

## **Episode 53: Dave won \$113k on a game show**

Welcome to What Was That Like. I'm your host, Scott Johnson. This is a show where we talk to regular people - people just like you are just like me - who have found themselves in an extremely unusual situation. We'll hear their stories and get inside their head because we all want to know what was that like. More information about each episode at [whatwasthatlike.com](http://whatwasthatlike.com). Here we go.

Got a fun story for you today!

Our guest for this episode is Dave, and Dave recently found himself \$113,000 richer, and he attributes that to some practice, some luck, and a pretty good talent for solving word puzzles. He won that money by being a contestant on Wheel of Fortune.

We discussed:

- How he prepared for the game
- How he actually got on the show as a contestant
- The special instructions he was given
- What Pat Sajak and Vanna White are REALLY like
- How he's handling taxes on his winnings

And there's a bonus story toward the end of our conversation about how Dave actually saved someone's life (unrelated to his game show appearance).

On the website for this episode, you can see a video of Dave solving those puzzles and winning all that money, a trip to Barbados, AND a new BMW.

And if you'd like to join the other listeners who support this podcast, you can do that at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](http://WhatWasThatLike.com/support).

And now, here's Dave.

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### **Scott**

Dave, thanks for coming on the show.

### **Dave**

Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure.

### **Scott**

The funny thing about Wheel of Fortune is that everyone's watched it. Obviously, it's pretty universal. Everybody knows the rules. Everybody knows how it's played. I'm sure a lot of people at home - kind of like Jeopardy - sit at home and think, "Oh man. If I was on there, I'd be winning every time". How nervous were you when your game first started?

### **Dave**

Truth be told, I wasn't incredibly nervous because I had been riding the calm wave of a CBD gummy that I had eaten about an hour prior. I took proactive steps to mellow myself out and get myself centered before I started the game. So, I was not too frazzled - a lot of deep breathing and calm.

**Scott**

How long in advance did you prepare or plan to go on the show?

**Dave**

So, I had actually been auditioning for Wheel Of Fortune for a little over 10 years. I think the earliest memory I have was when I was like 21 or 22 when I could attend the audition events at local Indian casinos. So, I had been trying for quite some time. For this particular go-around, I auditioned at the great new Indian casino about an hour north of San Francisco - back in September of 2019. My episode ended up airing on April 8, so it was about a half year's time between auditioning and actually seeing myself on TV.

**Scott**

There's a little delay there. Yeah, definitely. Is that the normal way people get on the show? I thought they had to send in a videotape of themselves or something?

**Dave**

It's one of the multiple options. Some people do submit audition films online. You can record yourself at home being over the top exuberant or ebullient, and show off your homemade wheel you may have made. People come up with some pretty clever things for their online video submissions, but the alternative is to attend an in-person event with, what they call, the wheel mobile. So, it's a big old Winnebago RV that they've decked out with the picture of Pat and Vanna, and a picture of the wheel. Then, they have a local crew that kind of does contestant pre-screening at these events.

**Scott**

So, that's how you got on?

**Dave**

Exactly, but not even the typical way. These events are kind of open to the public. You show up, and put your name and contact information on a little colored ticket. They put all these huge tickets in a huge drum. Then, they draw up about 5 to 6 people at a time, and they bring you up on stage to do a little bit of the chit-chat interview with the fake host. Then, after everybody's done their little personality exposé, they have you play a mock version of the game, which is a little bit more low-tech. So, instead of the monitors - which Vanna would sashay across and touch letters on the screen to reveal - it's just a bunch of little whiteboard tiles and a marker. They fill it in by hand. It's pretty adorable.

**Scott**

When someone gets selected to be on the show, is it kind of like a vacation and they fly you out there and pay for everything?

**Dave**

That couldn't be further from the truth. So, it's actually one of the reasons that they offer a guaranteed \$1,000 minimum to appear on the show - it's like their "Thank you for paying your own way to and from Los Angeles to come for taping." So, you're required to pay for your airfare and hotel. If you want to stay with a friend nearby, you're welcome to do that. They do offer the Sony discount rate at certain hotels nearby, in Culver City, that are easy to get to the studio from. Other than that, you're paying for your meals, your airplane ticket, and your hotel for the journey.

**Scott**

When you're at home, do you usually watch the show and solve it before the contestants do on TV?

**Dave**

I fancied myself a pretty decent puzzle solver, which was evident during my episode. Watching at home, I'm pretty fond of yelling at the TV. I would watch with my parents and they'd be like, "How did you get that answer already?" "Well, I've been staring at these puzzles long enough, for almost 25 to 30 years. You get used to certain patterns and a lot of that just becomes obvious."

**Scott**

Did you have a particular strategy in preparation for the game?

**Dave**

Yeah. So, when I found out that I was going to be on the show - I think I got my letter in the mail around mid-February - I was unemployed for reasons entirely unrelated to the ongoing pandemic. I had a bunch of free time on my hands aside from raising the puppy. So, I started playing the Wheel of Fortune mobile game - almost as a part-time job - probably 15 to 20 hours or more a week, in the month leading up to my show. Also, that mobile game uses old puzzles from previous seasons of the show. So, you kind of get used to seeing historical puzzles, seeing what's been used, figuring out the patterns, figuring out words that get repeated pretty often, that sort of thing.

**Scott**

So, that's an app on your phone.

**Dave**

Yeah, it's called Wheel of Fortune Free Play. It's like the official, Sony-sponsored, mobile version of the game.

**Scott**

Okay. All right. We should mention that we can hear the puppy there in the background.

**Dave**

We do. Sir Augustus Theodore Corgington Esquire is being a little chatty this afternoon.

**Scott**

When you mentioned the name of the pup on the show, Pat kind of made a joke about it. What was it that he said?

**Dave**

He said, "Even just naming him sounds pretty exhausting" and I had to concur with that.

**Scott**

It's a long name.

**Dave**

I think he's just not used to me wearing these headphones. It's something new that he's never seen before.

**Scott**

Also, he's hearing your voice and not getting all the attention too, probably.

**Dave**

Exactly.

**Scott**

Okay. Let's talk about the day that you were there, on the show. Now, what a lot of people don't realize is there are multiple episodes filmed on the same day.

**Dave**

Yeah. So, typically, they'll take 5 to 6 shows a day. Mine was a 6-day taping. So, in my case, they were filming for the Great American Cities week, honoring the San Francisco Bay Area. So, that was the first 5 shows of the day. Then, the sixth game - they just called it America's game. It's like the generic, non-special-themed week. Then, they just intersperse those episodes throughout the season. So, they'll do a special theme week honoring a city - like Surfing Safari Week or Cruise Getaway Week. Then, occasionally, they'll just have generic episodes like mine.

**Scott**

So, you said yours was the last one filmed that day?

**Dave**

Correct.

**Scott**

Did they tell you to show up at a certain time later in the day? How did they know?

**Dave**

So, we all have to be there at the same time in the morning, bright and early, at 7.30 am because we all have to get our briefing by the production team, the legal department, and the contestant coordinators. It is a marathon event. So, the shuttle picked us up at the hotel where we were staying at 7 AM. We got to the studio by 7.30 AM. If I'm not mistaken, I was off the lot after the end of the show taping after I signed all my paperwork and then getting ready to get in a Lyft to the airport at 6.45 PM or 6.50 PM.

**Scott**

That is a long day, especially since your show was the last one and you're supposed to come on like you're fresh, enthusiastic, and chipper. I mean, that's the end of a long day. You're probably feeling kind of tired already.

**Dave**

It was pretty exhausting. We were more or less sequestered. So, after the call from 8.15 AM to 8.30 AM in the morning, we have to put all our cell phones in a locked storage cabinet that we don't have access to until after our show is taped and we're signed, released, and ready to go home. There was just a lot of information, coaching, rules, regulations, standards, and practices paperwork to fill out, so we were very busy the whole time. It was just a completely different experience because of the sequester aspect.

**Scott**

It kind of sounds like being on a jury.

**Dave**

In a sense but it was really entertaining to be able to watch the other 5 games being played. So, you kind of get a sense of how to comport yourself, what sort of things the production team is looking for, what to do, and what not to do.

**Scott**

Yeah, that does seem like it would give you a little bit of an edge to learn from the mistakes that the ones who went before you made. Was there a rehearsal? Did they give you any kind of instruction?

**Dave**

Yeah. So, we actually did get a pretty thorough rehearsal. In the morning, we drew lots to see which of the 18 contestants would be playing against each other and in which order. Then, we drew numbers to figure out which player would be in which position behind the wheel. So, that was already set out towards the beginning of the day. Then, later in the morning, we finally got released from the green room. We got to go into the studio, stand behind the wheel, and take our promo photos. They lined us all up and started adjusting the height of the podiums to make sure that we were all equally looking facing the camera. Then, they gave us spin technique lessons. So, they teach you the fine art and finesse behind spinning a 2200-pound wheel.

**Scott**

That is a heavy wheel. So, what is the trick to it then?

**Dave**

What they advise is that they want you to do this thumbs-up sort of grip. You wrap your 4 fingers around the spoke and leave your thumb up. You reach past the flipper of the player to your right and you pull it towards you, then push away. They were very adamant about it. We all got tons of practice spins. They were almost like drill sergeants perfecting our technique and making sure we did it right because they didn't want us having rings or our fingers getting caught, anything like that.

**Scott**

Yeah, that's something I wouldn't have even thought of. Do they tell you to over-enunciate because it really sounds like people are saying words in a way that's not how normal people talk.

**Dave**

Yeah, that's definitely one thing that the production team stresses. In the green room, right before we started, they have us do diction exercises and just say things like "hitting" and "dancing". They're just making sure that your letters are clear and crisp because with so many letters sounding very similar like T and D, N and M, they just want to make sure that the show flows properly. So, they don't have to constantly be like, "Did you mean N as in Nancy or M as in Mary?"

**Scott**

Yeah, I've never heard Pat ask anyone that because I'm sure it probably happened in the decades that he's been doing this show, but I'm sure they do all this to plan ahead for stuff that they know they can anticipate might go wrong.

**Dave**

Exactly. They are also cognizant of players coming from all across the country. So, they may have a regional dialect that could affect how they say certain things. I have a friend from New Jersey, who pronounces water almost like an O sound to it. So they're cognizant of these sorts of things because it could sound slightly different for somebody else than it would be for someone like me, but it's still technically a correct answer.

**Scott**

Now, you mentioned on the show that you perform with the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus. Did the fact that you are on stage sometimes help you during the game?

**Dave**

I really think it did. I think it was beneficial for a number of reasons - primarily because I'm used to being on the stage. I'm used to being in front of a crowd. I've been a soloist with the chorus before, so I've had those kinds of high-intensity spotlight moments that can be pretty nerve-racking. So, that definitely prepared me for the nuances of being on stage and under bright lights and also having clear diction and a loud projecting voice - which are 2 things that they always really liked contestants to have on stage. So, combining that with some decent puzzle-solving skills, I think it made for a good contestant.

**Scott**

You've been training for this for a long time.

**Dave**

Oh yeah. It's funny. My parents tell me stories of when I was about 2.5 - 3 years old. I would toddle around the house and be like, "Mom, I want to buy a vowel". My parents like to credit me or wheel of fortune for teaching me how to read at a very young age. So, that show has always been a part of my life. My uncle was on it in 1981, I believe, and I'm just following in his footsteps.

**Scott**

Wow. 1981. That show's been on forever. What was the year it first started?

**Dave**

I want to say it was the late 70s. I feel like I should know this - given just how much I've read about the show in the intervening time - but it's definitely the late 70s. They're on season 37 right now of the current Prime Time iteration. However, there have been daytime versions, special evening primetime editions - Wheel 2000 was a thing, briefly. The core Wheel of Fortune primetime experience as we know it is in season 37.

**Scott**

It's changed quite a bit as well over the years. I remember back in the early versions, in the end, you didn't get cash. You could only pick from all the kinds of junky prizes.

**Dave**

Oh yeah.

**Scott**

The ceramic Dalmatian.

**Dave**

The infamous Dalmatian.

**Scott**

I'm sure people are glad now they can get stuff that's a little more valuable. Can you talk about your opponents, George and Chad? How did you get along with them?

**Dave**

We had a chance to get to know our fellow contestants pretty well during the taping day. As I said, we were there altogether from 7.30 in the morning through the middle of the evening, like dinnertime. So, we got to know each other pretty well, just hanging out in between briefings, hair, makeup, and watching all the other games being taped. I thought they were both pretty entertaining guys. It was very rare for there to be 3 men playing all together on Wheel of Fortune, especially when it's not a military-themed week or Father's Day week. If I recall correctly, the last time there had been 3 male contestants in 1 show was in, like, 2014.

**Scott**

So, you said they drew the names randomly.

**Dave**

Yeah. So, what happened with my episode was that there were 5 episodes being taped for the San Francisco Bay Area-themed week. Since I had been a San Francisco resident for 12 years - just prior to moving before my taping - they were keeping me as an alternate for the San Francisco show. They said, "Okay. In the event we have somebody who bailed and can't make it, you need to step in. We'll have you fill in for 1 of the first 5 shows. Otherwise, you'll be taped for show number 6." It turns out they had 1 other alternate besides me and she was also on the docket to be a fill-in for the San Francisco shows. They had 1 vacancy, so they drew lots. I basically had a 50-50 shot of being in 1 of those first 5 games, or being at the end. It turned out I was show number 6 as planned. So, to fill out the other 2 slots for my show, they had 4 local LA area alternates. It was 2 men and 2 women. Then, we drew lots to see who would be my 2 opponents and they just happened to pick the 2 guys.

**Scott**

So, it was George and Chad.

**Dave**

Yep.

**Scott**

So, you got to know them throughout the day?

**Dave**

Exactly. I thought they were pretty fun. We had some pretty good camaraderie going on. We were kind of joking, "When's the last time you've seen 3 guys playing Wheel of Fortune?" I think 1 of the other jokes was how we were all standing up there like, "Yep. This is Wheel of Fortune White Male Privilege Edition" which definitely had that kind of feeling when you saw it on stage.

One of the things I thought was fascinating was, before we started taping - just about the time that we were about to start rolling camera - they were putting the final adjustments on our podiums to make sure we were all going to be the same height on camera. Chad looks to both of us and says, "Man. Savor this moment, boys". I was like, "You know what? That's a really cool, great thought". Then, he ends it with, "Especially you, Dave because this is the only time you're ever going to be as tall as the rest of us". For the record, I'm about 5'6" -ish and everybody else on stage had about 3 inches or more height on me, but I just was kind of taken aback by that. I was like, "That seems a little unnecessary but okay. I don't know if that's your psych-out technique or what have you but if that's the way you want to operate, then let's play this game.

**Scott**

Bring it on.

**Dave**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Yeah, and you were up for that challenge, obviously,

**Dave**

Certainly.

**Scott**

Obviously, everybody knows how the game itself is played. However, is the bonus round part a little more dependent on luck as opposed to the regular part of the game?

**Dave**

To a certain extent. Luck and skill are definitely both things that are required to be a great Wheel Of Fortune contestant. You could have some of the best puzzle-solving skills in the world but if you keep hitting bankrupt or lose a turn on the wheel, that won't do you any good. Conversely, you can get a \$5,000 spin on the wheel but if you get a dud letter, then you've lost control of the board and it's your opponent's turn. So, it's really the combination of the 2 - that's essential. The bonus round is almost always harder. Those puzzles tend to have more interesting adjectives and words and letters that aren't as common. You also have the choice of 3 different categories for your bonus round puzzle before you get there. So, there is some luck to that. I think I had the choice between event, thing, and phrase. I chose "phrase" because I thought "thing" was too generic. It turned out that the phrase that I chose happened to be something that I was able to recognize and capitalize on in a roundabout way.

**Scott**

Also, I love how you still say it very clearly.

**Dave**

I know. It's one of those things that's been really fun to rewatch because, if you look closely, you can just see my little head in the circle at the bottom of the screen, you can see me looking at the puzzle - when he asked me for my 4 consonants - how my eyebrows raised up, and I had this shit-eating grin on my face when I figured it out. Then, I call a W and a B - just oddball letters. Pat started to chuckle. He was like, "Oh God. Why did we even bother? He knows it. Just give him his money, and then, we'll all go home".

**Scott**

Yeah. He was making jokes throughout the game because every time you win a round, he walks over to you. Then, finally the last time he said, "Hey. Come over here. I'm tired of walking over there. You come over to me".

**Dave**

That threw me off guard but he is so on top of his game in terms of witty comebacks and making people feel at ease under the bright studio lights. Even when people are getting trounced pretty hard, he's the shoulder to cry on.

**Scott**

He really is almost the perfect game show host because he has the right level of humor and dialogue and, obviously, he's done this for so long. He makes a lot of money.

**Dave**

Yeah. Actually, I like to joke that - if my research and my math are correct - I believe I made more than double what he made for filming the same episode.

**Scott**

Wow, that's interesting. Of course. What is it? He only works one day a week or something, right?

**Dave**

Yeah. Typically, they do like 4 to 5 taping days a month, during the middle of the season. So, I believe it's something like \$52,000 an episode that he makes. My total cash and prize winnings was about \$113,000. So, if you do the math, I cleaned up a little better than Pat at the end of that day or, at least, for that half hour.

**Scott**

He's gonna do okay, though.

**Dave**

He'll live.

**Scott**

Now, one thing that I read is that you broke \$100,000 and winnings the hard way.

**Dave**

Yeah.

**Scott**

Can you describe that? What does that mean?

**Dave**

So, if nobody takes the million-dollar wedge into the bonus round from the main game - which is 1 tiny little sliver of the wheel that you have to land on - then call a correct letter and hit no bankruptcy for the rest of the game-- it's kind of a long shot for that to happen - if you make it to the bonus round with that, the top prize you're playing for potentially is \$100,000. There are 24 spaces on the bonus round wheel that you spin. Then, you pick up the envelope that you land

on, and that's the prize you play for. So, typically, 6-figure winners on Wheel of Fortune only happen when somebody wins 100,000 in the bonus round. The next highest prize is \$50,000 cash, which I think may only have 1 or 2 spaces on that wheel. So, not only would you have had to have had a pretty strong showing in the main game and win \$50,000 or \$60,000, but then you'd have to get a really high dollar cash prize and the bonus round. That's the only other way to reach 6 figures without hitting 6 figures itself in the bonus round.

**Scott**

Okay, here's what everybody wants to know. What is Vanna like?

**Dave**

Vanna White is legitimately one of the most authentically sweet human beings I think I've ever met in my lifetime. I'm so happy to be able to say that because I know the old adage is "Never meet your heroes", but she was absolutely worth meeting. One thing I will never forget was sitting there in the green room. It was 8.20-8.30 in the morning. We were getting our briefing from the production team or the legal team. Somebody was giving us more paperwork and information, and our heads were spinning. Then, who should walk into the green room but Miss Vanna White herself - before hair and makeup and still in street clothes. She was carrying a little purse that had her name Vanna White in puzzle letters with some of the vowels missing. It was just very iconic. We were all fangirling and freaking out. I noticed that there were some vowels missing from her bag with her name. So, when there was kind of a lull in the uproar, I said, "Vanna, Can I buy a vowel?" I'm sure she's never heard that one. Then, she turned to me and said, "Honey, I'll give you a vowel". From that moment on, I was like, "This is happening" while pinching myself.

**Scott**

She is, again, just a name that everyone knows. She's like an icon for America.

**Dave**

She really is. After I won my car in the bonus round, I got to have some chit-chat with her and Pat on stage. I was sitting there. I ran over to the car with my dad - who was in the audience with me - and hopped in the passenger seat. She was standing right there outside the car clapping and smiling, "Congratulations, I heard you needed a new car anyway". That was amazing. She was so authentically joyous for everybody who came to the studio that day.

**Scott**

That is awesome. When you do something as many times in as many years as she has, it would be really easy to just go through the motions, but that's cool that she's genuinely happy for you. I was going to ask you who that was - I saw the man on the stage with you when you were in the car.

**Dave**

Yep.

**Scott**

At the end, that was your dad?

**Dave**

That was my dad. So, I absolutely would have loved to have both my parents there but, unfortunately, at the time, my puppy was a little too young and wasn't fully vaccinated, so we

couldn't really have him kenneled. So, my mom volunteered to stay home and be a guardian for the puppy while I was down in LA. She got to watch from home afterwards.

**Scott**

That's what moms do.

**Dave**

Oh yeah. She's always there for me and for everything.

**Scott**

Was there anything that surprised you, when you were there in person, that you didn't expect?

**Dave**

The wheel was surprisingly small - it's much smaller than what I imagined it would be - and the puzzle board was much larger than I expected it to be. The wheel itself was probably only about 5 to 6 feet in diameter. So, it is small and hefty. When I was up there looking from the stage, it took up at least three-quarters of my field division. So it's pretty in your face.

**Scott**

I wonder how do they determine contestant qualification based on eyesight? Since the board is so big, it's okay if you don't have perfect vision. You'll still be able to see it.

**Dave**

I don't know about that but I know one of the criteria that were looked for in the in-person auditions was, obviously, puzzle solving skills, loud, clear diction, and logical letter choices. Then, there was also a 5-minute written test that you take at the callback audition. So, they give you 16 partially filled-in puzzles with categories. Then, you have five minutes to fill in as many of the blanks as possible.

**Scott**

Did you fill in all of them?

**Dave**

No, they actually didn't tell you the score afterward. There were definitely a couple that I left blank but I'm pretty confident I had at least 11 or 12 of them, if not a couple more.

**Scott**

All right. Let's talk about the money. Your total dollar amount for winnings was \$113,000.

**Dave**

Plus \$55. Let's not forget the \$55.

**Scott**

Okay. How did that break down from cash and prizes? You had a trip in there too, I think.

**Dave**

Exactly. So, the face value is \$60,900 in cash. The trip to Barbados for 2 was valued at \$10,990. The BMW X2 that I won in the bonus round was valued at \$41,165.

**Scott**

Though, your taxes are based on the overall dollar amount, right?

**Dave**

Correct. To a certain extent, yeah. So, everything that I won was considered taxable income at both the state and federal levels. So, I'm basically paying a marginal tax rate on everything. Now the thing with the trip, they stated the value of the trip was \$10,990 during the show. However, they always pick the most inflated value they can find for that trip just to make the numbers look better and more exciting on TV. When it actually comes time to book, the price I actually paid for those accommodations - or the price that the production company pays at the time of booking - is what I'll be able to claim on my taxes. So, based on research - I don't know if the prices are just artificially depressed right now because of the ongoing pandemic - I've determined that this trip, in reality, probably won't cost more than about 4 grand.

**Scott**

That's quite a difference.

**Dave**

It is quite a difference but it just means I'll only have to pay taxes on 4 grand instead of almost 11.

**Scott**

When do you get the money and the car?

**Dave**

The standard is that you'll get your check for your winnings 120 days after the air date, so it's about 4 months. Then, the car should come about 5 months after the air date. I've been hearing from other recent contestants that, because the production of the show is more or less shut down, they're not taping any new episodes. However, since there are people that are still working from home and processing all the winnings from previous contestants, things have been ahead of schedule by about a month. So, I'm anticipating getting my winnings in August but it could come in July if things are holding up according to current patterns.

**Scott**

So, I'm sure you've probably talked to an accountant or a tax specialist to make sure you optimize everything.

**Dave**

Yeah. I do have a tax guy that I will be talking to. But my educational background is in accounting and finance, so I kind of have a good sense of where to go as a baseline. This is the first time I've had unemployment income. I sold a house and I have a big 1099 Game Show income. It's a very complicated tax here and tax isn't my specialty. So, I'm definitely going to recruit some outside help for that.

**Scott**

Leave that to the specialist.

**Dave**

Yeah. One of the fun things, because it's 1099 income, you're considered an independent contractor for that one day as a game show contestant. So, you're actually able to write off your flight, your hotel, your meals, and your transportation for the taping. So, I made sure to keep all

those receipts and give my Lyft driver a \$35 tip coming back to the airport. I was wanting to spread a little bit of the wealth and I knew I'd be able to write it off anyway.

**Scott**

So, those were all expenses that you incurred in order to get that income precisely seems like there's no question about that. Are they because of the pandemic? I should mention that we're recording this in early May of 2020. Everyone's quarantined and this whole thing's going on around the world. Do you know if there's gonna be a gap in the airing of shows if they're not recording any new ones right now?

**Dave**

Yeah. The season, if I'm not mistaken, typically ends in July. My episode was taped on March 12. The very last day of taping before the shutdown was March 13. So, I was among the very last episodes to be filmed. We had no studio audience as a health and safety precaution. If you watch the episode, you'll notice that Pat wasn't touching any of the contestants. Normally, he would put his hand on your shoulder when he comes to talk to you. If you're a lady, he'd walk you by the hand from the bonus wheel to your mark on the stage but we didn't have any of that. There were 2 weeks that were filmed earlier in the season but I think they were travel or cruise-themed weeks. So, they deemed it not really appropriate to air right now amidst the pandemic and everything that's going on. So they have 2 weeks of episodes canned that could potentially be aired. Other than that, as of tonight, May 1, they're out of new episodes for season 37. So, it will be all reruns till the end.

**Scott**

They've got 30 years' worth of reruns. I don't think they're gonna run out of that

**Dave**

They're not hurting.

**Scott**

Are you going to keep the car?

**Dave**

I get that question a lot. As much as I would love to, unfortunately, I'm probably going to end up selling it just because I can't really justify upgrading to a car that's drastically above what I already have. Right now, I have a 2006 Scion that I had for about nine years. There's 90k on the clock. It runs like a kitten and costs me nothing to operate. I got a quote for just the insurance on the BMW that I won. Just the insurance alone is going to be almost triple of what I'm paying now on my current car. That doesn't even take into account having a premium gas bill and all of that. So, I figured I'd just pay the taxes to take the car. Then, turn around and sell it, get 5 figures out of it, and put the money to better use.

**Scott**

I think that's smart. I know there's probably a local dealer there in Culver City or in LA that provides cars for the show. Did you work a deal with that person or that dealer to give it back to them? How would you do that?

**Dave**

The thing I was told is to not bother contacting them until after the taxes are paid and everything. Then, they can actually legally release the car to me. That paperwork doesn't start

until about 90 days after the show airs. So, I have some time to think about it. I think it's really dependent on the dealership. Some people have said, "Yeah. You can basically get whatever the value of the car was on the show as a credit towards anything on the lot". So, if I didn't want the X2 specifically, and maybe they had something else that was more my speed, I can just take ownership of that instead. However, truth be told, I'm really not much of a BMW guy and I won from a BMW dealership. So, there's not a lot I can do there.

**Scott**

So for the cash that you're gonna have, after the taxes are all paid, do you have plans for that?

**Dave**

Yeah. I've done some back-of-the-napkin math and I figured - without any other interesting tax things that I might not be aware of after I sell the car for what I can get for it - I should have about 65 grand in actual usable cash. One of the things I had planned for that was putting some new siding on my little mobile home by the beach here. It's more of just a cosmetic thing to keep the value of the home up. If I'm going to be here for a while sheltering in place, it might as well look a little nicer. I've been doing other little fixup projects around the house. My parents needed a new washing machine because theirs went on the fritz, so I just bought them one recently. My brother's mobile home needs a little bit of help on the roof and some of the pavement of the driveway. So, I'm helping them out with that. Other than that, I'm just going to be boring and save and invest like I have been doing - and make this nest egg work for me a little bit.

**Scott**

You're spreading the wealth around. That's just a confirmation that you're not a BMW guy.

**Dave**

No, and that's the thing. I could drive this super fancy car and burn through my pockets a little faster or I could sell the car and use the money for better things.

**Scott**

Yeah. Do some good, right? Are you planning to be on any other game shows? Have you thought about that?

**Dave**

Definitely.

**Scott**

You seem like a natural for it.

**Dave**

I've been kind of obsessed with game shows. I would watch Game Show Network all the time as a kid - like vintage game shows. For whatever reason, they speak to a part of me. I just can't get enough of them. I've auditioned for Jeopardy every year since 2007, which was the first year they introduced the online test. I've made it to call back auditions twice. So I did, once in 2007 for the teen tournament when I was right on the cusp of turning 18 and then, once, I believe, 1 or 2 years ago. So, I've gotten very close within striking distance to Jeopardy as well but there is a cool-off period of sorts. Because of my appearance on Wheel of Fortune, I'm generally not able to appear on other game shows for at least 12 to 18 months from my original air date. So, I can still do it. I've actually had a friend from the Gay Men's Chorus who was on both Wheel of

Fortune and Jeopardy, so it is definitely possible, but I just have to be patient and bide my time a little bit.

**Scott**

I heard a story that you actually saved the life of another member of the Gay Men's Chorus by donating part of your liver. Do you want to tell us about that? What happened there?

**Dave**

That's true. I joined the chorus in the fall of 2015. It was right after the time when a fellow member of the chorus - by the name of Ross Woodall - was getting too sick to continue singing with the chorus. So, he bowed out. Our paths never really crossed when we were in the chorus separately. Then, he came back in one of the rehearsals that next season just to say hi to everybody because he missed seeing everybody and missed being there every week. He got up on stage during our break and made an announcement that just kind of took me by surprise. He said, "Oh. By the way, I'm still looking for a liver. It's been 7.5 years and I couldn't find anyone on the deceased transplant list". So, they were advocating for a living donor as the best option. I was like, "That takes a lot of courage and bravery to stand up in a room of almost 300 guys and ask for something of that magnitude". So I said, "I gotta go meet this guy".

So, during our break, I went up and talked to him. I just said, "I can't imagine what it's like to have to make an ask like that and to be waiting for 7.5 years, and make that sort of last-ditch effort". He had some pamphlets that said, "Hey, if you're interested - I know we literally just met - here's the website to UC San Francisco and their screener. You can just start with a blood type test. That would be the first step to finding out if you're even eligible from that perspective." I figured that I'm young and healthy. I don't even know what my blood type is. So, this might be just a good excuse to get that done. I ended up getting my blood type tested. I'm O positive, he's B positive, so we are compatible. They said, "Hey. This is a match. Do you want to want to keep going?". I said, "Okay, why not?". So, I spent 2 days at UCSF, just being poked and prodded in every way. They scanned everything possible - X-rays, MRIs, ultrasounds - you name it. Then, for every test that they did, they kept checking off the boxes. They were like, "Yep, this works. This works. This works. You're young. You're healthy with no other conditions. Your liver is just the right shape and size." So it ended up being that I, of all people, was the right match for that. With the blessings of my parents, we both went under the knife on 27 January 2017. I was under for about 8 or 9 hours. He was under for about 11, 12 hours, and we both came out the other side happy and healthy.

**Scott**

That is incredible, and for someone that you really didn't even know.

**Dave**

Yeah, but we got to know each other really well through the whole thing. So, once we found out that I was a match, I started to get to know him better. It turned out, we were singers from the same section. We were both upper second tenors but we didn't know that until we got to know each other. So, had we both been in the chorus at the same time, we would have been singing the same notes with each other. I found out that he also played the accordion. I play the accordion. The more we got to talking, the more we realized there were all these similarities between us that just seemed too coincidental to be a coincidence.

**Scott**

That is great to be able to do that for someone and be willing to do that for someone. Who said nice guys finish last?

**Dave**

Exactly. Yeah. Nice guys sometimes get the third highest main round score of all time on Wheel Of Fortune.

**Scott**

That's right. Well, Dave, it's a great story. I love hearing this kind of thing. I'll have the video of your show on the website and the show notes for this episode so that people can go and watch that. Thanks for sharing your story.

**Dave**

Thank you so very much. It's been a pleasure, and I can't wait to see the final product.

**Scott**

All right, hope you enjoyed that one! Dave's a great guy so it's nice to see him win that money.

And before we head out the door, I wanted to let you know how YOU can get involved and connect with me and the other people who listen to this show.

Probably the best way is to join our private Facebook group, which is at [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WhatWasThatLike.com). Lots of great discussions in there. Remember Dan, the prison consultant from the last episode? He's in there answering questions, and several other past guests are members of that group too.

You can also follow me on Instagram. I think I have about 8 or 9 thousand followers over there, and I post something kind of odd or unusual almost every day there. My Instagram is [WhatWasThatLike](https://www.instagram.com/WhatWasThatLike) if you want to check that out.

And, I'm ramping up my Twitter! I know Twitter is really huge for having conversations so you can always contact me there. My Twitter handle is [WWTLpodcast](https://twitter.com/WWTLpodcast).

And the show is LOTS of other places too. I'm not going to give you all the links to these places here, but you can find What Was That Like on YouTube, Roku, Spotify, Pandora, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, RadioPublic, Podchaser, Reddit (we even have our own subreddit for this show). Links for ALL of those are on the podcast website, at [WhatWasThatLike.com](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com).

Thanks again for being a listener, and especially for telling your friends about it! See you in two weeks.