

YOU AND ME BOTH - GROWING UP (WITH JUDY BLUME) - TRANSCRIPT

HRC I'm Hillary Clinton and this is *You and Me Both*. I am so thrilled to be joined this week by the groundbreaking author Judy Blume. Since she began writing in the late sixties, Judy's books have struck a chord with so many millions of readers. From *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* to *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* to *Blubber*. Let's not forget *Forever...* That one was famously passed around among groups of friends. Some of the pages were dog eared because they had, quote, "sex scenes" in them. Her open, frank way that her novels engaged with subjects that, you know, were considered taboo – like sexuality, bullying, divorce, religion – really resonated with young people. Now, of course, writing about those topics also got her into some hot water. Since the culture wars back in the Reagan era, Judy's novels have consistently landed on the American Library Association's list of most banned books. But today, Judy Blume is enjoying something of a renaissance. The film adaptation of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* came out this past spring to critical acclaim, and it caused a resurgence of women of a certain age, talking about their formative experiences with the story. And *Judy Blume Forever*, a new documentary film about her is streaming now on Amazon Prime. There are so many things I want to talk to Judy about, including her efforts to combat book bans and the nonprofit bookstore that she and her husband run down in Key West, Florida. I am so delighted she's joining me on the podcast.

Are you there Judy Blume? It's me, Hillary.

Judy Blume I am there. Hillary. Hello. Hello. Good morning.

HRC Oh, I cannot tell you what a treat it is for me to talk with you. And I asked a couple of my childhood friends from ancient times who I still vacation with, visit with, you know, catch up with all the time, you know what they want me to talk to you about, and, to a person, because we're a little older then, you know, when you started, they said, "Oh, I wish she'd written when we were – we were wondering about life." And they reminded me, and I just wanted to tell you, that I remember in sixth grade – so this would have been probably 1957, maybe 58 – all the girls in the sixth grade were ushered into our school auditorium. There was brown paper covering the windows in the doors leading to the auditorium. We had no idea why we were there, and we sat down and they showed us a film about menstruation. And I, along with the vast majority of my classmates, as we

were recalling the other day when I was telling them I was talking to you, had never heard of it. I remember one of my friends saying, “Wait, I’m going to bleed? I’ll die!”

Judy Blume Oh, that’s so sad.

HRC And I had a wonderful mother, but she never said a word. I came home from school. I said, “We saw this film.” And she goes, “Oh, so now you understand?” No, I did not understand! But none of us knew about this, this, this, this very natural thing that is the experience of, you know, all of us. And I know, I know from reading about you – you didn’t grow up with any more openness than I did.

Judy Blume My mother didn’t talk about anything, but my father did.

HRC Oh, my God. My father would never have said a word to me!

Judy Blume My father did. My father is the one who told me about menstruation. Oh, I didn’t understand anything that he was saying. It had to do with the lunar cycle and the moon being full. And so I would look out the window and if the moon was full, I said, this is, now is the time that all the women are having this wonderful experience. I couldn’t wait to get my period. I really, really wanted it, as you know from my books.

HRC Oh, my gosh, thank goodness you had a father like that. Most of us did not. The last thing my father ever would have talked to me about is anything personal. But, you know, your mother – and you’ve written about her, you’ve done interviews, I’ve read long, long interviews with you over the years. You know, you’re so open about how you didn’t have that kind of intimate, open relationship with, with your mom. But, you know, she started typing your early books, right?

Judy Blume She did [laughs].

HRC Did that open up a conversation or was it just like, “I will type this.”

Judy Blume It was so strange because she, she came to my house to type, to type it. She was a crackerjack typist. And when my father died, and he died early at age 54, she went to work at a law firm and she was their typist, one of their many typists, I guess. But they always said, when – when she went on vacation, they had to hire two people to take her place. She was great. And I have to say, she is the person who really so encouraged me to

read and never restricted what I chose to read. She would say, “I think you would like this book, Anne Frank.”

HRC She kind of related to you then, in a way, through books.

Judy Blume Yes. Yes. And that's a wonderful thing that parents and kids can do. Maybe you can't talk about me...

HRC Right.

Judy Blume But you can talk about this character in a book, and that's great. However, my mother came to the house, she typed my manuscripts and that was it. She did not ask questions. I did not let her type the manuscript for *Forever...* She did type *Margaret*. You know, these are – these were finished. I, I can type. I'm a pretty good typist. But she would do the the one that was going to the publisher and never said anything.

HRC Oh my Gosh.

Judy Blume Never said a thing. Isn't that weird?

HRC It is weird, but it's weirdly touching too. You know, she wanted to be helpful. She couldn't really talk to you about even what you were writing.

Judy Blume Mm hmm.

HRC I do think a lot of it is generational. You know, women of her generation, my mother's generation born, you know, in the early part of the 20th century, you know, I don't think they had anybody to talk to. You know, my mother had a terrible childhood and, you know, just, uch, I don't know how she survived it. And so when I learned more about that, I just couldn't even imagine what it must have been like for her. But what you did and what was so incredibly impactful about your writing is that you kind of brought these very real childhood, personal growing up experiences to public light. And maybe a mother or a father or both couldn't talk to their child. But you, in a way, were talking for them because you were allowing these issues, these concerns that kids have, to be legitimized.

Judy Blume Well, I like that. Thank you. (laughter) I, that's not what I was thinking, of course, when I was writing, I was just you know – I had all this stuff inside me and I, I had the creative energy and I needed a place to put it because I then – remember, my generation, we married early. We had our children early. And then what?

HRC Mm hmm. Yeah, then what.

Judy Blume Yeah. And I think I do think in my generation, that's why there was so much divorce. You know, I was a junior in college when I got married.

HRC Mm hmm.

And, you know, I had two kids by the time I was 25.

HRC Right.

Judy Blume And I like taking care of babies, but then. Then what?

HRC Yeah, exactly.

Judy Blume And I, I desperately needed the creative outlet. It could have been anything. But I was home with two little kids, and I did have stories running around in my head forever since I was nine years old. So it's like, okay, let's see. Let's see if I can do this.

HRC So your first book, the title is so great. *The One in the Middle was the Green Kangaroo*.

Judy Blume Oh no, no, Hillary! It was forgettable. Forgettable. It amazes me that it's still in print and that children read it. Little children. Little children.

HRC But they do. And there was a publisher in, I guess a publisher, right? So how did you go from feeling, you know, the need to express yourself creatively to getting that first book in print?

Judy Blume Well, I knew nothing. You know, I was extremely naive and I didn't know anybody who wrote or anybody in publishing, but I read magazines about, you know, how to publish a book. That first book was not the book that brought me my incredible

editor, the best editor in the whole world, Dick Jackson. That was the next book, Iggy's House.

HRC Oh.

Judy Blume So the first book was published, just, you know, I would send the manuscript out and it would come back and I would send it out to somebody else and somebody published it. But of course, what's unforgettable to me is working with Dick Jackson. I mean, Dick Jackson really discovered me, found me, nurtured me. Every one of his writers felt and still continues to feel the same way about him. How lucky, how incredible to find a person like this. And apparently he worked differently with every one of his writers. You know, like, "does he do that with you?" "Wait, no. Does he do that?" I mean, it was almost like girlfriends talking about a boyfriend, but it wasn't, you know, it was just a way that he found that he recognized what we needed and he gave that to us. And for me, all of my early books – not the Fudge books, because Dick and his partner, Bob Brown, said to me, "Oh, Judy, you're so prolific," this was ages ago, "You're so prolific. Why don't you do those funny books that you're writing with somebody else?"

HRC Oh, wow.

Judy Blume I know. And that was a big joke between us later on, you know, how did they let those books go? But they did. And they were a very small company. And I was prolific in those days.

HRC They just couldn't handle your workload!

Judy Blume I was getting the job done. I don't know how because I used to think someday, someday, when the kids are bigger, I will have much more time to do this. And you know what happened? The more time I had to do this, the less well I used my time.

HRC And what did your kids think about their mom writing books? Because clearly, at some point they realized that there were books that you actually had written, maybe on the kitchen table or a desk in their house somewhere.

Judy Blume The first two were at the kitchen table on the college typewriter. You know, it evolved. I mean, if you ask them now at 60 and 62? Well, they would tell you something different. But my daughter was my first reader. You know, she was a reader

always, and she'd come home from school and she'd pull the pages out of the typewriter and she would sit there and read them. And she says that I always watched her to see what she thought was funny, how she was reacting, and she would say, "I can't read while you're looking at me, stop looking at me." And my son says he remembers the clickety clickety clack of the typewriter. But really and truly, I feel that I didn't make enough of the fact that I was a working mom, because there weren't any on our *cul de sac*. We lived in suburban New Jersey. I never let them see, I think, the struggle and the pain, and I think that's important.

HRC So if a listener is thinking to herself, let's say, or himself, but let's stick with herself, "gee, I want to do that too." And they have, like, young kids at home. You think now maybe sharing more of that process with them, letting them see this is, you know, something you care deeply about and, and it takes time, it takes discipline. Is that something you would advise?

Judy Blume Well, I mean, women weren't going out to work so much.

HRC Oh, I know. I did not personally know any friend whose mother worked. Now, I had women teachers, so clearly I knew women worked.

Judy Blume Right.

HRC But that-

Judy Blume And nurses. You could be a teacher or a nurse.

HRC Or if you went, sometimes you'd go into a store or the library and you'd see other women. But that seemed very disconnected from my neighborhood because nobody worked. None of the women worked. The men left in the morning, they came back for dinner.

Judy Blume Yeah, and it is very different. But I do think that... I don't say sit down and talk to your kids about the struggle. That's not how I would do it. I mean, just let them see it. Let them see what's going on. The struggle. Don't hide it from them. You know, my first rejection, I went into the closet and I closed the door and I cried.

HRC Yeah.

Judy Blume They were very small. Did they need to see that? No, that was mine. That was private. My husband -- my then husband -- never saw it. I don't know if he was aware really, of what was going on. He just he said, well, this is terrible. But he thought it was "cute."

HRC Yeah,.

Judy Blume He thought it was cute.

HRC Yes. That again, is something very generational. But there was something else going on with you, Judy, that I've always thought, because you didn't just write whatever the more advanced version of, you know, 'see Dick run, see, see Jane, catch the ball.' I mean, you you began to tackle issues of, you know, race and and sex and religion. Those were taboos. I mean, I remember being told "you never talk about religion," and they didn't have to say, "don't talk about sex," because that was just assumed.

Judy Blume That didn't exist!

HRC That did not exist. We, you know, we had no idea. How did you come to, you know, really embrace issues that others were not writing about, let alone talking about? Was it kind of scary to you to do that?

Judy Blume I really can't explain, except that when I started, I knew that I wanted to write books that I would have wanted to read when I was a kid, and I knew that I wanted to be honest. I felt that adults -- in my life anyway -- adults kept secrets.

HRC Yes, true.

Judy Blume From kids. Everything was secrets. I hated secrets! And so I mean that in a way, that's how I started my life of, you know, inventing stories inside my head when I was nine years old, because of the secrets and because nobody told me, so I had to make up the stories that went with the secrets. And I did want to be honest. And I, I have kids say to me, "What's your superpower?" I now have decided what my superpower is. It's my memory.

HRC Oh, that's fascinating. In what way?

Judy Blume I had a fantastic memory for the details of being a child. And I still do. I mean, I may not know where my glasses are or my keys or, you know, and remember to put on my little hearing aids. But but I still have that memory for long ago.

Judy Blume And children are very observant. And so children know a lot more than they are given credit for, don't they?

Judy Blume They do. You know, I have a bookstore in Key West, and when a -- especially a young child -- comes into the bookstore, you know, we can look into each other's eyes. I think this anyway. And we recognize something there. I'm talking four or five, six year old, you know, the parent or the grandparent is always, "Read this book, get this book," you know, and I just make eye contact with the child. I'm careful in the bookstore not to say to the parents, "no, don't do that." And then when it's older kids, it's like, please, please, just let them browse and choose their own books. Don't stand down there and say, "No, that's not a real book because it's a graphic novel." Don't stand there and say, "that's a comic book, and you can't have that." You know, I don't know about you, but I as much as I read books, I loved comic books.

HRC I did too.

Judy Blume Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter.

HRC Oh, Brenda Starr covered- You know, she was carried in the Chicago Tribune. She was, and I -- this sounds ridiculous, but you'll understand -- she was the only grown up woman character that I knew of who had a job. And not just a job, a glamorous, exciting job and a boyfriend with a patch over his eye. I mean, the whole thing was so seductive. And I was a faithful reader because it took me out of my present circumstances, because none of that existed where I was living.

Judy Blume You probably don't remember this, but once I interviewed you for the 25th anniversary, I think, of Sesame Street. And this has this has to do with Brenda Starr. And that morning I was getting dressed and George, my husband, took a photo of me, a little Polaroid, and it says, "Brenda Starr, Girl Reporter going off to meet with Hillary."

HRC Oh, my. I love that. Oh, you've got to send me a screenshot of the Polaroid.

Judy Blume Oh, look, I. Okay.

HRC We're taking a quick break. Stay with us. [ad break] You know the recent documentary about you -- I had a documentary done about me. I don't know about you, but it's scary. I mean, you you know, you you basically agree. And then, at least in my case, it's kind of out of your hands and off we go. Did you find that as well?

Judy Blume I didn't want to do it. Yeah, [sings] I didn't want to do it. But I. I liked the filmmakers very much and I trusted them.

HRC Right. And that's how I ended up. But that was not an easy process to get to. But, you know, one of the things that struck me that's in the documentary is the correspondence that you've had over the years with your readers. I didn't know that. I mean, you know, I had a similar experience, in a way. When Chelsea was five years old. She wrote a letter to President Reagan because we were talking at the dinner table that he was going to Germany and he was going to go visit a cemetery where a lot of Nazis were buried. And Bill and I were, you know, really unhappy about that. And we were talking about it over dinner. And so Chelsea started asking these questions like, you know, what does this mean? Who were the Nazis? What happened? And then she said she wanted to write a letter to President Reagan, and she wrote a letter, you know, asking us to help her spell. But she basically said, Dear President Reagan, please don't go visit the cemetery. The Nazis were not nice. I saw The Sound of Music.

Judy Blume Oh!

HRC That's how we related it to her. And we sent the letter off and she never got a response. I mean, for weeks, she would, you know, come home from school and say, Did I get a letter? And I'd have to tell her no. So when Bill was elected president and we were moving to the White House, I asked her, I said, "well, is there anything you particularly want your dad to do as President?" And she said, "I want him to make sure that every child who writes him a letter gets an answer." So we set up this big correspondence unit literally to answer kids' letters. Most of whom in it were were volunteers, wonderful people who took a day out of their week to come do this. So when I learned that you had correspondence with kids who read your letters, and those letters are now in the Yale University archives. I was so touched. Talk to us about how that started and what it meant to you.

Judy Blume Well, it was a huge surprise. You know, that first that somebody read my book and then that that child would think to write to me that the first letter was from a 12 year old girl. And I guess she had read *Margaret* because that was published. That was my third published book and the first one that really got out there. And I mean, I was so excited. Of course, I wrote back and that was the beginning. It did reach a point where it took over my life. It became so difficult that I didn't know what to do. I actually consulted with a therapist because there were some, as you know, that went on for years and years and years. You actually didn't get in the documentary the really- well you got one serious woman.

HRC There were there were many others.

Judy Blume Many, many, many others.

HRC I want our listeners to understand, if they haven't seen the documentary that we're talking about, children writing you with serious problems, even, you know, threatening suicide and just pouring their little hearts out to you.

Judy Blume Yes. I mean, with that comes a great responsibility.

HRC It does. It does.

Judy Blume Yeah. Because you can't ignore them. You want to try to help. And that's when I consulted with someone, because there was one particular kid that I just grew to love and I wanted to save her. And the professional helped me understand that I couldn't necessarily save her or any of the others, but I could be a supportive friend.

HRC Mm hmm.

Judy Blume And that just by acknowledging what they were writing about, you know, acknowledging their lives and their problems, that that was a good thing to do.

HRC You know, I've had somewhat similar experiences in public life where people either write to me or whispered in my ear and confide, you know, deeply personal stories, struggles, questions, and. On the one hand, it is such a responsibility. It's also such an honor that for whatever reason, some other human being, often a young person, is willing to open up to you. You know, people want to be heard and they want to be seen,

especially children. You know, I was talking to a group of teenagers is you. And there's a lot of legitimate worry about what's happening with teens, especially teenage girls today and the rise in anxiety and depression and eating disorders and the linkage with, you know, what happens on social media. And I asked this, you know, group of 15, 16 year olds what they thought could be helpful. I mean, were there, you know, programs or people. And one of them said to me, "you just don't understand how hard it is to talk to your own parents."

Judy Blume That's just what I was going to say. Why did they all write to me? Why did they write to you, and confide in us? Because it's so hard to talk to your parents. It's so much easier when you don't see the person at the breakfast table the next day. You know, in my day. I mean, it was a letter. So they were writing a letter and sealing it and putting a stamp on it, putting it in the mailbox. And that was it. They got out what they had to get out. They didn't know I would answer them. They just got it out in a safe way. They didn't want to talk to their parents about it.

HRC We'll be right back. [ad break] And now, of course, we're engaged in yet another battle over children, what they read, the books that are in libraries, school libraries, you know, by outspoken groups of parents who are reaffirming that stereotype. You know, "I don't want to talk to my children about these difficult issues, and I don't want anybody else either talking to them or writing something."

Judy Blume "And I don't want them reading it because it's dangerous." It's -- they're afraid. I mean, that was pretty much the way it was in the eighties. The book banning craze of the eighties, it's never gone away, but it's -- hasn't been so intrusive. But today, what's so scary is that it's coming from government. It's coming from state legislatures. It's coming from, I, you know, I'm a resident of that state. We used to say, "oh, Key West isn't Florida." You know, we used to be able to joke about that. But we have the same governor. We have the same legislature. So I -- I just read that 40 percent of the book banning in school libraries is from the state of Florida.

HRC That doesn't surprise me.

Judy Blume So it's very scary stuff going on.

HRC And it's also -- it allows literally one parent with, I would argue, a political agenda to demand that a book be withdrawn. And as you know far better than I, you've

consistently had some of your books on the American Library Association's lists of most challenged books. I hope you wear that as a badge of honor. And that does go all the way back to the 1980s. How did you feel when you know somebody like Phyllis Schlafly, for example, a name from the past, would attack you and attack your books and say that the material was too sexually explicit and everything they accused you of. When that happened to you, were you as shocked as I think you should have been?

Judy Blume Yes. And, you know, it was depressing. I'm a person who likes to get out there and do something, and I didn't know what to do. And the publishers weren't so much behind us then as they are now.

HRC Oh, interesting.

Judy Blume But I found the -- or maybe they found me. The National Coalition Against Censorship.

HRC Hmm.

Judy Blume And once I found them, I knew what to do. I had my people. You know, that's the thing is, you're not as alone as you think you are. That you're not the only person this is happening to. Just like getting your period right? Other people being banned. And here is an organization that's working to promote the freedom to read, intellectual freedom.

HRC It can be so liberating.

Judy Blume Yes.

HRC And empowering.

HRC It was.

HRC It really cuts through the loneliness that not just children, but people feel, you know, to discover there is somebody else like you. Somebody else has bumped up against that obstacle. And, you know, but you've said before, I read somewhere, that you can't debate the zealots.

Judy Blume No.

HRC But you got to find a way to fight back. And you do have to try to rally other people, fair minded people who don't want books to be banned in our country. How do you find that balance? It's really tough between advocacy that's productive and then getting into these, you know, downward spiral loops of arguing with the zealots.

Judy Blume I now think that the way to go -- yes, people should speak out.

HRC Mm hmm.

Judy Blume But I think the way to go is to join forces with the great organizations that we have. PEN America, National Coalition Against Censorship. ALA (American Library Association). They all have programs. They know what to do. And this is what I tell people who ask me. I say, join up, join up, Find out. Join us. If you can even read one website right and get your information and then become part of this.

HRC Mm hmm. And I hope all of our listeners will follow that recommendation because, you know, we need more and more people supporting the organizations and speaking out. You know, I have to say that the recent filming of your extraordinary book, *Are you there, God? It's Me, Margaret* must have also been challenging for you because it was like putting one of your children out there, wasn't it, to find out what people thought?

Judy Blume Well, I waited 50 years. I waited 50 years to find the right time. Right.

HRC That was important.

Judy Blume And I'm so glad I waited because most writers of the original material don't like their movies.

HRC I've heard that from everyone, yes.

Judy Blume I love this movie. I love it, love it, love it. I just I loved every minute of working with them, you know? I mean, I didn't write the screenplay, but they were always sending me drafts and we were always talking about backstories. They were very inclusive. I was on the set for five weeks.

HRC Oh great!

Judy Blume And I do love it. I love the movie and I'm so happy that it got such wonderful reviews.

HRC I also thought that book in particular not only stood the test of time, but was theologically very, very important.

Judy Blume Nobody knew then. You know, I meet adults who come into the bookstore and they say, "I just read *Margaret* again. And, you know, I don't remember anything about religion. Did you put that in later?" It's like, no, no. It was always there. They just remember, you know, what was important to them that time, which was puberty and yeah, friends and family.

HRC You know, I remember when I was I was writing *It Takes a Village* back in the early nineties, and I had a chapter about, you know, kids are theologians in part, you know, motivated by your book because, you know, kids start asking questions when they're relatively young. You know, "what happens when you die?" Or, "does God watch us all the time?" And, you know, that's another subject that is really important to children. But there aren't very many books that have written about it. But your taking *Margaret*, and putting her into a kind of dialogue with God was so important.

Judy Blume That was me. That was me. I had a dialogue going really to make sure that my father was safe in two school years when we weren't together. Which is the story in --

HRC You moved to Miami, right?

Judy Blume -- Yeah, that's a story of Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself. But that is when I became I became kind of obsessive about these prayers that I invented. And I had to do this and I had to do that to make sure my father was safe. It was like, what a burden for a nine year old, right?

HRC Oh, yeah.

Judy Blume To think, 'it's up to me to keep him safe.' And then he was flying back and forth, and flying was. Was something. Well, it was so new then. Commercial flying, commercial flights so new. And I had to work so hard to protect him.

HRC And you're so right that children often assume responsibilities for what happens in their families, that their families have no idea about. When you said that, I just remembered this game we used to play when we walked to school and we you know, we'd be chanting, " if you step on a crack, you'll break your father's back." Remember that?

Judy Blume Yes.

HRC Because the the sidewalks had, you know, cracks between the squares of concrete. And I mean, we would be totally obsessed with not stepping on a crack so we wouldn't break our father's back.

Judy Blume I mean, in my case, it was. Break your mother's back. I don't know why that was.

HRC But I literally could talk to you forever. But I want to. Before we have to wrap up, I wanted to ask, you know, you're you've said that you're not going to write anymore books. You're 85 now. You're running the bookstore in Key West. You and your husband have a really full and loving life from everything that has been described, taking walks and doing things together. What did that feel like to say, "I'm going to stop writing books"?

Judy Blume It felt great. You know what, 50 years, five - oh years. And it changed my life. And I'm so glad that I had it in my life. But then it got to be, you know, locked up, locked up for another five years. Because the last book -- and I'm so glad I went out on this book -- took me five years. So it's a relief. People say, "don't you miss writing?" And like, No, no, I, I don't even know how I did it, you know? But I did it. And I do have a full life. And I'm grateful that the bookstore came along just when I said, "That's it, I'm done writing."

HRC That's so great to hear. Because, you know, when chapters close in your life, you can either feel regretful and disappointed or you can sort of look forward to, okay, what's the next adventure? What happens, you know, now? And I've heard you've taken up or you can be found tap dancing?

Judy Blume Oh, that goes back to -- I think I started tap dancing when I moved to New York. Originally I was maybe 40ish and I saw a tap dancing class above the bagel shop on 80 whatever street. And I said, I'm going to do that. And I did become obsessive about

it. I loved it. I didn't want to do anything but go to tap class. And when we moved to Key West, of course, you know, I put away my tap shoes and then we found we had a teacher in Key West. And so I took out the tap shoes and I loved it. I haven't done it in a while. I'm a little bit -- you know what my doctor says to me? "The only advice I have is do not fall."

HRC That -- that's the last word my doctor says to me every time I see her.

Judy Blume Do not fall. And so I don't know. But maybe I love it. I still walk along the street and I do certain riffs that I learned way back then. Yes, I can still I can still tap dance. It's because my mother said, "Jewish girls don't tap. Jewish girls take ballet." And I loved ballet, but I also wanted to slap my feet on the ground. It's so satisfying. So I waited a long time to do it. But then I got pretty good.

HRC Yeah, I bet you were.

Judy Blume Not great. Not great, but pretty good.

HRC Well, to finally wrap up, Judy, which is just -- it's such a joy talking to you, I'm wondering if you were to, like, talk to your own eight or nine year old self, you know, back when you were growing up or or fast forwarding talk to eight or nine year olds today. What would you say about both the traditional and some of the new challenges that kids have to navigate?

Judy Blume Oh, my God. Listen. Listen to yourself. Ask your questions to somebody you trust and never give up. You know, that's the thing. Determination, really, when you say "get the job done," it's determination as much as talent or anything else. It's -- I am determined. So find what you love to do and do it. Yeah.

HRC Well, Judy Blume, thank you for finding what you love to do all those years ago, starting, you know, when you literally were a child with all your questions and your curiosity and then sharing everything that you were thinking and giving young people, but some not so young, the comfort and really the sense of belonging that your stories have provided. And I hope I'll get to see you tap dance sometime in the future. If I ever get to Key West, I'm coming right to that bookstore.

Judy Blume Thank you, Hillary. I don't know if you'll see me tap dancing, but I surely would like to see you. Thank you so much for having me.

HRC For more of Judy, go check out the documentary Judy Blume Forever on Amazon Prime. Or go back and read one of your favorite books by her. You know, speaking of books, we loved as kids, when I was younger, I was a big fan of the Nancy Drew series. I still love a good mystery and especially one that is written by my dear friend and one of my favorite authors, Louise Penny, who has also been a guest on this podcast. You know, Louise is best known for her award winning series revolving around Inspector Gamache up in Quebec and the tight knit community in eastern Quebec that he is part of. You know, for some reason, that little town of Three Pines always seems to be in the throes of yet another murder. And Louise and I had so much fun collaborating on our own political mystery thriller State of Terror. When I had her on the podcast, we talked about how she first discovered mysteries.

Clip - Louise Penny I remember clearly the first time because I was a voracious reader as a child, but never crime novels. And I remember coming up the stairs and my mother came out of the bedroom and it was mid-afternoon or so, and she was holding a book and she said, "You know, I just finished this book and I think you'd like it." And she handed it to me and it was still warm from her hands. And it was an Agatha Christie. And it was the first time that my mother and I shared a book. It's become magic since then, and I've had such a soft spot for Christie since then as well, and. And for crime novels.

HRC You can find this conversation and so many others with people I admire. Just go to You and Me Both wherever you listen to podcasts. You and Me Both is brought to you by iHeart Podcasts. We're produced by Julie Subrin, Kathleen Russo, and Rob Russo with help from Huma Abedin, Oscar Flores, Lindsay Hoffman, Sara Horowitz, Laura Olin, Lona Valmore, and Lily Weber. Our engineer is Zach Mcneice, and the original music is by Forest Gray. If you like You and Me Both, tell someone else about it. And if you're not already a subscriber -- what are you waiting for? You can subscribe to You and Me Both on the iHeart Radio app, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts. Thanks for listening and I'll see you next week.