

# S01 - E52 - Rooted & Unwavering - Hylke Faber & Skip Richards

00:08

Welcome to rooted and unwavering, a podcast and radio show which features leaders from all walks of life in conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged, what becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others greatness, also when we don't feel it. Join host Hylke fauber, transformational coach, facilitator and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

**Hylke Faber** 00:47

Welcome to rooted and unwavering. Welcome Back Episode 52 of root and unwavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, Hylke Faber, and I'm here today with skip Richards, a now retired technology executive, and many other things as we'll discover. Skip, how are you today? I'm doing great.

**Tuula Rytala** 01:13

Hylke, thanks for thanks for having me, and I'm looking forward to this.

**Hylke Faber** 01:17

Me too. It's an it's a true honor to be with you and listeners. I will change share in a moment why this is an honor for me to sit with skip today. Before I introduce skip more, I want to say a little bit more about this podcast, rooted in wavering, as we do at the beginning of all of these episodes. This podcast is called rude and unwavering, because it is a place where we rest our attention on what is most important to us that cannot be prescribed, that comes from within us, as leaders, as human beings. And I find that in my psyche and in the psyche of the people that I coach and work with, that there's a lot of competing forces, and some of them are encouraging, some of them are discouraging, some of their beautiful. Some of them are not so beautiful. We live in a time where we get a lot of things fed to us day to day. Think about my grandparents. We would get the newspaper a couple times a week, and that was it. And today, on our phone, we get breaking news every five minutes. It's a very different environment. So being rooted today, I think, is even more important than ever. And how do we become rooted? To me, that is a very personal practice. I use meditation, breathing, reminding myself of my values, reading and also listening and observing others. And this podcast is really a way for us to observe and learn from each other, because I find I learned so much from others, from their stories, from their energy. Like, yeah, I want to be like that person. And that's also how I connected with skip. Skip and I sing together in the Phoenix Men's Chorus called Orpheus. And that's 100 people or so. It's a lot of people. And skip stood out to me from the very beginning, I joined about two years ago, as a



person who was always of service, putting the chairs together, taking care of audio or visual things, just being there to take care of a lot of things that a community like that needs. I also was struck by his courage and charisma in motivating people towards, for example, fundraising or are doing the right thing. But if I make it very sort of simple, I was very struck by Skip's generosity of spirit and his kindness and real care. That is all before I got to know skip more as a person, and so skip comes to us with a very extensive background in technology. I said he's recently retired. He has many decades of experience in sales and technology, and has a proven track record in leading teams to meet and exceed business goals by helping customers modernize and gain business advantage through deployment of innovative technologies. He's very customer centric and business minded individual. He really is focused on that care for customers, the people around him, help them solve their problems. You kind of get that from Skip, like, whenever you're with him and there's something going on, he's ready to step in. He has a very broad set of skills, a skilled deal negotiator. He's an award winning big picture, visionary solution designer. He is an award winning sales leader. With a mainframe hybrid cloud skill orientation. He's an accomplished mediator and arbitrator. He is an expert in the IBM SW license metrics and license compliance. And listen to this. He's a pilot. He he flies all around, including his wife to her current workplace, which I think is a little bit away from where they live, currently in the Phoenix area. He's he has a license from the FAA and as a general aviation pilot. He has an open water scuba diving certification. Also is skilled in ham radio. He's a professional photographer. He's a classically trained tenor voice, an amateur astronomer and a semi professional barista. In addition to that, he's a gadget freak and a curiosity drunk junkie. It's a lot, a lot, a lot. I can just tell how much skip is in the middle of life. Skip, welcome. I'm so happy that you're here with us today, and so let's dive in with this first question, which is, Skip, tell us what have you learned in your life and leadership about

**Tuula Rytala 06:15**

Wow. Well, thank you, first of all, hylka, for inviting me. I haven't heard that reading of my my bio out loud for many years. What have I learned? I think the number one thing that I've learned is the need for authenticity. And we talk about authenticity a lot. It's been a buzzword for quite a few years, but I worked for 40 years for the IBM Corporation. And IBM, back in the day, was called Big Blue. Big Blue. You all wore a white shirt, a dark tie, a dark suit. We all look the same. We had no personality whatsoever that was against the rules. So is exactly the opposite of the authenticity that I think is so critical. I remember just very quick story. I remember one day we were told you'd have to wear a white shirt, or it could be a light pastel. So one day, I decided to stretch the rules a little bit I wore what I thought was a light pastel shirt. My boss invited me up to his office early in the morning. He said, Skip Your shirt is a little bit too pink for me. I would invite you to go home and change it and use it on nights with your wife when you go out for dinner from now on, so we were not allowed to be to stand out as true, true to our self kind of people. Now, that was 40 years ago, over 45 years ago, over the years, we have a remarkable change in the industry that the industry discovered that bringing your true self to work. Being your true self, being your authentic person, made you more productive. They actually got more out of you. Was good for business, to be who I am. And I remember thinking the year I retired, we had one of those employee opinion survey, and one of the questions on that opinion survey was, to what degree do you feel you can be your true self at work? And I thought, How remarkable. How



remarkable that I went 40 years from now being sent home for wearing two pastel or two pink, a pastel shirt, to today, where I'm encouraged to be who I am. So I believe what I'm learning out of all this is authenticity is good for me and it's good for business.

**Hylke Faber 08:53**

Thank you. Skip so I am thinking about you and and thinking about what is it like for you when you are truly being authentic? What is your experience of that? Maybe you give an example when you felt or feel you really authentic. What is that like? And maybe contrast that with an experience when you were not okay.

**Tuula Rytala 09:19**

So let me tell you, I managed a lot of sales teams. Most of my career in IBM had to do with either selling software, and we're talking huge the mainframe computer software, not like Microsoft Word or anything like that, but big, multi million dollar software packages, or buying software. I also worked for IBM's outsourcing division, where I managed a large software portfolio, and as either a seller or a buyer of software, I managed teams. So I had I had teams that that helped me accomplish my goals, either my sales goals or my software management goals. On the savings side, the first thing I'd always ask an employee who was going to join my team when I interviewed them, was tell me about yourself and don't talk about work at all, and you get that deer in the headlight. Well, no, I'm ready to tell you about my sales history and my attainment and all my skills, and I don't want to hear that. I want to hear about you. And so for me, it was important that people bring who they were and be who they were and know who they were and bring that to work and make that and some of them weren't comfortable doing that, and I didn't press too hard, but I wanted to just see how much how comfortable a person was being who they were at work.

**Hylke Faber 10:53**

So you used it as a way to develop rapport and also assess the fit of the candidate Exactly. So skip when you we can have these conversations with ourselves. I know I have that with myself. Often. Am I being myself right now, or am I in some kind of a mask in some kind of way? As my husband likes to say, yeah, kind of some yeah in some kind of way. So yeah, like you're like, you're trying to, like, like, what I do is I, part of my ego thinks I have to be great all the time. So when you ask me, How am I I'm also, Oh, I'm great. And my husband will say, well, huh, are you really great? Yeah. So, so tell us. Tell us about what is it like for you when you're really feeling you're being authentic? What's that like?

**Tuula Rytala 11:50**

I feel unfettered. I feel like it was told very early on in my career that I was one of the most creative people on the team. I like to think way outside the box. In fact, my wife still teaches me, still teases me when I drive, I tend to go over the lines. She goes, there you go, coloring outside the lines again. So I believe creativity comes from thinking outside the box and the feeling I get when I'm able to be really who I am is that unfettered creativity. My father is the one who taught me that early on in my life. I'm the oldest of five boys, and one of the things he did with us is he studied us as adolescents to see what our



interests were. And he fed those interests like you'd fan of fire. He I was interested in early on in photography. He built me a dark room, he bought me an enlarger, and let me explore this unfettered creativity and it and he did that with each of my brothers, who have all gone on to do really remarkable things. One of them is a world renowned opera tenor. One of them holds several patents for his company. So I believe that this unfettered perspective of being who you are and living in who you are makes you more creative.

**Hylke Faber** 13:20

You mentioned your dad, yeah. I also, before this podcast, heard you comment on the shirt you're wearing. Would you mind sharing?

**Tuula Ryttila** 13:31

Oh, man, you're going to make me cry. My dad passed away this last month, and he was the first class of the new Arizona State University in 1958 or 57 when they named it used to be known as Tempe Normal School, the Arizona College. And they went through all these names, and my dad did his undergrad there and graduated from Arizona State University. He kicked off this fine tradition of many generations. I think we're up to four generations of Sun Devils now in our family. So thank you. Wow.

14:07

I

**Tuula Ryttila** 14:08

I feel a great sense of loss, but I feel a great sense of peace in my father's passing. He He gave us a legacy that was just astounding, just remarkable legacy that he

**Hylke Faber** 14:22

passed on to us and what was his name. His

**Tuula Ryttila** 14:25

name was Ed, Ed Richards. My favorite, favorite story about my dad, it we figured that over 40 plus years of teaching middle school, he must have taught over 8000 students one night, my aunt was listening to a radio station here in town in Phoenix, and it was one of these call in and thank God for something, or ask for a prayer request, one of these religious shows, and this very elderly sounding lady's voice called in and said, I just want to thank God for Mr. Richards in eighth grade because he changed my life, and we don't know who that person was, but of those 8000 students that he touched in 42 years, how many of them have stories like that, that he changed the world because he touched people's lives? Thank you for like say that

**Hylke Faber** 15:20

thank you for sharing that. Skip and thank you, Ed. I'm very struck by a couple of things. One the contracts that contrast of you wearing this ASU purple shirt, where the pastel shirt 45 was a no.



Burgundy was, excuse me, was was a no, was a no go. And so here you are, like, really having shifted that in honor of now, in honor of your inner of your dad, and in and then I was really struck by your, your dad's approach to helping you discover what you are about. Um, so tell me more. Tell us more, because I think as a leader and as a human being, there's so much to learn from that kind of encouragement.

**Tuula Rytily 16:20**

Okay, I'm going to shift gears a little bit. I'm not going to talk about my dad, but it's a management philosophy I created early on in my career, and that is focusing sometimes on my weaknesses. There's a guy that I study under who teaches about love and about relationships, and one of the definitions he likes to use for love or about close relationships is it's the process of meeting needs. And if I in our culture, we're taught to be very independent, to take care of ourselves. But what it does is it encourages me to say, what is it that I'm not that good at and what is it that you can bring to my life, that together we become more than two, if one plus one is two, maybe we're more than two. If you meet my needs and I learn to meet your needs in relationship, we become much more powerful. So that general management philosophy is something I've used throughout my career. When I'd sit down with a team, I formed lots of little sales teams and different teams throughout the years, the first question I'd always ask, we'd get in a room, go around a circle, okay, guys, everybody tell me your name and tell me what you suck at, and they look at you like what you're my boss, I'm not gonna say, I'm not gonna say what I suck at. And I say, let me go first. I'm Skip Richards. I'm a big I'm a big picture thinker. I really suck at putting together the plan to make that big picture work, and I've hired each of you to help make that happen. Tell me about you. And one by one, slowly they get comfortable trusting me that. Yeah, I'm not very good at this, or we find out there's a hole in the team. Nobody's good at this one aspect of what we have to do, and we'd have to go hire somebody to fill that hole. But I'm really big into saying number one, I trust you. Number two, I trust you enough to tell you what I suck at, and that was part of my management philosophy.

**Hylke Faber 18:35**

So in that what I suck at, there was a invitation for help, yeah, an invitation for for support from others is what I'm hearing. Right? Okay, so that builds connectedness, that that builds trust. Can you tell us? Because I I still have to ask about your dad. One more question, I hope you don't mind not at all, is, is, is, what did you learn from him through that experience of him building the dark room for you, or being so intensely observant and curious about his kids and what they were about, what you learned from him about two things, two

**Tuula Rytily 19:24**

things, I would, oh, man, so many things I learned my dad. One of my favorite pictures in my brain of my dad is there's five little boys. You know, there's five of us, and he'd come home from work and we'd all go running out to meet him, and you'd think he'd just swoop us up and give us all hugs. He never did that. He would always walk right past us, and we grab hold of a leg or an arm and we he would carry all of us, but he wouldn't pay us any attention, and he goes straight to my mom, and he would greet her



first so that told me, number one, know what your priorities are. Cure Your priorities. He'd always love us and hug us and take. Care of us, but Mom was number one, and we always knew that. So that's first thing I learned from dad. Second thing I learned from dad was hard work. He was one of the hardest working men I ever knew. He was school teacher the summertime. He worked for a moving company, and we moved furniture. And I actually worked with him a few, few years, but, but, but, I think what you're getting at is this paying attention to strengths and weaknesses and interests and fostering creativity. We were five boys who are five opposites. We all had distinctly different personalities, interests. We none of us tried to copy any of the others, and only one of us followed in dad's footsteps. Boy number five actually became a teacher, so I'm sure that brought him some joy, but pay attention to others and their interests and their and their strengths and help foster that. I would say it was what my my dad brought to the picture

**Hylke Faber 21:03**

to me, it's such a beautiful attitude, and also one that I don't observe all the time in leaders. So can you say a bit more about how that helped you? Um,

**Tuula Rytala 21:24**

how did that help me? It so to really explain that, I need to tell you a little bit about how we were raised. Yes, we were raised, and wouldn't know this about me now, in what I call almost an Amish lifestyle, I was raised without television or movies or dances or sports or anything worldly. Was shunned because of this religious sect we were in at the time. Dad was a free thinker, and because he thought outside the box, and he encouraged us to think that he knew that instilled a lot of fear in us, and he didn't want us to live with fear. And he encouraged that, I believe, to help break those bonds of fear and open our open our eyes to something greater than this culture we had been raised in. He was like third generation, so we didn't know anything but that. And I think my dad was the catalyst where all five of us boys kind of opened our eyes and said, yeah, there's a bigger world out there, and we can impact that world. So I think taking the fear away is what that did for me.

**Hylke Faber 22:41**

Great so and, and, you know it, it did show its impact in your life. Look at you give a recognized, awarded sales leader, photographer, uh, aviator,

**Tuula Rytala 22:55**

that's enough. That's enough. Scuba diver.

**Hylke Faber 22:57**

I mean, I can keep going for a couple of minutes. It's

**Tuula Rytala 22:59**

really the barista part. I can make a good cup of coffee now that I'm proud of stuff. Oh,





**Hylke Faber 23:05**

that's exciting. I want to have one of those and one of these days. So that's good. That'd be great. Okay, so if you think then about how this has then influenced your leadership style, you gave the example already of how you would interact with your teams. So how have you I'm curious about, how have you applied that curiosity and appreciation about people's talents in motivating people, in creating results, and at the same time, I can imagine there being a bit of tension, because you have you can observe what's there, what people want to do, and then there's also what the business needs, what you're trying to accomplish. So how did tell us about that? And how have you you used that approach?

**Tuula Ryttila 23:58**

This one's probably the easiest one to manage to answer. I told you about going around the circle and having everybody on the team say, here's what I suck at. We obviously did. The other part of that too is, here are my skills. Here's where I'm good at. And I would, I would always work to put people in a role, much like my dad did with me in photography and my other brother in cars, and my other brother in music, he was good at getting us into that role where he knew we could be successful. And I do the same thing with my teens. Is I knew, given the organizational structure, we had a goal, a mission to accomplish, and that mission was made up of many different roles, and I'd find the best person on the team for that role where, number one, we could be successful as a team, but number two, they could be successful as individuals. I have a little story about that one. Once I worked for a manager and I was in a role that I really was not good at. He did not ask me what I. Sucked at, and he put me in a role at something I sucked at. And at the end of the year, I got the words performance evaluation of my 40 plus year career. And from that, it shocked me, because all through the year, I knew kind of I wasn't really killing it, but every every email I got, every interaction I had, would use the word Excellent. You're doing excellent. And so there's something wrong with this. I jumped on a plane out of my own pocket. I went and bought my own ticket. Flew to Dallas. I said, Randy, I'm here to talk to you face to face. We have some serious discussions to have. It was less about the fact that I got a bad performance rating, and it turned into more of of a you need to get me in a role where I can be successful, because I'm a high performer. I want to, and he did. He did from that year on, and he's recently retired, too, and we've met a few years ago, he said, you know, you did something no other employee ever did. You know, a lot of employees complain, sorry, I gotta fly. A lot of employees complained about bad performance reviews. But you said, How can I get into a role that number one, I can be successful at and help make you successful. We did that together, and you kicked butt. I mean, you knocked it out of the park from there on. And he said, You taught me something by doing that, and I used it. And he told me that he used it for the rest of his management career as well. So I think getting people a man, this has gone way too long. I think getting people into a job where they can be into a role where they can be successful and it fits the dynamic for the team is the most critical thing.

**Hylke Faber 26:52**

I'm so struck by this kid. Because first of all, Ray said nobody else has done this right? And there's a reason people, when there's performance reviews not going well, that people don't go there to their manager and say, Hey, tell me what I'm good at, or let me talk about what we're what I'm good at. So



put me in that. Yeah, right, yeah. Um, that comes with some risk. Oh, yeah, right. So how did you feel? If you can remember going into that conversation with Ray in Dallas, how did you feel? What was go out on your mind?

**Tuula Rytala 27:34**

I really thought he was going to fire me. I didn't know him very well. Uh, he turned into one of my best friends at work over the years, we got to know each other, and since we've been retired, we've actually corresponded. So I thought I was going to get fired, and it turned into exactly the opposite. He said, You know, the way I came at it, as I said, his name is Randy, by the way, Randy, I said, Randy, I know you probably, I don't know if professors have to grade on a curve. I know you probably have a curve you're managing to and you decided to stick me at the bottom for whatever reason. But I'm not that performer, and I'll ever want to be there again. And I just told him very assertively, I won't be there again. I will leave your team, I will find a new role, or you will fire and we're going to find you a new role. And he made me very successful.

**Hylke Faber 28:32**

Was it like an immediate okay, we're going to find you a new role? Or was Randy resisting a little bit?

**Tuula Rytala 28:39**

Oh, no, he was very well. First of all, it's a little off putting, because he never had anybody quite call him on something like that before that way. So and I literally called him the night before, I said, I'm flying into Dallas. I knew he didn't live too far from the DFW airport. I want you to meet me at the airport for lunch. You and I are going to have a discussion, and then I'm going to fly back home, which is what I did, and I did it on my own dime. And at the end of the discussion, he said, By the way, I want you to expense this lunch. I want you to expense this trip. Go put it on your corporate card and pay for it with my funds. Whoa, that was good.

**Hylke Faber 29:18**

That's amazing. So I am so struck by you being willing to acknowledge your own talent, your own value, right, not being dissuaded by some performance review or some situation, which is where many of us disconnected would go, we like we give up on ourselves, or we give up on the boss or the situation. Instead, what you said is, yeah, you're right. There's something here for me to learn. There's movement that I need to do. Randy, I know what I'm about, and I sense skip that.

**Tuula Rytala 35:00**

Answers one particular and every year, every year those mainframes computers grew. And I don't know how much you know about software, but when you buy corporate software, the way I explain it, non technically, is you buy it by the horsepower. So if you're running a 300 horsepower mainframe computer, you buy 300 horsepower worth of software, and next year you may have more clients. So you grow to 350 horsepower, you go out and buy 50 more. That's called an upgrade. So every year, the mainframes would grow a little bit. The term is MIPS, millions of instructions per second. MIPS is the





horsepower rating for mainframes. We'd go out and tell all our software suppliers we grew from 300 horsepower mitts to 350 you need to send us a bill for that incremental part. And they'd all send us a bill. We'd pay it, and we'd be in compliance from a license perspective, one little company out of Canada, I don't even remember their name, sent us a huge bill. Tiny little company sent us a bill for a quarter of a million dollars. And I had a guy on my team with law degrees, a lawyer, and I said, Read their contract, and let's see what's behind this. Because I don't believe we should be paying a quarter of a million dollars for this tiny, little piece of software. And we discovered something interesting about this software. It wasn't tied to horsepower or MIPS, it was tied to the number of people using the software. And guess what? The number of people using the software was the same. I went, why did they send us a bill for a quarter of a million dollars? So I called them. Called him in, sat him down, said, guys, explain to me why you sent me a bill for a quarter of a million dollars for something you're not really entitled to. They looked me straight in the eye, and they said, because you asked. So number one, it taught me the one of the most critical things I need to pay attention to is ethics and the integrity of the people I work with. I told them, not only will we not pay this bill, we will discontinue your software, we'll find other alternatives for your software, because I'm not going to work with a company who unethically sends me a bill for something they're not entitled to, hoping all over like the fine print and pay it. So number one, I'm not, I'm not going to pay it. Number two, we're going to discontinue yourself. So that's one of my and in that whole experience, I discovered this thing about myself, that there's, there's, there's a lot of capability here. I can impact the numbers in a big way just by being smart, thinking smart thoughts, doing the right thing, behaving ethically and with my own personal integrity, became a very important factor in my work experience.

**Hylke Faber 38:10**

So I see that the you trusting your integrity, which also in a way, in the background, as I hear it played in your conversation with Randy, like you were in Integrity with your own value and now your integrity with this supplier company, with your own values in terms of Managing Resources and being ethically in agree in contracts that that helped to guide you. So when you did that and you called these people in, how did you feel? Oh,

**Tuula Rytala 38:50**

this had to have been, Oh, man. This was a 1919, 93 so this is like 20 years ago. No, 30 years ago, 30 years ago. This is a 30 years ago story, and it's still I can feel it like it was yesterday. So

**Hylke Faber 39:06**

how did you feel? I

**Tuula Rytala 39:09**

felt empowered. Doing the right thing is so easy. If they would have sent me a letter saying, Thank you for your upgrade. Notice you're still at only 20 programmers and your licenses for 20 programmers, therefore there is no charge. I would have done business with them, and we're still outsourcing that credit card. So this is 30 years later. We're still managing that software portfolio. I don't work there



anymore. Someone else is but we would still be paying that company good money for their product, but Right? Not anymore, not

**Hylke Faber 39:42**

anymore. It's very clear. So the value of truly being in integrity, okay, so skip what would you say to somebody that hasn't had this environment from a very early age? This? Rental encouragement to really figure out what you're good at and go for that. What would you say to somebody who maybe, like many people might be, might be working on something that they felt they had to do just to make a living? Like many, many people these days, go to school for things that they think will make them money, because they need to survive, right? They go they don't go into the arts, or they don't go into teaching, or they don't go into fill in the blanks. They don't become a singer like your brother, because that's not going to work out for them, at least from what they can tell. And let's say these people have been in this for 1020, years, right? What would you say to them?

**Tuula Rytala 40:48**

My biggest advice that I gave my kids, my family, people I love, is have a passion and follow your passion. If you're not passionate about what you do, do something else. My youngest son was just here because of all the fires in LA. He works for the studios in Hollywood, so he's ended up in a very, very good place. But a story he told me once after he got out of film school, he didn't know how to get a job. He has really good skills, a great eye, a huge encyclopedia, encyclopedic knowledge of film. And he didn't know how to get a job. He had no contacts. And he said, Dad, what I did is I went to a film site that I knew was shooting. It was up in Portland at the time, and I said, Guys, I'm here to work. I have these skills. You need my help, and when you feel like adding enough value, you can start paying me. And he said, within one week, he was on the payroll and being assigned more jobs and more jobs at other sites. He followed his passion and he didn't do it originally for the money. He just said, I'm here to work. And when you think what I'm doing is worth something, you can start paying me. And he's making he's killing it. He's working on an ABC show right now that's been on for seven seasons, and he's he's doing great in Hollywood. He knows so many stars. I can't believe it, so I would say, follow your passion. Follow

**Hylke Faber 42:25**

your passion. Follow your passion. Okay, so skip. We're living in, in in, in times that there's a lot going on in the world, and there's always a lot going on the world, right? And, you could feel at least, I know people sometimes myself, feel pulled in many directions in terms of, how will I be of service in this situation? Because there seems to be so much that's needed, right? How do you work with that question? Ooh, for yourself

**Tuula Rytala 43:02**

you're gonna you might have to shut me up through this one, because this is something I do a lot of thought about. There's an article right now just hit the latest February 25 copy of The Atlantic magazine about social isolation. We are in an epidemic of social isolation. There's three spheres of



connectedness. There's our family, there's the culture we fit in. So I'm an IBM retiree, or I'm an old guy, and I have these people I kind of fit in with and those I'm very I very well identify, identify with my family, very clearly that hasn't changed. And I identify as a, you know, as a retiree of an in technology company. But in the middle there is these friendships and social interactions, non intimate relationships, we'll call them that over the last 50 years, there's an epidemic in our society because of a lot of different factors, the pandemic being one of them, it's just gone off the cliff, and a lot of studies have shown our entire culture is changing because of this thing called social isolation. And what I'm trying to encourage people to do is, let's change the norm. Let's get outside of our comfort, our comfort zones. Let's go sing in a choir like you and I do. Hylka, let's, let's learn the name of 100 guys, which is something I challenge myself to do with our choir, it's about 100 guys, and I like to be able to greet every single one of those 100 guys by name. We have to change the norm. We have to get outside of our comfort zone and go back to church or sing in a choir or join a social club, or go to the library and join a reading club. Do. Something that encourages this connectedness with the that part of our circle that makes us feel like we belong.

**Hylke Faber 45:11**

Beautiful. That's beautiful. I answered

**Tuula Rytala 45:12**

your question, but that's thinking a lot about lately, absolutely,

**Hylke Faber 45:16**

absolutely, and I know my my curiosity is about So how does skip in this next stage? Because you said you are recent retiree, I know you're a recent retiree, one month,

**Tuula Rytala 45:35**

one month today,

**Hylke Faber 45:37**

one month today. Okay, so how do you sit with that question? Because you have so many capabilities, like so many your, your list of suck may be long, but your, your list, list of like magnificent, is very long. So how do you choose and connect and be of service to what do you really want to be doing? It's back

**Tuula Rytala 46:02**

to passion. I love to fly. Yeah, I do fly my own airplane. I have a group of individuals that we go on trips together. We have lunch together. We got one coming up this weekend in Lake Havasu. And hold on a sec. I

**Hylke Faber 46:25**

I can hear you very well. Skip.



**Tuula Rytala** 46:27

Okay, my screen just went blank. I'm sorry.

**Hylke Faber** 46:31

It's okay. We can see you well, all right, sorry. So,

**Tuula Rytala** 46:35

so I'm passionate about flying, and I've got two different organizations that I fly with both full size aircraft and model aircraft that compete with and it's it's a community of people who are like minded that I can impact, that I can enrich, that enrich me. I'm passionate about flying. I'm passionate about music. I am part of this chorus that you and I both sing in and I'm going to spend more of my time in service to that chorus, either in whatever role that they think I fit in and I can excel at. So I think pay attention to what you're passionate at about and and where connectedness can create that enrichment that I think benefits our society.

**Hylke Faber** 47:25

I really love how actionable you make it skip, and the frame you put on it of the social isolation and the non intimate relationship drought that we're in, and how we can actually do something about that by joining a social group that has our interest and start interacting with people and actively pouring into it. There's one element, and this hour has flown by. We're almost at the end of this podcast already. Is service because that I want to talk to you about, is service because I see you so much in service, being of service to others. I see you doing this with your your children, uh, tell us about how do you choose? Because you're a busy man. I know that too. I sometimes I witness you like the choir rehearsal ends at 9:30pm and you're living an hour or 45 minutes away or something like that, and you stay and you know, you clean up, and you're there for the people and and this was also before you retired. I saw you doing these things. So how do you choose to be of service?

**Tuula Rytala** 48:49

Wow, that is such a good question. So, so what I haven't really explained today is that I lost full time two full time jobs. This last month, I retired from two full time jobs. My one at IBM, which then became kendriel When they spun off the outsourcing. That's not important. I retired from over 40 years with the large corporation I spent my entire life with. Over the last five years, I've also cared for my mother and father, who lived in an adjoining Little House on my property. And my father recently passed, as I mentioned, and my mom has Alzheimer's, and since my dad's not here to take care of her anymore, we had to commit her into a care facility and with memory care, and she's she's doing quite well, but that was also a full time job and and I've been asking my myself that question is, I've all of a sudden found myself with a lot my life has changed dramatically over the last 30 to 60 days. Completely changed, and I have. I've been wrestling with this. Do I do with that time? And number one is my family. I'm pretty passionate. Between my wife and I. We have seven children. She has three. I have three, and we have one. I want to pass on the legacy that my dad passed on to me. I want to help them follow their passion. And in the case of my three older kids. They are and they're they're just killing it. I'm so proud



of them. My younger daughter is still in high school and she's heading down that same route. She wants to be a family planning lawyer, because the whole adoption that we went through to get her, it really resonated with her, and I want to help her follow that passion to become a family lawyer. So I think it's, it's that legacy I want to, I want to continue to pass on the legacy that my dad gave me. And I want to breathe life into things I'm passionate about, flying, singing, lots of other things. You know, you can see my radio station behind me here. I'm also involved in a small radio club out Sun City. So just things that I really love to do and I'm passionate about, and I haven't figured that out yet. I don't know how to prioritize that. I have to be very transparent about that. Yes, yes, I

**Hylke Faber 51:16**

get that. There is an underlying question that I have, which is, your service orientation, and this might be another one where you're unconsciously skilled, because this is one of the things that that that has really struck me like about you. Like it, it seems to come very natural to you. And just like as you're describing like six kids, the the parents, the job, the choir, the radio station, The Flying Club, imagine you being of service and all of these things. So how do you choose to not just be a consumer of these experiences, which you could be? This is a person that actually gives to them.

**Tuula Rytala 51:59**

This is another part of my my parents legacy, I'll say my parents, because of my mom, obviously spoken to a lot. It's a story I told at my father's memorial. In the late, early 70, early 70s, there was a war going on between Honduras and Nicaragua, I think, or El Salvador. It was in Central America, and my dad's a school teacher, so yes, technically, has the summer off. But in my life, he never took the summer off. He always worked well. This year, he came home and he said, Boys, there's people dying in Central America, and they're living in caves, and things are really bad down there. We're going to go down to Central America, and we're going to build homes for refugees, kind of Jimmy, Jimmy Carter style, you know, we literally hooked up the family travel trailer to the family van at the end of May, and we drove to El Salvador, Central America, and we spent the entire summer building little homes for refugees. We really did what he set out to show us. So he taught us this service mindset, and there was so much reward in that. As a kid, we learned Spanish, we got to see a culture that we would have never even dreamed of, that living, you know, the life we live here in the United States. We're so blessed. But we saw a culture that we'd never seen before, and at the end of the summer, we let everything back in the trailer, hooked it up to the van, and we drove back home, and he started teaching school again. He did this with five little boys, and my wife, my mom, sorry, five little boys and my mom and my youngest brother, who's 11 years younger than me, actually took his first steps in El Salvador in Central America. So it just became this family story that we've all I'm sure it's grown from what really happened, but we all still talk about this, the trip to El Salvador summer, where dad didn't work, and we all went there and we built these homes for refugees. It was kind of a cool thing. But I think that instilled in me this, this mindset, the true self worth, self, whatever your it comes from serving others.

**Hylke Faber 54:23**



So this, we can call this the El Salvador effect in your family, right? So when you're sitting in a community, in a group like the chorus or whatever you are, how do you know what to be of service to

**Tuula Rytila 54:41**

um, there are gonna go back to it. There are certain things I suck at, and there's certain things I do really well. I always start from that place. I know what I do well. I know where the holes are. I see where the holes are. And it brings such a sense of accomplishment to be able to solve problems. I'm a huge problem solver, and to do something I'm skilled at doing. So I just ignore the stuff that I know I don't do very well, and I'm really good at saying no to fundraising. You know, I heard to get up and do some fundraising, but I'm not part of that committee. I don't think about fundraising. I suck at that. I love mentoring new members, so I pour myself into the Mentor Program and try to help guys feel at home and build relationships in this course. So that's an example of how I make a decision between one or the other. I just know I love this, so I do it. I do what I love.

**Hylke Faber 55:43**

I see the holes. I'm honest about what I suck at.

**Tuula Rytila 55:50**

I know what I'm good. I never thought I was gonna bring that phrase to your podcast. Did you I

**Hylke Faber 55:54**

love it? It's gonna be a t shirt. It's gonna be a t shirt because it's it's a refreshing, honest way of being so last question, or last question for today, which is, what would you say to somebody who, in this moment is just not feeling it like they're feeling a little lost, they may not be as clear as you are about what they're good at or how to be of service, they may feel a little overwhelmed what you say to them. I'm

**Tuula Rytila 56:26**

going to go back to my very first story. I told you about my interview technique. Tell me about your life, and don't talk about work at all. What is it that you like to do? Do you sing? Do you ski? Do you golf? Do you fly? Do you what is it that when you think about your life, what is it that really makes your juices flow, and how can you somehow incorporate that into your work experience? How can you find something that makes you feel like that? That's always been my strategy is, is I'm not going to do something I don't like doing. Obviously, we all do stuff we don't like doing, but I'm not going to major on that. I'm going to major on stuff that really brings me satisfaction, that I know I'm passionate about. I don't know if I've answered your question. Hylke, oh, yes, you

**Hylke Faber 57:21**

did. You did. I was sitting to let it in. Skip, so that's, that's beautiful. We're coming towards the end of our conversation. Couple of things that I'm I'm learning, and thank you so much. Skip, one of the few things I'm learning, one is to be honest about what you suck at, to be honest about what makes your





juices flow and, and, and go for that. Also this really strong orientation of El Salvador service orientation like, oh, how can I be of service. What's we didn't talk about today was the energy that brings and how that actually can revitalize us. And I see that in you. So that's, that's one of the things that that strikes me just from listening to you. And then I would say also what, what strikes me from this conversation is this deep encouragement in the other appreciation. Tell me about you. Yeah, so if you're listening to this, maybe spend some time thinking about what makes my juices flow, and this is an ongoing conversation in life. These things evolve over life sometimes and sometimes get clear and refined, and how will I put that to use and to application today? Thank you so much. Skip. It's been a true honor to sit with you today.

**Tuula Rytala 59:01**

Thank you so much. Hylke, I likewise. I'm humbled by your confidence in me. Thank you.

**Hylke Faber 59:09**

I'm practicing what you teach me and which what Ed taught you as well. And if you're listening to this and you find this helpful, you have been listening to rooted and unwavering. We've been talking to skip Richards, who is, in my eyes, a very generous, encouraging renaissance man who has followed in his dad's inspiring footsteps in in being appreciative about what he's about and also clear about what he's not being truly of service and taking that with us and inspiring generations to come to do that, which he has for me today. So thank you for that. If you like this kind of thing, you can listen to root unwavering wherever you get your podcasts, Apple Spotify other places and also. On YouTube, of course, where you can watch the videos, you can always reach skip Richards on LinkedIn or other places See you next time. On Brewton and wavering, where we help to connect leaders more innate to deeply to their innate potential. I am your host. Hylke Fauci you next time

**Presenter 1:00:22**

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