

# catching DIANE ATWOOD health

**Conversations About Aging: Joe Cupo, 68**  
**Catching Health with Diane Atwood**  
**March 9, 2020**

**Diane** Welcome to Conversations About Aging, a Catching Health podcast. I'm Diane Atwood and I'm traveling throughout my home state of Maine interviewing people 60 and above about their lives and what it's like to be growing older. Today's conversation is with someone who came into people's homes for nearly 40 years. Not through the front door, but through their television sets. He was and always will be a meteorologist — one with a distinct New York accent. Join me as I talk to Joe Cupo about why he loves the weather so much and what life is like now that he has retired.

Well, here I am in the kitchen of Joe Cupo. A lot of people are going to know Joe Cupo, oh, my goodness. And what happened to me is that even 10 years after I went off the air, and I didn't have the notoriety that you have, people would say I still watch you every day. Oh, yeah. Do you get that? People will say they still watch you?

**Joe:** Well, it almost gets you into an embarrassing situation. Because it's, oh, we love you on TV and how do you tell them, well, I haven't been on the air for over three years. And then if it comes up, you know that I retired, oh you're retired, you know, when did you retire? I don't want to tell them because you feel like I don't want to offend anybody. But yeah, it's interesting how I guess, you know, it's so true that time goes by so fast and the older you get, the faster it goes. And I think for most people, you know,

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they just lose track. So yeah, wasn't it just yesterday that I saw you, you know, I can appreciate that.

**Diane:** I can appreciate that too, because it does feel like just yesterday, and you said three years ago, you retired? Yeah. Because it does seem like yesterday to me.

**Joe:** Yeah, I retired in April of 2016. So it's over, you know, it's three and a half years.

**Diane:** Now, we can't take it for granted that the entire state of Maine knows Joe Cupo. So I'm going to give you the opportunity, opportunity to introduce yourself, who are you?

**Joe:** I was the chief meteorologist at Channel six, WCSH for 37 years. I started in 1979.

**Diane:** Do you miss it?

**Joe:** Um, not really. It changed Diane, you know, the whole business changed so much. And the job that I fell in love with was no longer that job. So there was really nothing to miss.

**Diane:** So the day you decided to retire, you knew it was time?

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**Joe:** Absolutely, yeah, it was definitely time The world was changing and I was becoming a dinosaur trying to do things the old fashioned way and they didn't want that.

**Diane:** What was the hardest thing in terms of technology?

**Joe:** I think the whole thing now is this move toward digital media. You know, my focus was always on television and doing the show and getting a good show on TV, a show that people can understand and come away from that show with some understanding and some knowledge of why the weather is going to be what it is. And it was getting harder and harder to do that because of the emphasis on the digital, you know, they wanted you on Facebook, they wanted you on Twitter. And there's only so much you can do you know, in the time that you have, so I found that my focus had to be away from the TV, the actual show and more toward the digital world and I didn't particularly care for that.

**Diane:** What about now that you're retired? Do you have a presence in social media? Joe Cupo the person?

**Joe:** None whatsoever. I'm not on Facebook. I still go online every day and I look at all the weather guidance, I still forecast the weather. It's a hobby. But as far as you know, again, that whole social scene, Diane I had a horrible experience with it. I don't know if you remember the Kennebunk woman, the Zumba dancer. You remember when they crashed that and there was a list? And someone said that my name was on that list. And I'll never forget how that went viral, you know, on social media and Debbie

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had the store in Freeport at the time she had people coming into the store, you know, we're sorry to hear that Joe is cheating on you, we're sorry, you know, I mean, it was just horrible and it was totally fabricated. Wow. So after that whole, in fact, Bill Green's name was also. Bill Green and I were both accused of being on this, you know, alleged list that she had and you know, neither of it was true. But I think because of that I had a really bad taste in my mouth and social media, and I never really got into it.

**Diane:** We should explain to people that Debbie is your wife.

**Joe:** Yeah, Debbie is my wife. She had a store in Freeport, Maine Wreath & Flower and I remember, it was just horrible. She came home one Saturday night in tears because of all the people that came in who assumed that this what they saw was true. And I don't know if you remember, but I had to go on the air and do a mea culpa with Cindy. We actually did an interview where she asked me, you know, have you ever been down there? I said, no, I haven't. And thank God, I had that ability to do that, you know, I mean, someone who was accused of this who didn't have my platform, what would you do? You know, so yeah, we did that, and after we did that, that kind of silenced it quite a bit. But I mean, everywhere I went, my eye doctor, my dentist, they're all like, you know, we've known you for so many years, we have to ask you, is it true? Wow. And it was horrible and all because of somebody who just made up this thing you know on Facebook.

After that, I wanted nothing to do with Facebook or any of that stuff.

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**Diane:** And yet because of your job and what the expectations were, you had to be on social media then.

**Joe:** Yeah, exactly. You know, they were forcing it on us. And, you know, it also got to the point where, you know, those, how do you want to say there are no boundaries anymore as far as hours when you're working? You know, it's like, they want you on Twitter even when you're not working. You're supposed to be telling people I went for a bike ride today. I went to the store today, you know, that's just not me, Diane. You know, I'm not into telling people about my life and I think everybody needs a little privacy, you know. Working in television, as you know, you don't have a lot of privacy, you know, you're out there and people recognize you. And that's great. You understand that you know, but I don't need to be telling people, you know, where I'm going every minute of the day, why I'm doing it, you know, stuff like that and that's what they were. That's what they want.

**Diane:** When we hear your voice, we know in an instant that it's not a Maine accent we're hearing. Can you talk about where you were raised?

**Joe:** You know, it's funny you say that because when I was hired in 1979, I was hired with a six-month probation, a provision that, you know if it didn't work out, they could let me go. And they were nervous about the New York accent. This Italian from New York is going to come to Maine and do the weather. And you remember Bruce McGorrill, right? They were like, is this going to really work? Obviously it did, you know, I was there for 37 years and the wonderful people in Maine accepted me despite my New York accent. But yeah, I grew up on Long Island in New York. And I guess, no

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matter how long you are away, you never lose certain things. But now when I go home, I call it home, it's really not home anymore. Maine is my home. But when I go to New York and I talk they all tell me you sound funny.

Yeah, I've got a New England twang now apparently that they pick up on but I don't say coffee anymore. I say coffee. You know, I don't say dog. I say dog. So you know that kind of makes me stand out down there.

**Diane:** Tell me about your childhood.

**Joe:** It was a great childhood growing up on Long Island in the late 50s and early 60s was a great place. Actually, where I grew up in Nassau County in Uniondale was a lot like say South Portland. You know, the houses were about that distance apart. It was a really great place. We used to play baseball in the streets and had a wonderful childhood.

**Diane:** Did you have brothers and sisters?

**Joe:** Yeah, one brother and one sister. I was the oldest, I was the big cheese, you know, the big chooch as my mother called me. And they're all still down on Long Island. I'm the only one who left the nest.

**Diane:** Wow. And are your parents still alive?

**Joe:** No, my dad passed in 2014 and my mom just passed last year actually last November.

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**Diane:** So that's a difficult passage, isn't it to lose your parents and suddenly you're in that top tier generation?

**Joe:** Yeah, it's definitely different, you know. The people that you used to look up to are all gone and now you know, there are nieces and nephews who look up to me I've become the what do you want to call the patriarch of the family, so to speak. Yeah, it's difficult. I had to sell the house, you know, that I grew up in, you know when my mom moved out and that was hard, because, you know, they had been in that house since 1955, and you know, finding all these things. They were both packrats, so as we're cleaning out this house with finding all these old, you know, cards we gave them letters we wrote to them when we were kids, man, that was something, really A lot of the stuff I couldn't throw out, I just had to hang on to it.

**Diane:** So you brought it home to your house?

**Joe:** Yeah, yeah, I've got I could give you a tour of my house. So all the things here that used to be in Uniondale.

**Diane:** So you're a sentimental guy.

**Joe:** I am very, very sentimental. I'm an old fashioned, sentimental guy. Yeah.

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**Diane:** You're Italian? One hundred percent. 100. Both parents were Italian? Yes. Catholic?

**Joe:** Yeah, a hundred percent. Yeah. Both Catholic. And that's a big part of my life, Diane. My religion. Debbie and I were invested in an order called the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre this past year. The primary goal is to try to keep Christianity alive in the Holy Land. Everything we do is focused on that and we've met some wonderful people in that order, who we just have a lot in common with, you know.

**Diane:** It's interesting because for a lot of people who were raised Catholic, you hear the term lapsed Catholic. They don't want to go back to church and yet, well, did you ever go through that or has church always been important to you?

**Joe:** No, absolutely. There was a period of my life where I totally left the church, stopped going. And I don't know, I forget how long that was. It was a pretty long time. When I went away to college, I kind of fell away from it up in Albany and when I first moved to Maine for many years, I didn't go to church and then one day, all of a sudden. You know, you talk about the Holy Spirit, you just hear this voice, it comes to you and says you need to do this. And I remember going back and it just felt so good and that was it. That was probably maybe mid 80s, you know, that that happened. And since then I've been going to different churches because I've moved around. But I have to, I really need that. It helps me so much get through life. Going to Mass on Sunday, you just get a reinforcing shot of spirituality that you have to take with you and use it, you know, as you're going every

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day, meeting people talking with people. Whatever you're doing even on the phone and the way you drive. Everything you do is influenced by that, you know, because we're taught humility and to care for others. And those are two of the basic tenets of, well, Christianity. And if everybody would just adhere to that this would be the world would be a much nicer place.

**Diane:** Unfortunately, religion is at the root of a lot of not so good issues, isn't it?

**Joe:** Yeah, it is unfortunate. And I know a lot of people use that as an excuse, you know, not to go to Mass, you know, there has been abuse and yeah, I know all about that. I get all that. But that's not going to stop me from pursuing my religion or pursuing what I feel is a very important facet of my life. Yeah, there are bad priests out there and quite frankly, the devil is everywhere. You know, it doesn't matter where you go. Yeah, he could also, you know, there could be priests that are, that could be devils. It's very, very unfortunate. But that is a test of your faith, too. You always have to keep your faith. You have to have faith, you have to have hope, and those two things along with charity, are what should drive your life.

**Diane:** And so at this point in your life, those are things that drive you?

**Joe:** Absolutely, every day. I mean, that's one of the great things about retiring now. You know, when I was working you wake up in the morning and the first thing I would do is okay, I need to do this, this, this before I go to the station. You know, it was always a race. And now I can get up and don't have to do that anymore. I know I can get up and I can pray. If I want

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to pray for five or 10 minutes and have a little session with God, it's really nice. And I find that I get through the day a lot better than I used to. Grounds you. Yeah, absolutely.

**Diane:** What about the church today as opposed to the church of little Joe Cupo? Things have changed. You talk about the technology changing at the station. Have things changed for you in the way Mass is said, for instance?

**Joe:** Well, when I was really small, the Mass was in Latin, you know, so you didn't understand a thing. Fortunately, that's no longer the case. But I mean, now Diane, I'm so involved with the church, you know, being a lector. So I'm up there reading scripture, and being a cantor and being in the choir. So I feel like I'm actually a part of the Mass more than I was when I was younger. When I was younger, I was just kind of there. And everybody else was, you know, the priests, the altar boys, they were all parts of the Mass.

**Diane:** You were never an altar boy?

**Joe:** No, I was not. Because you had to learn Latin. I didn't know it so I never became an altar boy. And probably also in my youth, I don't think I was I felt this strongly about the church as I do now. We did it then because we had to, you know, our parents said, you will go, you will receive your communion, you will receive your confirmation. You didn't really have any choice. So it was more of a, you were pushed into it. Now, it's more

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voluntary. Now I go because I want to go and as I say, I'm much more involved.

The great thing about our religion is we're being taught that you know there's something out there bigger than us. We are not the center of the universe. You know, we're just like little particles. And, again, that goes hand in hand with, you know, being humble and being in humility. And yeah, you know, it's not about me, it's about something bigger than me. And that's what they teach us.

**Diane:** That's nice. Well you had another call in your life. To be a meteorologist. So when did that happen? Did you always want to be one?

**Joe:** I think that's a gene. I really do. Why? I mean, you meet people I've met so many people who just love weather. You know, I've always wanted to be a meteorologist, and you can just tell how they love it. And I can relate to that because as a kid, that's all I wanted to watch on TV was the weather. Down in New York, there was a weather guy named Tex Antoine, who gave this great weather show, you know, he'd come on, he was an artist, he would draw the fronts and the highs and lows and explain everything. And that's how I started learning about weather. And why? Again, I think it's I think it's a gene, a weather gene. So yeah, from I don't know, eighth grade, I guess I started, you know, and just pursued that right through the very day I still love it. Even though I'm not on the air anymore. I'm still forecasting.

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**Diane:** You're sitting there with your cup of coffee or whatever, and you're watching and saying, wait a minute, wait a minute. I see that front coming.

**Joe:** Well, all the guidance is online now. Everything is there. You don't need to be working for it. It used to be you had to work for somebody to get the maps and all the stuff you needed to make a forecast but now it's all on the internet. I just recently went to a dinner — a few of my friends were retiring at the National Weather Service. I got invited to that dinner up in Gray. And you know, they're even giving me more websites. Oh, check this out. Check this out. You're gonna love this and yeah, you know, so I'll start that. You know when there's a snow storm coming nothing's changed for me. I still want to know like I did when I was working at Channel six. And I know people are going to call me and ask me so I better know. Still do? Oh, absolutely.

**Diane:** You have your own personal Storm Centers here?

**Joe:** With the music and everything. And a sweater. I wore a sweater. But no, and I know that if there's something happening if I go out shopping, I know that I'm going to be asked. So I always feel obligated to keep myself abreast of what's happening. But also it is a hobby you know, it's not like I'm doing this I had, I love it. I've always loved weather, Diane. I feel guilty that I got paid all those years for doing this because it wasn't work.

**Diane:** How do you become a weatherman, though you have to go to school and you have a lot to learn, like, it always amazed me that you

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weather people can just get up there and you spew out the stuff. You don't have teleprompters or anything? You know your stuff.

**Joe:** That's the gene. No, you do have to go to school, you know, you have to study all this. Unfortunately, the dropout rate is very high, because when you try to study meteorology, what most people don't realize is it's very mathematical. It's a branch of physics called fluid dynamics. So if you want to go for a degree, you have to learn calculus and differential equations, and you know, it's pretty hairy, fluid mechanics. So a lot of people don't make it through that, you know, and it's unfortunate but yeah, you get all that stuff and then, you know, you come out and then they, you also learn how to interpret the guidance, you know, because the computer models, most people would look at that and say, what is this? But we're taught how to interpret the numerical guidance and translate all these numbers into tomorrow is going to be partly sunny high near 40. I've always said, that's my job, I'm a translator, you know, I go to work, I look at all the stuff and I take all these numbers and all these lines on I turn that into oh, tomorrow, it's going to snow. You know, we're looking for four inches.

**Diane:** So you're not actually predicting, you're not just pulling it out of your hat, but you are looking at all these models and it is showing you but sometimes it turns out not to be accurate?

**Joe:** Yeah, for one or two reasons, either the models were wrong, which they can be, you know, models are not perfect, they're not the real world. That's one reason or number two, the other reason is you screw something

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up. You misinterpreted something the model was trying to show you. So those are the two main reasons that forecasts go bad.

**Diane:** Did you take any guff from people over the years? People saying, hey, you said it was going to do this. And it didn't even come close to that.

**Joe:** You know, actually very rarely. And and I think the reason for that is because, you know, there are certain weather situations that lend themselves to making a really good forecast, you know, there are certain things, yeah, you know, this is going to happen. Then there were those that are get a little in the gray area, you know, you really can never be perfectly sure how storms are going to track how close they're going to come to the coast. When I was on the air, I would always explain that to people, you know, and I think that for that reason, they kind of gave me some corner. Because if it didn't quite turn out the way I said, I also gave them well, this could also happen, too. Right. And I think that was a big part of, to me, that was an important facet of doing the weather on TV. Not just giving the forecast, but explaining why we're giving that forecast and what might go wrong with it. And so I didn't get a lot of negative feedback.

**Diane:** Is Maine the first place that you worked?

**Joe:** Channel six is the only station that I ever worked at.

**Diane:** Wow, and you just were looking down job opportunities and you saw Portland, Maine and you thought huh that looks interesting?

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**Joe:** They actually contacted me indirectly because they were looking, again, this is 1979. And they were looking to do something that no one was doing, have a morning meteorologist on the morning news. Okay, in those days, the morning news was 25 minutes long, not like today. And it was with Cliff Reynolds? Very good, good memory, yeah. Cliff Reynolds was the guy I broke in with. And they were so desperate because they were looking for someone who was going to work for very little money, you know, so they were calling colleges, all the colleges that they knew had weather departments. They were calling to see if they could find someone to come and they called SUNY Albany where I had just finished up my degree and I used to play tennis with the chairman of the atmospheric science department. So we're out there playing tennis one day and he said Joe, I just got this call from a TV station in Portland, Maine. You have to check this out. And I called and Fred Nutter was the news director, you know Fred. He hired me, too. Stole your way from Channel eight, right?

**Diane:** Yeah, I guess he did. But he actually offered the position to one of the reporters up in Bangor. And so I thought I didn't get the job. But then he called me back a few days later to say that reporter didn't want to move down to the big city. So if I wanted it, I could have the position.

**Joe:** I remember you because I remember seeing you on Channel 8.

**Diane:** That was my break. I had no idea what it was like to be on television. I didn't even have a television back then. But it certainly was a - I loved it. Just like you loved being a meteorologist. I love being a reporter.

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**Joe:** Well, you did a great job. No so Fred, I called Fred and he said, Well, can you send me your resume tape but of course I didn't have anything like that. I never even dreamed that being on TV. I said no, I don't have it. So he said, can you come for an audition? So I drove here from Albany and did an audition. And you know, I don't know what they saw but they hired me.

**Diane:** I'm curious. You said that you didn't even have a resume. You didn't even think about being on TV. What kind of a meteorologist did you want to be?

**Joe:** Well, I thought I'd worked for the weather service. You know, that was my goal was to get a job at the National Weather Service. So I was looking into that and it was funny because, again, you know, that whole idea of somebody looking down on you. I met a gentleman in Albany, who was on TV. He was a weather guy on TV and we started playing tennis together. And he was the one who put the bug in my head, He said you'd be good at this. He said, you explain things well, because that would we'd have a lot of conversations. And he actually set me up with an interview with his news director in Albany. They had no openings. But I met the news director and we talked and he said, yeah, he goes, you should definitely think about doing this. So when the call came in, I don't know how long after that happened, but you know, when the call came in and Dr. Hamilton said you ought to check this out. Again, I'm just kind of following you know, following that star and it just happened. You know, I came here I auditioned, I was terrible. I don't know how I got hired, probably because, you know, I was going to work for nothing. You know, I just was so excited about being on

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TV that, you know, okay, well, we'll take it because they had other people, but when they told them what they were paying, everyone said no, they turned it down. So like you, you know, everybody turned it down. So I got the job.

**Diane:** And you never looked back.

**Joe:** No, I didn't, I didn't think I'd stay here because I loved Albany. I had a lot of friends there and I thought, well, okay, I'll work here for a couple years and I'll try to get back to Albany. But then, you know, living here and it just wow, you know, this is really a neat place. And Channel six was a great, you remember, I mean, it was run by a family, a Maine family and they were right there. And it was just a wonderful environment to work. It's very, very warm and fuzzy.

**Diane:** And they kept adding shows and they kept promoting you. And before long, you were the chief meteorologist.

**Joe:** Yeah, I mean, I was very fortunate, I mean, things just fell into place. Again, the main thing is that the people here took a liking to me. And without that, as you know, in television you're not going to go anywhere. But you know, the feedback was good. And, and I you know, I guess it was it was both ways, you know, cuz I enjoyed the people. I enjoyed going out and going to the schools and talking to the kids. Bringing back the cakes? Bringing back the cakes. Bruce McGorrill always loved those cakes, you know, but also going out to the Kiwanis Clubs and all the different organizations that would invite me to speak and getting out and, you know,

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shaking hands, almost like a politician, but I enjoy, that's me. I enjoy people. I'm a very social person. And so it was really a match made in heaven. And yeah, Channel Six quickly saw that, hey, this guy isn't all that bad.

**Diane:** That's nice. No, you're like an institution.

**Joe:** I don't know if I call myself that but.

**Diane:** But now that you're retired, what does it feel like? Because Joe Cupo is like a persona. And do you stop being Joe Cupo and become somebody else now that you're retired? Or can you still be Joe Cupo?

**Joe:** Thank you for asking me that. That's a wonderful question. And the answer is nothing has changed. The person I was then is the same person now. I didn't change anything when I was on television. You know, I mean, I behaved I went through my life the same way I'm going through it now. So there's absolutely no difference. Yeah, I'm not going to work anymore. But I never when I was on the air, Diane, I never took myself seriously as a TV star. You know, I was a meteorologist out there trying to inform the public and all that TV glitz stuff I never really took seriously, never took myself that seriously. And when people come up to me and say, oh, you're a big star, no, I'm not, you know. So now I'm not on the air anymore, but I feel the same.

**Diane:** People still come up to you, they still ask you what the weather is going to be.

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**Joe:** Oh, It's wonderful. It's very flattering. I can't tell you how many times, we miss you, you know, we really loved watching you for so many years. And yeah, that just gives you goosebumps when you hear that, you know.

**Diane:** And you are part of people's families. That's the message that I get, too. You come into people's homes a couple of times a day and they rely on you, and you do become part of their family.

**Joe:** Someone once asked me, do you ever get tired of people approaching you, coming up to you? And I would, my answer would always be well, the only thing worse would be if they didn't come up to me. And I truly felt that and the other thing, Diane, I remember so well. My first year at Channel Six, early in the career Willard Scott came to Maine. You remember Willard? I do. He came to Maine to do some shoots on L.L. Bean and stuff, you know, and the Thompsons wanted me to go out and you know, do a stander with him. And I got to watch him work the crowd at LL Bean because we were right there in the store and people are coming up and of course, they recognized him. And I watched how he treated the folks like he knew them all his life. And I said, yeah, that's the way to do it. You know, I learned a lot from him that day. And yeah, it's very natural for me, too. It was natural for him and I felt, yeah, that's exactly how I'm going to do this.

**Diane:** Well, you're still doing it, because from the moment I walked in the door, you were very, very welcoming.

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**Joe:** Thank you. That's the Italian too, you know.

**Diane:** Well, where's the food?

**Joe:** Oh, well, you want some pasta. We can do that real fast.

**Diane:** Okay, because I know somebody will want to know, you probably had some very challenging weather moments. I can remember challenging weather moments like hurricane Bob and being sent out to Long Island to do a story and almost getting swept away on the mail boat. But were there some really tough weather stories that you had to tell?

**Joe:** The toughest one without a doubt was that ice storm in '98. That was just horrible. You know, I'd always say this about the weather in New England, you know, it might tick you off, but it won't kill you. As opposed to, you know, if you go to the Midwest where tornadoes kill people or hurricanes kill people, you know, we don't usually have that here. Yeah, and you might get your picnic rained out, but more or less the weather here isn't going to kill you. But that ice storm, that was one of the worst things I ever had to predict, and the fact the longevity of it, that it just dragged on and on and on. And I remember people calling me and saying we got all power back and I say great. You know, if you have to do your laundry or your dishes, do them right away because you're probably going to lose it again. You know, and they'd say really and I'd say yeah, the storm is not going away. It went on for like three days.

**Diane:** What was it about the weather patterns that made that happen?

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**Joe:** It was, in a nutshell, things stalled, you know. We always do very well here if weather keeps moving, even if it snows if the storm moves it's only going to snow for you know, eight to 12 hours and then it's gone. But when things stall, that's when you get in trouble. And that's exactly what happened. Things stalled and we were in a bad place. We were in a place where the temperature was right around that you know where it was just cold enough so that these little water droplets coming down were freezing on all the power lines, all the trees anything you know, and it was freezing rain freezing drizzle kind of thing. And again, you know if it happens for a few hours, you can live with that. But it went on for days, just days and days and days and remember, our tower went down at Channel Six. We were off the air. Well, actually we had generators I guess that we managed to stay on the air but most people didn't, their TVs were out. Most people were listening to us on the radio. On the AM, our frequency used to get picked up on 88 or something. It was on the far left. AM Station. Right. I remember people telling me you were like a voice in the night, you know, they couldn't see us, but they would hear us. But that was without a doubt the worst. I dreaded going to work because I hate giving people bad news, you know, and you have to go on and say, this is not going to end. It's going to go on. It's not going to end till you know, the end of the week. So hang in there.

**Diane:** And even weeks. I remember we went to Lisbon falls, I think it was. And we did a story that people had been without power for a couple of weeks. They had the signs at the end of their road. And while we were

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there, their power went back on. And the most thrilling thing was that they could flush their toilet. Yeah, exactly.

**Diane:** I'd like to digress here now. I want to talk about you and aging. Because this is a conversation about aging. How old are you now?

**Joe:** I have to say this?

**Diane:** Well, I started telling people how old I am just recently.

**Joe:** I'm 68.

**Diane:** So you're still young.

**Joe:** Relatively speaking. Yeah.

**Diane:** You are. And you retired at 65?

**Joe:** I was actually 63. Yeah, cuz that was 2016 in April. So I was well, let's figure this out. That was 2016. I was 64. Yeah, I was 64 when I retired. I turned 65 that summer, right after I retired. So yeah, around there.

**Diane:** Has retirement been what you thought it would be?

**Joe:** I guess I didn't really have any preconceived notions of what it would be. I just knew it was time and I knew that I had things that I wanted to do. I mean, you know, I love to bike ride and now I don't have to worry about

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getting home and jumping in the shower, you know, I can stay out as long as I want. I love working in the yard. And I could do that a lot more. And then I started pursuing some other interests. You know, I started taking voice lessons and piano lessons. And that musical side of me that was kind of swept under the carpet for so long. And it's amazing with all this stuff how the days just go by? Wow. Yeah.

**Diane:** Tell me about the music. So you sing at church. What are you tenor? bass?

**Joe:** I'm a tenor. Yeah. And I sing, I'm at St. Peter's in Portland. And I joined the choir there a few years ago, but then after I joined, I said, you know, I really don't know what I'm doing. So because I couldn't read music. So I called up the gentleman who actually sang at my wedding, he's a voice coach. Can I mention his name or is that? Go ahead. His name is David Goulet and David's been in Portland forever, a very talented guy. And I said David, I'm 66 years old and if this is nuts you can tell me but I'm thinking of taking voice lessons and he just laughed. It's never too late if you want. And he's been wonderful. I mean, we have so much fun doing the various exercises. He pushes, you know, he gets you he definitely elevates your abilities. And then I wanted to learn how to read music so I started taking piano lessons. And Sylvia Infantine who I knew from way back reconnected with her and we started seeing each other once a week. So between the two things now, yeah, it's been it's been really, really special. And you know, the same high I used to get when I was on the air, you know how it is when you do a show and it's done. You just have that feeling of satisfaction. Completion. Yeah, it's always a good feeling. Well,

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now I get that same feeling. If I play a piece on the piano or I, you know, I sing a solo or whatever, you get that same kind of really nice satisfaction. So it kind of filled in that void, you know, from leaving the station.

**Diane:** Do you have a favorite kind of music?

**Joe:** Not really. I love the old stuff. You know, I love Sinatra and Dean Martin. I just sang at a competition at Bates College in Lewiston and I did a song called On the Street Where You Live, which is from My Fair Lady, you know and stuff like that, I just love that stuff.

It's funny. I remember joining the chorus. In sixth grade, I joined the chorus. And the teacher was such a jerk, so I quit. And I think back now I said, you know, I really kind of cut off my nose to spite my face because I really do love to sing. And so although you know that that part of me was just ignored for so long. And now that I've gotten back into it, between the choir, the chorus at the Italian Heritage Center, I sing there. It's like wow, I really really love this. You know, I love rehearsing. My piano teacher is trying to get me to do a show, you know, she says you should volunteer for like, you know, one of these city theaters or something. I don't know about that. But they put on musicals here and there. Oh, yeah, I know, and another friend of mine sings with the PSL. He's doing the magic of Christmas right now. He's trying to talk me into auditioning for that next year. I don't know. I guess I don't feel like I'm that good. But I'm just having fun, Diane, I'm just having so much fun. Just like I had fun doing the weather.

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**Diane:** A lot of people as they get older they don't find the things or they don't recognize the things that would make them happy. So it's really great that you have found lots of things that make you happy. So a question I often ask people is what makes it a good day for you? I get the sense that most days are good days for you.

**Joe:** Diane, you nailed it. That's so true. You know, I again, I don't need to travel, go to exotic places. I'm very very happy with my life here and all the things that I'm pursuing. So yeah, every day is a good day. Even when it snows. A snowy day is a good day because I don't have to drive in it anymore.

**Diane:** As we all age things change our physical abilities, things like that. Are you in good health? Are you still able to be as active as you used to be?

**Joe:** Yeah, actually, you know, biking is a big part of my activity. I bike over 5000 miles a year. That really has I'm almost riding as well now as I rode a few years ago, I'm sure at some point that's going to change, you know, but right now, I'm feeling really good and you know, got these power meters on the bike that tell you how many watts you're putting out and how much power you know. And I'm, I'm just as strong as I've been so thank God everything is good. I'm, you know, I'm still getting around. I mow the grass, you know, I have a push mower and I don't sit down on it, doing everything. When I go to Florida, I'll be swimming every day. You know, for not just like 10 minutes. I'm in the pool for an hour, an hour and a half. You know, I do like hundreds of laps. So I'm very blessed. I've had a few issues. I had my

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hip replaced last year, you know, that was from a bike crash. MS ride, right? Yeah, one of the MS rides I crashed and they told me they said you're going to have troubles down the road. And you did, what kind of troubles? Well, it was basically an arthritic thing and they just ate away over cartilage. So it was bone on bone with the hips, and had to have the hip had to be replaced.

**Diane:** So you had to deal with chronic pain then for a while, probably. And is it a big difference now that you've had the hip replaced?

**Joe:** Like night and day, it's amazing. Anytime putting weight on that leg was painful. So yeah, I was walking with a cane for a while and you know, just hanging in there. But you know, got it done and everything is good.

**Diane:** Did you feel like an old man when you were walking with the cane?

**Joe:** Yeah, I guess you could say that. I mean, I still, Debbie gets very upset with me when I say I'm getting old. You know, I'm getting old, I'm an old guy, you know? How you doing? Not bad for an old guy. She gets very annoyed with me when I say that.

**Diane:** What kind of advice does she give you?

**Joe:** Well, it's just you know, you're not old. You're not old. Look at look at all you do is well, yeah, I know. But I am old. I'm 68. You know, I'm not 38, I'm 68. You know, on the one hand I say that but then on the other hand, I get on my bike and I go out and do 40 miles. So.

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**Diane:** You could change the narrative to yes, I'm old but look at all I can do. Age doesn't matter. You can be an inspiration to people who sit and think, oh, I should be doing something. Joe, you've had a lot of life experience, having lived so long. Do you have any advice that you want to pass on?

**Joe:** Well, I think number one, what I always would tell the kids when I go out to schools find something that you really enjoy doing. And make your living at that. You know, don't don't do stuff just because you think you're going to make a lot of money or because someone tells you you should do this. You need to, you'll be much, much happier in life if you find something that you really enjoy, and you make a living at that. And I guess don't ever give up on your hope or to follow your star. I mean, I fantasized about being a TV weatherman, as a child watching Tex Antoine in New York and saying, why wouldn't that be cool to do that. Of course, you never think it's going to happen. And, and yet, you know, I went to school, became a meteorologist and then because of one phone call, boom, I got the job at Channel Six. So who would have thought, you know, and I guess I would say that anybody if you really want to do something, pursue it and you might surprise yourself, how things will work out for you. Because there'll be times that every door will look like it's closed. It's like when you play Solitaire, you know, there's like, you think there's no more moves except maybe there's one card, and you turn that card and all of a sudden, all these other opportunities open up. Life is like that. There'll be days when you'll think, uh, I'm not going to get that, it's not gonna happen and then somehow it happens, but you gotta have faith and don't give up. Always

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pursue that dream. If you just follow that dream and follow that star. And you'll be amazed more times than not how that plays out.

**Diane:** What do you hope people walk away with after hearing some of the things we've talked about? What do you want people to know about Joe Cupo that they might not know?

**Joe:** Um, boy, that's that's a tough one Di. Well, I'll just say this, alright. You said that when you came here, the way I greeted you made you feel very warm. That's who I am. I want people to, you know, if they want to, they want a hug, you know, they want someone to talk to, I'm here, you know, I'm that kind of a person. And I love meeting new people, I love talking with people and getting one on one with them. You learn new things, they learn things about you. So I guess that's how, I think you should go through life being like. You should go through life, you know, wanting to mingle and wanting to socialize and getting to know people and not be in your own little world. You know, get out there. Circulate, you know, and be a part of this.

**Diane:** There's always something there's always there's always something to talk about. Yeah, besides the weather.

**Joe:** And you'd be amazed how barriers break down. And you'll get smiles. That's what I love. I love to make people smile. I love that. If I can bring them some kind of happiness, you know for even for a short period of time that makes my day.

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**Diane:** Well, you've made my day by agreeing to do this conversation. Thank you and thank you for your hospitality.

**Joe:** I didn't offer you anything to eat. I feel guilty that goes against my grain. I'll have to hold that one against you. You'll have to come back for dinner.

**Diane:** You've been listening to *Conversations About Aging*, a Catching Health Podcast. I'm Diane Atwood and I've been talking with Joe Cupo, one of Maine's best known meteorologists.

If you enjoyed my conversation with Joe, please share it with a friend. You'll find more episodes of Conversations About Aging on my blog Catching Health at [CatchingHealth.com](http://CatchingHealth.com).

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