston, you went back to Evansville.

Could you tell me more about what you love about it?

>> Love about what, exactly?

>> Like Evansville.

>> Evansville, yeah, it's the typical, smallest big town you've ever lived in, I guess is kinda the best way to describe it. It's tough, as we're raising a family and raising children, we've definitely gotten into that mindset of the teenagers wanting to leave home and wanting to explore other places.

And we've heard multiple, multiple times, we're never coming back to Evansville. We're never coming back to Indiana. And I look at them and I said, that was the same thing when I left Evansville when I was 18 to come up here. My mindset definitely was never to come back to Evansville.

But that pull of the hometown sometimes is just too strong to overcome. And so familiarity is one, it's just to be able to come back to your hometown, family is another. That's part of it, but Evansville is just very much a very good mix. Both that agricultural mindset, that very down to earth people of the land, if you wanna say that I put it of it's a very strong German community on top of very.

Till you experience it, it's kind of hard to describe what it is about Evansville, about

southwestern Indiana. That is a strong draw, but that small town mentality. People care for each other, people really look out for each other. The community is fairly tight knit for the size that it is.

We have an MSA of about 300,000 people, so it's not a small town, but it has that feel. But overall, family, the familiarity, just being able to come home and know this is home, it's always felt like home. That's what we came to, and that sense of belonging to the community is a big part of it.

>> Yeah, that's great, thank you so much. So, keeping on the line with familiarity, Purdue day of giving is coming up. Very big day, both for the College of Pharmacy and the university as a whole. What's so special about day of giving to you?

>> That's a fascinating question, out of everything that's in here and.

And when Purdue day of giving came online, I was very jaded about it. I was just kind of, what are we doing? There's enough philanthropy going on, there's enough people giving back to Purdue. What is the purpose of this? I believe it came online when we were still in Houston, if I remember right, or we just came back to Indiana.

So I was kind of a little bit distant from the university at that point, both physically and mentally. We hadn't been back to campus, so I didn't know exactly what was going on. And that first year, once it got done, I was just, wow, this is a day for the university to really come together and give back and have that feeling.

Even though you're in your home of Evansville or you're in Florida or you're in Australia or wherever you're at in the world, to have that feeling of coming home to Purdue. It's unless you've participated in that and seen everything that Purdue puts out about day of giving through the different channels that they go through.

Through YouTube, through Facebook, through all the marketing channels, you don't really know what that experience is like. And when we make donations throughout the year to various things within the university, John Purdue Club and the school pharmacy. And within APHA and Trap and Ski club, which I was involved with at know we do that throughout the year, but that day when we give, it feels different.

It feels you've got, I don't know what the number is off the top of my head, you've got thousands, tens of thousands of people across the globe that are giving to Purdue on the same day. And it's just a really awesome feeling, and so if you've not participated in that before, at least pay attention to what's going on that day and what is going on on campus that day.

It's a fun day on campus from what I've seen, I wanna to be up here one of these days while day of giving is going on, because it looks like it's a blast, but it's hard to describe. When you click that button and you make the donation, you feel like you're a bigger part of a community versus being in the middle of November and you're up in your John Purdue club membership.

It's okay, yeah, I'm supporting athletics again, great. But it just feels different on that Purdue day of giving. So I'm interested to know as a student, what's that experience been like to have kind of that rallying going on around that specific day every April?

>> Yeah, it really does feel like a holiday, especially just going around campus, I remember, I think it might have been.

It was either last year or the year before. I was walking down third street and someone in one of the Purdue gathers pulled up next to me, and they're, would you like a lollipop happy day of giving?

>> And that was just one of those experiences, I was, this is a holiday, and this is really one of the big days on the campus for the College of Pharmacy, for the entire university.

We had a carnival one year, there was a Ferris wheel. Me and my friend, we stood in the shadow of the Ferris wheel, playing like, massive. It's just, it's a moment to kind of reflect on all of the accomplishments that the university has done. Both the alumni and the students, and kind of just be thankful that Purdue has been such a big help for all of those.

At least that's how I feel about it as a student, I know without being a Purdue student, I wouldn't be here with you today.

>> And there's a lot of other things in my career I wouldn't have done. I wouldn't be working in my nuclear pharmacy in Rhode Island without Purdue behind me.

So it's a day to be thankful for me, as well as just thankful for all of the people I get to know at Purdue, thankful for all of the things we're able to do together.

>> Nice, that's very cool, and like I said, one of these days we're gonna to make a trip and make it a point to come up here and experience that.

Either while our daughter is here at Purdue, or later on, we're gonna to come up and experience it full board, we wanna to see it. We wanna to see how it goes.

>> I'm telling you, it's a holiday, you got to make it. Put it in your calendar.

All right, I have one final question for you. So I've been told you're a big sports fan, specifically produced sports. If you could have dinner with any coach or player in any of produced sports history, who would it be and why?

>> So we were talking a little bit earlier.

This was the question that I focused on the most, because I wanted not only a good answer, but I wanted something that really resonated more to me in my heart. And so you could sit there as a student that went through the mid 90s here at Purdue. You could rattle off Gene Katie and Glenn Robinson and Drew Brees, and we were a big fan of Stu Schwagart when he was here playing football.

Dean Barker brought that up during the presentation today, it was kind of weird how all that kind of comes back. There's a lot of people that we got to see play or we saw on television play or make such of an impact on Purdue athletics. Joe Tiller, it would be really cool to meet him and have a meal with him to get his story coming from Wyoming and kind of just reinventing football, Big Ten football and what it meant.

And it was no longer gonna to be just five yards in a cloud of dust and run the ball at time. We're gonna to open this up and actually have a passing game which then brought in Drew Brees and brought in Kyle Orton and brought in all these greats that we had in the early 2000s.

I've been lucky enough to meet a couple of people, just happenstance that I've met Gene Katie in just a weird situation. When Purdue was at the Elite Eight in Louisville

a couple of years ago, I got to meet Brian Cardinal, who was one of my favorite players when I was here at Purdue.

And shortly after that, the custodian was near and dear to my heart when he was a player and a great individual. So when I approached this question, I'm, well, I mean, there's always that chance. There's gonna to be that weird thing that somehow me and Drew Brees or some, we're in some place with Drew Brees and I get to meet him.

I'm, we check that checklist off. So I finally came down, the person I would wanna to meet most would be John Wooden. Both from a basketball standpoint, his career here at Purdue, his career at UCLA, and that run, the incredible run that he had at UCLA. But then his leadership and coaching fundamentals, the pyramid that he invented, that's outside here at know just to get the insight of putting that together.

How did you do that? How did this come together for you? Unfortunately, I've read some about him, but have not had a chance to ever do a deep dive on his history. Or really kind of his leadership part that's one of my bucket lists to do is kind of really get deep into John Wooden and how he developed all that.

But what a fascinating, fascinating individual to have gone through Purdue, graduated here. Had a great basketball career here, but then just make that ten, hundred thousand times more than what it was with that career at UCLA. And to touch so many people with his leadership mentality, I know coach Painter relies on the pyramid a lot with what he does here.

I know there's thousands of coaches that do the same thing and to have that kind of thing that you did. It'd be awesome to meet him when he was right, before he went to go coach UCLA, and he goes, I got this thing. I know what I wanna do, that excitement that he's got this thing on paper, and I know this is what's gonna to work to catch him in that moment.

That would be fascinating, and that would be who I'd go for.

>> Yeah, fantastic answer.

>> All right, well, thank you so much for being here today. It has been an absolute honor having you here on the podcast, and I know everyone is really excited to listen to your story.

>> I appreciate the honor has been all mine. And look forward to seeing what Purdue pharmacy does with this space and what you do with your career.

>> Yeah, thank you so much.

>> Thank you.