

Check It Out! Podcast Transcript  
Episode #44  
“Engineering a writing career with Bernadette Pajer”  
Sno-Isle Libraries, Oct. 18, 2019



Ken Harvey: 00:00 In this episode of Check It Out! we spend time with Bernadette Pajer, the author of the Professor Bradshaw Mysteries. This wonderful and intriguing set of whodunits is situated in Washington state around the year 1900, and it's about a professor who applies his knowledge of the new science of electrical engineering to solve murders. Coming up next, Bernadette Pajer.

Ken Harvey: 00:33 Welcome to season two and episode 44 of Check It Out! the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast for lifelong learners with inquiring minds.

Speaker 2: 00:41 The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 00:49 Hi, I'm Ken Harvey.

Jim Hills: 00:50 And I'm Jim Hills.

Ken Harvey: 00:51 And we're delighted to have with us an author for this episode of Check It Out!, the Sno-Isle Libraries podcast and she is actually I have discovered from reading, starting to read one of her books-

Jim Hills: 01:07 Extensive research is what you meant to say.

Ken Harvey: 01:08 ... Yeah, that's part of the extensive-

Jim Hills: 01:11 There you go.

Ken Harvey: 01:11 ... The real in depth backgrounding that we do anytime we have a guest on. I've been reading her book and one of the books in the series of books and gosh, I have to tell you, it's worth reading folks. So we are delighted to have with us Bernadette Pajer, who is an author, who happens to hail from this neck of the woods, meaning the greater Seattle area and she is a, let's see, how would I describe the types of things she writes? She is

(Continued)

a kind of a mystery romance, based in science writer. That's how I'm seeing the books so far and-

Jim Hills: 01:55 Yeah, I like that a lot. That's a really good one.

Ken Harvey: 01:55 ... Yeah. So we are delighted to spend some time with her. So Bernadette, thank you so much for spending some time with us.

Bernadette Pajer: 02:01 Well, you're welcome. Thank you for inviting me.

Ken Harvey: 02:03 Well, I know that there's a lot more in your background that I haven't talked about yet, but you are a longtime resident of the Pacific Northwest, right?

Bernadette Pajer: 02:12 Yep. Born and raised here. Spent a couple years back east in the early years of my marriage, but then we moved back here.

Ken Harvey: 02:17 Well, I believe that you live in the best place in the world to live. So I'm glad that you have shown that kind of wisdom and taste. So you are the author of a series of mysteries that are called the Professor Bradshaw Mysteries, and what I discovered that there are four books so far in this whodunits series, and again, I would say that to the audience, well worth reading even if you don't think that you would like whodunits. But this series is in my mind, pretty unique because it's set in Washington State, but in a slightly earlier time, back around 1900, and it really kind of revolves around this professor, Professor Bradshaw, and you want to tell us just a little bit about him?

Bernadette Pajer: 03:18 Oh, well, he's a very brilliant man, a very sensitive man who through past experience is in a stage of life where he has a very thick protective wall around himself. So he comes across as very dour and very serious. But those who know him, the characters in the book sort of know his more true self. And the series takes you through him facing things from his past and things currently happening to him, and so you go on this emotional journey through the series. The mystery plots are all unique to each book, but his journey of self acceptance and trying to understand grapple with some pretty important issues in life are what carry the thread through the series.

Jim Hills: 04:13 Why did you decide to add the science bit because he's electrical engineering? That's an interesting twist I think.

Ken Harvey: 04:21 He's a professor of electrical engineering.

Jim Hills: 04:23 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 04:23 Isn't that right?

Bernadette Pajer: 04:24 Yes, he is and I am not. So it was an interesting choice. So I mean, I wrote the first draft of this book ages ago, I can't even remember how long ago it's been now.

Ken Harvey: 04:34 And when you say this book, which book are you speaking to?

Bernadette Pajer: 04:38 I would say A Spark of Death. So the very first book in the series.

Ken Harvey: 04:41 Oh.

Bernadette Pajer: 04:41 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 04:42 So I'm reading... Because that's what I'm reading.

Bernadette Pajer: 04:44 That's book one, yes.

Ken Harvey: 04:45 And that is book one?

Bernadette Pajer: 04:45 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 04:45 Okay, because I was afraid that there was a prior story, though you do refer to some prior history.

Bernadette Pajer: 04:52 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 04:55 Yeah.

Bernadette Pajer: 04:55 No.

Ken Harvey: 04:55 So this was the first one that you wrote?

Bernadette Pajer: 04:55 Yes, that was the very first one and took a while to get to publication. But what was interesting is when... I've always been fascinated with this time period. We went from in the year 1900, from horse and buggy, coal fired stoves, no radio, no TV, no flight, we had none of that. Just it's amazing, the old fashion. Even the bums on the street were wearing suits.

Bernadette Pajer: 05:22 I mean, everything was just this very old-fashioned way of being, within one generation, people in Bradshaw's time went from that to astronauts in space.

Ken Harvey: 05:35 Which is pretty remarkable.

Bernadette Pajer: 05:37 Pretty remarkable. Yeah, so much happened in that time period, and I don't think we're ever going to see again, in such a short time span, such a change, altered change of life. And so I've always been fascinating by those early stages of what people were thinking and doing and inventing, and all the things they didn't foresee, of course, about what would happen, oh, the carts, wonderful. Nobody foresaw all the traffic and all the problems that came with it.

Ken Harvey: 06:04 Different set of problems than having horses and horse-drawn buggies and carriages, yeah.

Bernadette Pajer: 06:08 Those had their own unique problems-

Ken Harvey: 06:10 Yes, they do.

Bernadette Pajer: 06:10 ... I mean, horses do make a bit of a mess.

Ken Harvey: 06:12 They do.

Jim Hills: 06:12 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 06:12 They do. Got to be careful how you cross the street.

Bernadette Pajer: 06:15 Yes, definitely, yeah. So when this character first came to me, and I first started off sort of writing romances, and then historical romances, none of them sold. But I was developing my craft. Nothing you write is ever a waste, I'll tell that to the writers out there. Everything you do is building your foundation of crafts. But I got to a point where mostly what I was reading was mysteries, and I liked that format. I was intrigued by it. And so when Professor Bradshaw came to me in this time period, I at first my mind said, "I should make him an English professor." But then I realized I would have to go back and read all of the literature he would have been familiar with, and then figure out how to use this information to drive plots and to solve crimes, and that sounded very difficult. And he kept telling me, "No I'm a professor of electrical engineering." And I'm like, "I don't know." But I love science.

Bernadette Pajer: 07:17 I did really well in school in math, and in the early science, I didn't take a lot that I took, and I thought, well, I can do this. How hard can it be, right? And so I just dove in and begin... I love to research. I enjoy it so much. And a funny thing was when I wrote that first book, and like I said thoroughly researched, kept all my notes. When the day finally came, when I got an email that said they wanted to publish. Poisoned Pen Press

wanted to publish the book. I was elated, and then terrified, because I thought I am not an electrical engineer. And so I googled, electrical engineer Tesla enthusiast Seattle.

- Bernadette Pajer: 08:05 I said, I got to find an expert to vet my science. I need it to be rock solid, and a wonderful man named Bill Beaty, at the University of Washington has a fabulous website all about all kinds of science. He just loves to play with science, and especially he loves electricity, and the fool had made the mistake of putting his contact information on his web page.
- Ken Harvey: 08:34 So that's how he showed up on the first line of your acknowledgements page?
- Bernadette Pajer: 08:37 Yes, yes. And so I cold called him and I told him about the book and he said, "Send it to me." And it was fabulous. So he vetted it. I was really pleased that I had gotten everything right.
- Ken Harvey: 08:54 Essentially right.
- Bernadette Pajer: 08:55 Essentially right, which made me feel really good about my research. He had some tweaks. It's like an engineer wouldn't say it that way. So he said, "You don't want an engineer or a scientist to pick up this book and throw it across the room because you worded something really stupidly." So he helped tweak that a little bit. And then he loved the idea of an invention that's in this first book, and I had not really defined it. I was leaving it be very mysterious.
- Bernadette Pajer: 09:21 Well, he sort of built it in his head and decided what it could be. So that was a lot of fun. So I could have more details and through the series, later on in the series, you see that invention come into play.
- Ken Harvey: 09:33 Well, it sounds like from that, that he really had a great bedside coaching manner. Don't say anything stupidly.
- Bernadette Pajer: 09:39 Yes, yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 09:41 So obviously you did not have such a brittle and fragile ego that you couldn't receive that from him.
- Bernadette Pajer: 09:49 That's really a good point. And a tip I always pass on to, especially new writers, you have to grow a thick skin. I have a friend who calls it duck oil. You got to just let things roll off you. You can't do anything well in this life if you're not open to constructive criticism. At first, it's really hard because you don't

have any self confidence, you're still building your craft, you're still learning to trust your own voice. But then after years of practice, and many manuscripts that are in the drawer later, you begin to understand what is useful to you, and what is not and you don't let it take you down personally or dim your self confidence. And that whole aspect of writing, it's almost like a philosophy of life though and I've given workshops sort of on this theme.

- Bernadette Pajer: 10:42 That sort of honest openness to change, to hear, to learn, to evaluate, I think it's really an important part of being a human being in this world, yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 10:56 Well, I think that's so important, and I want to really thank you for the work that you've done. Essentially mentoring and encouraging budding writers in the region because that's one of the ways that actually we got to know about you and some of your work. So congratulations on that, and thank you for that service.
- Bernadette Pajer: 11:17 You're welcome.
- Ken Harvey: 11:17 Getting back to Professor Bradshaw. One of the things that really struck me as I began reading your novel was that he actually within the story is teaching at the University of Washington.
- Bernadette Pajer: 11:32 Yes, yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 11:34 So that's pretty neat.
- Bernadette Pajer: 11:36 Yeah, and I tried to get all of those details as accurate as I could. So I did down the research hole for University of Washington, Seattle. If I have him walking down a street, I've researched that street to try to get the details right of what it felt like. When I write, I riddle my manuscripts in the first draft with little XXs. Like having him walk down the street, XX because I got to look that up. I love to look up everything to make it accurate.
- Bernadette Pajer: 12:06 What can be really fun is I'll do general research on a topic. Say I was researching science at the turn of the century, learned about Tesla coils, I learned about classrooms, I learned about experiments and different things about what happened, and with his first book, I had essentially put elements of the plot in place, which I won't kind of reveal all of them here now but what was really fun is then when I went deeper into Seattle, University of Washington, I had set up a, what is it? It was a

display of the students' work that they were going to have and then I finally got to the UDub, down to the Suzzallo Library, where you can put on the white gloves and get out the... I'm not sure they have white gloves, but anyway, you're down there and with this precious historical material, and it turned out the same month that I had the students doing an exhibition, they actually had one.

- Ken Harvey: 13:07 Oh, wow.
- Bernadette Pajer: 13:07 And they did have a Tesla coil there, and I have in the book that President McKinley was to come to Washington State, and he actually was scheduled to come to Washington State. And I'm like, this is kind of weird.
- Ken Harvey: 13:19 That is really fascinating and a little weird Miss.
- Bernadette Pajer: 13:21 It is a little weird. But when you do your research thoroughly, you begin to be able to incorporate what you think you're making up and you are making up, but because you've done your thorough research-
- Jim Hills: 13:35 It could be.
- Bernadette Pajer: 13:36 ... It could possibly have happened. And in several cases in when I was writing this book, it actually did happen, which was really fun.
- Ken Harvey: 13:42 Well, I think great research does lead to really accurate predictive fiction, in some ways.
- Bernadette Pajer: 13:49 Yes, yeah.
- Jim Hills: 13:50 Yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 13:50 So, I knew that this was going to be... Now I have to make an admission. I'm not a mystery guy and I'm not a romance guy or at least didn't used to be, now there are Hallmark Mysteries that I watch on TV. My wife loves us sitting together and watching a lot of the A&E, which arts and entertainment channel and BBC historical, Neil Mysteries and murder mysteries and romances and so I've become a much more cultured and complete person over time and yet my wife who is a very avid mystery and murder mystery reader typically has not been successful getting me to read those novels. So when I picked up A Spark of Death, your first book, your first published book, that's correct?

Bernadette Pajer: 14:55 Yes.

Ken Harvey: 14:55 And we're going to talk a little bit more later about some of the others that you've done. I knew that this was going to be a good, worthwhile thing to read in the first part of chapter one, and I want to read what you wrote. So this is chapter one.

Ken Harvey: 15:18 "A curtain of pale hair hit the young man's downturned face. His skinny fingers trembled as he toyed with a pencil. He'd been staring at his examination paper without making a single mark for 10 minutes, test anxiety. Professor Benjamin Bradshaw knew it well."

Ken Harvey: 15:41 So I read that and I was like, okay, there's not a big explosion, there's not a gunshot, there's not a sci-fi special effects captured here. But I'm already intrigued and at the point where you state as the author, test anxiety. You've already resolved some tension that you had immediately created within me and I thought, okay, I think I can read this.

Bernadette Pajer: 16:12 Oh, that's awesome.

Ken Harvey: 16:13 Yeah, so I loved the way that you started this book, and I think that says something. There's something really fascinating about the challenge that any author has in inducing someone to read beyond the first few words.

Bernadette Pajer: 16:35 That's very true. Those first pages are so important and they can be the hardest to write sometimes because you either hook them or you don't, it's very important. When it comes to sort of my general approach to this is, oh, have you guys interviewed William Kenower from Pacific Northwest writers?

Ken Harvey: 17:01 No.

Jim Hills: 17:01 No.

Bernadette Pajer: 17:01 I encourage you to-

Ken Harvey: 17:02 Not yet, but if you put us in touch with him, we would love to.

Bernadette Pajer: 17:04 ... Yeah, he's fabulous. He says that an idea for a writer has to drop from their brain to their belly before it can come out in their fingers, right?

Jim Hills: 17:19 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- Bernadette Pajer: 17:19 So you can have an idea for a novel, and it's just up in your head. It sounds fabulous. But until you feel it, until it comes down to that gut level of you have to write the story and you have to tell about these characters in a way that feels that real to you, it's not going to come across as something to the reader that will grasp them. And you know what you said about the opening of the book and what grabbed you with that one character description. Who that character is, I felt and I felt I wanted to portray that and it's part of Bradshaw's journey. It shows you that.
- Bernadette Pajer: 17:57 So in me putting that forward, it was my attempt for you to really understand Bradshaw as an individual, his empathy for his students, and that came from this place of expression. And Deborah here knows, well, an expression that I sort of coined for myself and I love to teach people and it's right to express not to impress.
- Ken Harvey: 18:25 So when you mentioned Deborah, Deborah is our technical Podcast Producer and Deborah actually was a student of yours in a writing class or something like that, right?
- Bernadette Pajer: 18:39 Yeah, not a student but a writer in a group that I had form called The Monroe Wednesday Writers. We met at the Monroe Library.
- Ken Harvey: 18:46 So not a student? Does that mean it was like a therapy kind of group?
- Bernadette Pajer: 18:48 No, well what's really going to interesting is do other art forms, art and craft forms have to get together really to have therapy, writers really sort of do. We need to encourage each other because your confidence is so easily destroyed by criticism. So I lead the writing group, invited anybody who wanted to come. We shared writing, we discussed writing, I did offer, because I had come with more experience than the people and I was leading it. So I offered advice and encouragement, but Deborah is a fabulous writer, and I hope she's staying at it, so.
- Ken Harvey: 19:27 Yes, I hope so as well. So getting back to kind of the way you started the story that I was reading to the audience, reminds me of something that that my co-host Jim had said on an earlier podcast, where he had shared that he was talking with one of our librarians once about, sometimes he feels guilty for checking up, borrowing a book and not especially from the library and not getting it read, and the librarian said to you Jim?

Jim Hills: 20:03 The librarian said, "Get over that. That life is way too short for bad books. Check out what you think is going to be interesting. Get it home, take a look at it, open the first page, and if it speaks to you keep going. If it doesn't, close it. Move on to the next book. Life is too short for bad books."

Bernadette Pajer: 20:23 I agree, 100% and I'd also say, life is too short to read books that don't speak to you personally.

Ken Harvey: 20:30 There you go.

Bernadette Pajer: 20:30 Doesn't mean somebody else wouldn't love that book.

Ken Harvey: 20:31 Right.

Jim Hills: 20:31 Yeah, exactly right.

Ken Harvey: 20:36 So there was another part in the book. I just wanted to share with you, just really intrigued me and actually when I read this at the time, I stopped. So this is a little bit further in the book. It's about 12 pages in and something has happened with Professor, actually not to Professor Bradshaw, but with a colleague there at the University of Washington, and he's been told to go and tell someone that-

Bernadette Pajer: 21:15 I think we can say the widow.

Ken Harvey: 21:17 ... Yeah. Go and tell a woman that she is now a widow, and her husband has just been killed and has just died, and the way part of what you wrote here is that I'd like to just read for our listeners is as he kind of accepts this direction from his boss to go tell the widow is he's thinking to himself, how can he manage the task before him?

Ken Harvey: 21:45 "He took a deep breath that made his head all the lighter and his feet all the heavier. He lifted his anvil feet, excuse me, he lifted his anvil foot and climbed."

Jim Hills: 21:58 Yeah,

Ken Harvey: 22:00 So I read that line, he lifted his anvil foot and climbed and I just stopped there. And I thought, oh my gosh, I know exactly how that must have felt.

Jim Hills: 22:12 You know that foot.

Ken Harvey: 22:13 Yeah. So that selection of that descriptor anvil, using that noun as an adjective. I just have to tell you, I thought that was brilliant. So well done.

Bernadette Pajer: 22:28 Well, thank you. It's so fun. I mean, it's been so long since I wrote that, it's fun to hear it kind of come back. And it's wonderful to hear how the words you carefully craft impact a reader. So I thank you for sharing that, your experience with me to my words that are on the page. That is what I-

Ken Harvey: 22:57 Well, I've got one more for you.

Bernadette Pajer: 22:58 ... Okay.

Ken Harvey: 22:58 You want to hold your thought for a second?

Bernadette Pajer: 22:59 Yes, okay.

Ken Harvey: 23:00 Okay, so about 46 pages I think.

Bernadette Pajer: 23:04 Okay.

Jim Hills: 23:05 About, I'm looking at your notes. It is 46 pages in.

Ken Harvey: 23:08 46, yes, because I've got it here. There is a scene in which Professor Bradshaw has been called into this meeting and with the, gosh, I can't remember now what the name of the group is, but it's after they've examined the body of the inquest [crosstalk 00:23:32]-

Bernadette Pajer: 23:31 Oh, the inquest. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 23:35 ... So the coroner appears in the story, and this is the way you described the coroner. "Coroner Klein was a short, stocky, middle-aged man with wiry hair. Though clean shaven, his eyebrows were a grayish black jungle beneath a grayish black mop. He had intense black close set eyes and a disagreeable habit of breathing through his mouth. No doubt, a consequence of working with disagreeably smelling corpses."

Ken Harvey: 24:08 So, I was sharing with Deborah, your fellow from your group, how I had been responding to some of these passages from your work, and she said something that I told her I was going to write down and mention. She said that this is all about trying to trigger mental pictures and those mental pictures trigger then a corresponding set of emotions and hopefully create corresponding connections between the reader and the

- character or the situation. And I think just that's really an ongoing challenge that the author is attempting to manage up until the closing sentence of the work.
- Bernadette Pajer: 25:15 Exactly, yeah, and that word, trigger, is exactly what Deborah's remembering. This is another thing I give workshops on and I think I've even done it for Sno-Isle is trigger writing, I call it. So in my journey of writing books and putting them in the drawer. I discovered what I really wanted to do. At first, I overwrote everything. I tried to explain everything. I wanted you to feel everything. So I thought I had to put it on the page. And then it became more clear to me as I studied writing-
- Ken Harvey: 25:46 I've read some books like that. They are tough to get through.
- Bernadette Pajer: 25:48 ... They are tough, yeah. So what I really my aha moment came when I realized my job is not to put every emotion and image into the readers head, my job is to find the words that will trigger their own memories and emotions to fill out the picture. It's participatory when you read something like anvil foot, lifted his anvil foot. Subconsciously, your brain is processing, what's an anvil, it's something that's very heavy. And you don't even think about that, but you feel it, and it triggered something in you. And also, hopefully the description of the light head and the anvil feet.
- Bernadette Pajer: 26:38 If you have ever experienced a moment like that in your life, when you feel like you're presented with something, you're so overwhelmed and you don't want to do it, you don't want to do it but you have to do it. I was trying to find enough sensory imagery, in as few words as possible that it would trip in you that memory. I've been there, I've done that, test anxiety or having to tell somebody bad news you don't want to tell them.
- Bernadette Pajer: 27:05 Yeah, so it's very powerful. There's a wonderful author. He's up in Canada, C.C. Humphreys, and he described it best, "Words are energy compressed by the author, released by the reader." So my job is to compress the words and to search. I'm always searching for the right word to be those triggers.
- Jim Hills: 27:35 So one of the things that I'm really curious about, I mean, clearly, you told us about the depth of the research you did. How you imagined it and envisioned Bradshaw, and I'm looking at the Bradshaw Series, is four books. That happened, or well, we're published anyway in four years and that seems like-
- Ken Harvey: 28:04 A lot of work.

- Jim Hills: 28:05 ... Well, that's a timeline that many authors can't do. If they could do one in four years, that would be cool. So the question is I'm wondering how you felt at the beginning? Was this an explosion of your own creativity around? Like you had way more in your head than could fit in one book and you were trimming stuff down to tell a story but you had another one right on its heels or how did that work? Because you... To end up with a four book series in four years.
- Bernadette Pajer: 28:37 Yeah, well when the first one finally sold, I mean, I always envisioned it as having say, right now I'm envisioning nine total eventually.
- Jim Hills: 28:48 Wow.
- Bernadette Pajer: 28:48 And I knew that the sort of mysteries I like to read are not always huge, although sometimes I love Elizabeth George and hers are 900 pages long. But for myself as a writer, I knew they were going to be shorter, and I knew I wanted Bradshaw to go on a particular journey, and I know where that journey will begin and end. So I always envisioned in these pieces. But once it's sold, I've been writing for a long time and I was just thrilled. I'm like, okay, I'm going to write book two. And it's who I am as an individual. I'm a little bit obsessive about my passions, and so when I get up in the morning, and I'm cooking, I'm plotting.
- Bernadette Pajer: 29:33 I'm always writing, I'm always thinking, everything I'm doing. I mean, you will sometimes find the butter in the bread drawer or something because my brain isn't always where my body is. So that can be a little bit dangerous at times but it's just what I do, and I just constantly thinking and so I really wanted to get out with this series in order to gain an audience. Once they read it, they want to read the next, and the next one. So I was on that path up and through the fourth book, and then some people might talk about later, other things intervened, and I had to set it aside.
- Bernadette Pajer: 30:13 I do have the fifth book outlined, and I do hope to get to it one of these days, but I'm too busy now to get to it.
- Ken Harvey: 30:22 So we've mentioned the four books, I want to just call out the names of the four that are currently available, A Spark of Death, the one I'm currently reading. You mentioned, it was the first one. Fatal Induction, then Capacity for Murder, and so that automatically tells you it's a murder mystery. So thank you for that title, and then one that might not seem so obvious, is Edison Effect, or is it The Edison Effect?

Bernadette Pajer: 30:53 The, The Edison Effect.

Ken Harvey: 30:53 The Edison Effect.

Bernadette Pajer: 30:53 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 30:56 So all of those as part of the currently available Professor Bradshaw Mysteries Series. So-

Bernadette Pajer: 31:04 Can we add that it's in print, in the library and eBook and audiobook.

Ken Harvey: 31:09 ... Okay. So available in a number of different formats for our listeners and just my personal note you will enjoy them if you appreciate science and if you appreciate the mystery and the whodunits, then this is in my mind, must reads.

Bernadette Pajer: 31:34 Can I point out that it wasn't with the first book, but I don't remember when it first happened, but the Washington Academy of Sciences, which is in Washington, DC, came up with a program several years ago that they would have their scientists review fictional novels, if you wanted to, and then give you their seal of approval for science if it passed their peer review. And so I forget, like I said, the first book that I had that done but then retroactively I sent them even A Spark of Death, so the newer versions have the seal of approval. So all four of the books in the series have passed peer review for science, which is really fun.

Ken Harvey: 32:17 Well, and that seems... And listening to you that that's something that's really important to you to ensure that there's that scientific integrity that's woven through the work. And what I'd like to do is maybe just transition from part of what Jim said, which was, a tremendous amount of work of kind of four books within four years published and what you're doing now, because you have mentioned to us, before we began recording that you are now really kind of working more around kind of nonfictional work and fictional issues. But still with that kind of integrity-

Bernadette Pajer: 33:04 Exactly.

Ken Harvey: 33:04 ... Piece, because there's something that you had sent to us in terms of kind of giving us some background on yourself and you said that you've never given up faith in the power of truth and kindness, which I really appreciate. That you're also very, very passionate about the control and flow of information, and in

within a free society. And being mindful of where that flow can be restricted or might be restricted. And that it's important to be aware of that so that you don't find yourself unaware and potentially ignorant when you think you know, everything that you ought to know.

Bernadette Pajer: 33:50 Yeah, I wish I had it memorized. There's an old saying like, a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. And so many... I'm sure I'm that way on a lot of topics. You read in the media and you hear on the news a certain, I don't even know how to describe it, not a slogan, but just an attitude or perception of things. And so you adopt that as your belief system because you hear it everywhere. You just say, well, of course it's true. Of course it's true. Government says it's true, of course it's true. And we don't think to dive deeply, and that can be very dangerous, because we have to look beneath to see, really does that settle on? And especially when it comes from authority.

Bernadette Pajer: 34:35 I think we have a real problem with feeling like you defer to authority. Well, my doctor said, well, the CDC said, well, it was in the New York Times and these are authority figures to you. And so you feel like okay, I can trust what they say. But what we need in American, in order to keep America free on many topics is the belief that, well, it might be true. But until I go a little deeper down and research to see what the foundation of that is, I might withhold my own personal stance, especially if I'm being asked to say vote on something to remove somebody's personal freedom. I had better go down that rabbit hole and see exactly what this stands on.

Ken Harvey: 35:26 Well, as you're talking, I'm thinking of how American public libraries are really built upon a number of principles around access to information and ideas. And both the power and the power and necessity of operating within intellectual freedoms. So that ideas should be debated, not restricted, and they should be open. People should have access to them so that they can make up their own minds.

Bernadette Pajer: 36:14 Yeah, and it seems like right now there's this little oasis almost within libraries and in some in bookstores of that debate to happen. The books do exist that contain particular bits of information on both sides deep down into controversial issues.

Ken Harvey: 36:34 And sometimes with more than two sides, that can be a number of different perspectives. Don't you think?

Bernadette Pajer: 36:39 Yeah. What we're finding though, in the modern world where most people are getting their information, not so much from

books at the library, but from online, online newspapers, websites of major organizations, and social media. That's where a lot of the censorship has been formalized. I mean, I attended with some fellow board members I'm with, Informed Choice Washington, we flew back to Washington, DC. There was a Senate committee called the HELP Committee. I forget what the HELP stands for. It's a health committee, and they were talking on an issue near and dear to my heart, which they label vaccine hesitancy and what we call doing your medical due diligence.

Bernadette Pajer: 37:26 There were, I don't know how many, at least 600 of us who had gotten there at six in the morning to get in line, to get the couple hundred seats that we were told would be available in this room. And as we were standing in line, they said, well, there's only going to be 100 seats, and then they came back and later said, there's only 60 seats. And then they came back and said, no, there's only 30 seats, and by the time we got in, luckily had got there at 6:30 in the morning, I was one of the only 12 people to be allowed into this room, and the room was filled with what we called fake people. But it was probably staffers, we don't know who they were.

Bernadette Pajer: 38:01 They were ushered in a side door. They filled all the seats in front of the cameras, so that those of us who were sitting there, who really want scientific integrity in the discussion, and both sides of the discussion brought forward, we were not seen, and we were told if we stood up, or if we made a sound, we'd be arrested and they had zip ties visibly in their hand to do that, if they... It's just sort of absurd and I forget, even I had a point to what you were saying when I began this conversation.

Bernadette Pajer: 38:35 Oh, so the censorship of information and so at this hearing, the senators were saying things were not based on the facts of science. They were giving a lot of we know vaccines save the world and they're safe and effective and whooping cough outbreaks are happening and mumps outbreaks are happening and we have to stop this. These anti-vaxxers, and all of this stuff and I'm sitting there thinking, so frustrated because nobody on the panel and none of the senators were saying, well, wait a minute, the whooping cough vaccine doesn't prevent colonization and transmission, it just temporarily subdue symptoms and outbreaks are happening in fully vaccinated children, so we really cannot say that it's people who are not choosing to vaccinate that are spreading these, okay. I just gave you scientific fact that's well researched, that's FDA science, CDC science, and yet we have this rhetoric happening up, and my voice can't be heard.

- Bernadette Pajer: 39:41 I was excluded from the meeting. I wasn't invited to speak at the panel. Robert F. Kennedy Jr, who is very vocal on this subject. He's one of the world's leading, most respected environmental attorneys. When he began speaking up on vaccines though, suddenly, nobody will listen to him, nobody will speak or allow him to speak. It's very frustrating.
- Bernadette Pajer: 40:08 So there's this silencing of what we keep coming back to is product capability. It's all well and good to say you want to protect the greater good. That you want to make sure that everybody stays safe, but nobody will discuss the actual product capabilities. That's being censored. You're not going to read what I just told you about the pertussis vaccine in the Seattle Times, even though we've sent them the information. You're not going to hear it on KUOW, even though I've sent them the information. You won't even read it on the department of health pertussis webpage, even though I have had, I've sent them all the science, they've acknowledged it. I've had meetings with the chief science officer, the epidemiologist, they acknowledge exactly everything that we have said about the pertussis vaccine, but they will not put it on the public information.
- Bernadette Pajer: 40:58 That's censorship by omission, and those are the sort of things I'm dealing with and why book five of the Bradshaw Series is on hold, because all my avenues of expression of trying to engage and teach the public so that they can make, I'm not pro-vaccine or anti-vaccine. I'm pro-informed consent and you need full information about each product in order to make a wise decision, and my freedom and the freedom of all the people like me, trying to get that information out there is being censored by all the major media outfits and even by our own Department of Health.
- Ken Harvey: 41:42 Well, on the... When we run this podcast episode, we will have in our show notes, a list of titles of what's been published that's available, I believe, through Sno-Isle Libraries, that will reflect a number of different perspectives on issues that you've been talking about around vaccination, and also around the issues around intellectual freedom and kind of the censorship, because those are very important issues, indeed, and so I want to let our listeners know that that's going to be available to them. So, Jim?
- Jim Hills: 42:27 Well, I'm curious how you view... So yes, I mean, I take at face value what you just said. So I've worked in communications for a long time in a variety of sources, and I think one of the hallmarks of the moment that we're living in is a fragmentation

of information sources. So there are lots of ways and as you were talking about book five, I was imagining, book five it's going to take this on, and-

Ken Harvey: 43:01 I was wondering that too.

Jim Hills: 43:02 ... Yeah, and so there are, yes, I think the things that you pointed out likely do occur. Not a question, but what channels do you use or do you see as potentially effective in getting your perspective to a broader audience?

Bernadette Pajer: 43:24 That's a very good question. So, we've become more and more limited. We do have people who sign up for newsletters and to join an advocacy team, so we can send out emails. We did have to leave Mailchimp though, because Mailchimp said that they were going to begin deleting accounts of anybody spreading what they said was misinformation about vaccines, and Mailchimp is a heavy donor to the CDC Foundation.

Bernadette Pajer: 43:52 So I mean, we could spend hours and hours talking about the undue influence of the pharmaceutical industry on policy and the severe conflict of interest that is happening there.

Jim Hills: 44:04 Sure.

Bernadette Pajer: 44:05 And I challenge anybody listening to this podcast to look at our website and see if you can find a single word that is not absolutely accurate, fully sighted, hyperlinked to the study for you to see. So the avenues are becoming more and more challenging. You may have seen in Spokane, there's some billboards, we have up now to try to reach the general public.

Bernadette Pajer: 44:31 We've done some educational flash mobs where, yeah, we go and we have these giant signs and they just give you some intriguing information and encourage people to research, to do your own research and to learn what you can to make an educated decision.

Ken Harvey: 44:50 Well, if someone's interested in contacting you, and let's just say, we'll start with contacting you as an author, how would they do that?

Bernadette Pajer: 45:03 Through my website. That would be [contact@bernadette](mailto:contact@bernadette), I can't say my own name, [bernadettepajer.com](http://bernadettepajer.com). There's a link on the website, they can contact me through that, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 45:14 And then if they're interested in some of the issues that you've been talking about, and wanted to get more of that information, say from Informed Choice Washington, how would they do that?

Bernadette Pajer: 45:27 That would be our website [informedchoicewa.org](http://informedchoicewa.org).

Ken Harvey: 45:32 .org?

Bernadette Pajer: 45:33 Yeah.

Ken Harvey: 45:34 Okay. So we will have both of those links on the show notes.

Bernadette Pajer: 45:37 Thank you.

Ken Harvey: 45:37 Then we've only got a minute or so left. I wanted to ask you, if you have a memorable library story time, early in your life or recently that you'd love to share with our listeners.

Bernadette Pajer: 45:58 Maybe two real quick. One, when I was a little girl, when I first kind of fell in love with the escape you feel reading, was a story about these little kids that were at a hotel with their parents, and the parents went out to dinner, and left the kids in the room and they never came back, and the kids didn't know what happened. It turned out the parents had been in a car accident, and they were afraid the authorities were going to take them away. So the kids just together decided to walk home, like 1000 miles. And it was just the most... I don't even know the name of the story now, I just remember the plot. It was just-

Jim Hills: 46:33 As a good author would, right?

Bernadette Pajer: 46:34 Yeah, I guess so.

Jim Hills: 46:35 Yeah. It's all about plot,

Bernadette Pajer: 46:36 It's all about plot, yeah.

Jim Hills: 46:37 Yeah.

Bernadette Pajer: 46:38 And then I have a memorable story, which just telling tales on me. As one day I was standing in my kitchen chopping celery or something. It was like, two minutes to six and one of the branches of Sno-Isle library called me and said, "Are you on your way?" And I said, "On my way where?" and I had completely missed an event that was scheduled and they were very kind

and rescheduled for me and everybody who came to the next event got a free copy of my books.

Jim Hills: 47:10 But while you were chopping, you're working on plot, right?

Bernadette Pajer: 47:14 Oh, yeah, always. See, I become that absent minded professor's thing. I'm always in my head, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 47:21 So, maybe last thing before we wrap up, you mentioned that you have a fifth book in outlined form?

Bernadette Pajer: 47:31 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ken Harvey: 47:32 And I'm assuming it's a fifth in the series?

Bernadette Pajer: 47:34 Yes. The fifth in the series, yeah.

Ken Harvey: 47:36 So are you also looking at any nonfiction writing that will be published that may show up on the shelves?

Bernadette Pajer: 47:48 Maybe one day. Right now our medical freedom rights are being threatened all across the United States. New York, they lost all personal religious exemptions and their medical exemptions are very tight. California just passed the most ridiculous, if I'm allowed to say this, legislation that for all intents and purposes, removes medical exemptions. Medical exemptions! and we know that in Washington State, they're aiming for that as well.

Bernadette Pajer: 48:25 If I could take a moment just to say that there was a 1986 law passed, the National Vaccine Injury Act that removed all liability for injury or death from vaccine makers and from doctors, anybody who administers a vaccine, which is a very dangerous thing to do, and it put all of the safety in the hands of Health and Human Services, and Health and Human Services also has what's known as vaccine court which is a no fault system, and no discovery system. And so you have to sue HHS, if your child is injured or killed or an adult in order to get compensation. Takes about eight years to get through that program.

Bernadette Pajer: 49:06 So it's a very conflicted entity there. HHS both promotes vaccines and also defense against vaccine injury. And then in 2011, there was a supreme court decision that said that even flawed vaccines are protected by this 1986 act, and Justices Sotomayor and Ginsburg dissented, and Sotomayor said, that this is creating a regulatory vacuum in which nobody, not the FDA, not the CDC, no entity is responsible for ensuring that current science is integrated into the vaccine design and vaccine

administration policies. And that's where we are today with the collaboration of the government in the pharmaceutical industry working really tightly together, in joint relationships. Nobody is left to protect the parents and so while I would love to someday put down in book form, a lot of the things that I've learned and things that people need to know, I am running probably 12 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week, trying to educate the public and legislators so that we can stop the removal of our medical freedom rights and just get policies that are sane and based on product capability.

- Bernadette Pajer: 50:28 So I don't see myself getting a nonfiction book out there anytime soon, but let's hope someday it slows down enough that I can take a deep breath and get to that book and I'll come back and talk to you guys again.
- Ken Harvey: 50:40 Okay.
- Jim Hills: 50:41 Okay. That sounds great, yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 50:43 And thank you so much for spending this time with us. I'm enjoying the read, and I can see that there's three more books that I'll have after this.
- Jim Hills: 50:51 Yeah.
- Ken Harvey: 50:51 Well, I'm sure by then, Professor Bradshaw is going to be a very close friend.
- Bernadette Pajer: 50:58 Oh, I'm glad to hear that. Thank you so much for having me.
- Speaker 5: 51:01 Cuddle up with your preschooler, reading fun books like Goodnight Moon or Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. You'll find 100 enjoyable picture book titles, which were hand selected by Sno-Isle librarians. Guaranteed to create delightful and meaningful afternoon and bedtime experiences. All while helping your children learn to read. Find the countdown to kindergarten list and many more online at Sno-Isle Libraries.
- Ken Harvey: 51:28 If you have a great library experience you'd like to share with us, we would love to know about it. Drop us a line at [CheckItOutPodcast@sno-isle.org](mailto:CheckItOutPodcast@sno-isle.org). Again, that's CheckItOutPodcast, all one word, at [sno-isle.org](http://sno-isle.org). Who knows, we might even invite you to share your story on a future podcast.