

# CURT WOOTTON

Interview by Kiley Fischer  
with Introduction by Faith Bennett

The Social Soles interview series is based on the saying, “You don’t really know someone until you have walked in his shoes.” We thought it would be interesting to begin each interview asking our guest to bring a pair of shoes that are significant to him. They can be the little ones he wore as a toddler in the ‘Burgh (parents used to bronze them things!); Those he was wearing when he found out Hills was closing for good; The pair he had on when his series premiered on October 25, 2011, or the set he was wearing just one year later, same day, when Pittsburgh’s Mayor Ravenstahl declared the 25th: Pittsburgh Dad Day; The kicks he was sportin’ when Eat n Park debuted the Pittsburgh Dad Smiley Cookie; A pair we would have never guessed...What shoes will he bring?

We associate shoes with memories: good and bad. The question steers the path of the conversation. This route will show us a side not always seen in the one we are talking with. A more personal side. We are excited to see in which direction we are lead – by the choice in footwear and the memories stirred. Come. Let’s take a walk on the Dad Side...

Pretty much everywhere, but even more so when you live in a college town, June means “Dads and Grads”. Dads won over Grads when we flipped the coin. You know how these kids are these days, anyways. What are they callin’ em? Millennials or MillAnimals? This month is our first full month of summer and parents are feeling the anxiety of knowing they will have to: Keep them kids busy! Even the word “busy” is “bus” with an extra letter! Once the bus stops for the summer, things get more complicated! Too bad Kennywood didn’t step up and offer child care! ANYways, it’s the month to celebrate DAD, and look forward to fireworks, the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix, the Three Rivers Arts Festival, the Three Rivers Regatta, and Potato Patch Fries - before the kids head back to homework and finding new reasons to complain... So, let’s get this done.

AKA

Pittsburgh Dad



**Social Butterfly Magazine:** We can’t wait to hear about your shoes. What can you tell us about them?

**Curt Wootton:** I live for tennis shoes – but when they wear out, they are gone. My dad was always into throwing things away and no clutter – he was really a minimalist in that sense. So now when my shoes wear out – pffft – they’re gone, and then I get new shoes! (He gives us a big smile and laughs.) I have dress shoes I’ve had for years, but usually if I’m wearing dress shoes, it’s an, “ugh, it’s an uppity snobby fest and I’m not going to have any fun.” Tennis shoes are my go-to.

I had my Pittsburgh Dad shoes, the original shoes we had for the show, but I think I threw them away in the move. I wore them for four years and they were always the shoes I used for anything Pittsburgh Dad. They were falling apart; the soles were completely gone off the bottoms.

**SBM:** But you know, it totally fits the vibe.

**Curt:** If you go to my parents’ house, my dad has about four pairs of shoes while my mom has probably a million. He’ll go, “What are all these shoes in here? I have four pairs and that’s all you need! I got my boots, my tennis shoes, my flip flops, and my dress shoes! That’s all ya need!” I’m a lot like that.

**SBM:** (Laughs.) It really is passed down the generations.

**Curt:** Oh, yeah. When I was younger, I said, “I’m never gonna be like my dad.” But the older I get, the more I become him. I’m slowly transitioning.

Doing the show hasn’t helped at all. It’s really (he laughs), it’s really made it more certain.

**SBM:** The show really is just a homage to your dad.

**Curt:** My dad and my mom’s dad. The voice comes more from my grandfather, boy did he complain about everything. He’d yell at us about everything. And then my dad – they’re

all cut from the same cloth. My dad was born in Bloomfield and it’s just the way he is. If there’s something to complain and moan about, he will find it. Every time I talk to my dad – whenever you call my dad, be prepared for 20 minutes of complaining about something. Just buckle in.

They put a red light in at his house over in New Stanton and there was 20 minutes of that the other day. “I don’t understand why they do what they do! It’s just caused all sorts-” and it’s hysterical. Most of the time if I just go over there I’ll find a nugget of funniness to implement in our show. The early episodes, it wasn’t even me writing, it was just documenting what my dad had said over the years. There were no jokes – now we’re more jokey – but initially it was just verbatim how Chris grew up and how I grew up. For some reason people laughed at it.

**SBM:** It’s so funny because I remember being in college and my friend shared the show with me. I sent it to my mom and she immediately called and just said in this hushed voice, “It’s like they’re watching me.”

**Curt:** I had no idea that everyone else was the same, especially with catching on with the Steelers. That’s always been our bread and butter. People are always like, “Did you – did you have a camera in on me watching the game the other day?” It’s all the same reactions! That’s why Pittsburgh is such an awesome community and great city. People are bound to it. If they’re away, they want to come back to it. I always say we’re our own little culty-type city and it’s amazing to be a part of it. If you’re not from here, you can learn, but you get sucked in and you’re here for life.

**SBM:** I feel like we end up talking about that with a lot of people, the way Pittsburgh is like its own really weird, huge, dysfunctional family.

**Curt:** It is! I lived in Los Angeles for eight years to try to make it as an actor and any time I saw anyone with a Steelers, Pirates, Pittsburgh shirt on, I’d immediately gravitate to them. I’d strike up a conversation and that’s how I met most of my friends out there. I used to watch games at this Steelers bar, I met a lot of people there. If you want to network and you’re away from Pittsburgh, find some Pittsburgh people. They’ll take you in. It’s a happy, big family and I’m glad to be a part of it.

**SBM:** You spent all that time in LA, what’s a thing that outsiders really don’t get about this city?

**Curt:** It’s a very prideful city, hardworking. There’s a sense of community that I think doesn’t exist in say Los Angeles. It’s a big city, but it’s not. If you’re from Upper St. Clair, you’ll know someone from Baldwin. It’s not as big as maybe the world perceives it. If you look at Philly, that’s a huge city. Pittsburgh’s not small by any means, but it’s so much more family oriented and small in that sense. We have our traditions and it keeps us all together. It’s amazing. Anywhere you go, you’ll find someone from Pittsburgh. They’ll recognize the way you say a certain word and they’ll go, “Ah! Did I just here a ‘dahm?” and it’s just the greatest city in America, I’m convinced.

**SBM:** I worked in Erie for a while and I always got that. I’d ask if

somebody was going to watch the “Stillers” game and they’d look and me and say, “I’m – I’m sorry, what? You’re saying that, that’s not... that’s not how you say that...”

**Curt:** Oh my gosh, with the Steelers. My wife had me go to a wedding in January and there was a chance that the Steelers could play on Saturday. I’m going, “What kind of person?” I’m swearing. “You check the schedule before you even say, ‘Hey, I might get married on this day!’ There could be a Steelers playoff game!” I was spazzing. I said, “If they play on Saturday, I’m not going. I can’t go. I gotta watch – you think I’m gonna go and try to eat and the game’s on – there’s no way!” I was flipping. We’re die-hards. Steelers fans...and Pens fans and Pirates fans. We love our black and gold. I love it. It was a big thing for us. She couldn’t believe and I’m saying, “I don’t do a wedding in January on the weekend! That’s prime playoff season for the Steelers! Who doesn’t know that?! Who doesn’t check!?! Just have it on the Super Bowl next!” Luckily they played on Sunday and crisis averted.

You gotta prepare! They take precedence. People say, “Well it’s Christmas.” Well we’re not eating dinner until the game is over! Pffft! This isn’t even up for debate. The game is on Christmas, I’m not talking to anyone during the game. Don’t have people over and have the kids opening presents because I don’t really care, I’m watching the game. I love it.

**SBM:** (Still laughing) We were kind of talking about your dad earlier, what was it like for you growing up with that quintessential Pittsburgh Dad?

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**Curt:** I always say when I was really little, he was very intimidating. He was a thicker, bigger dude, a weight lifter. He was just intimidating. He didn't take any crap. When he said something, he'd yell at you, you'd do it, you'd listen to him.

When I got to be a teenager especially, he'd start saying something and my sister and I would just laugh. We're like, "Do you realize what you're saying? It's hysterical!" One time, he was flipping out because the cat that we had tore open the trash bag. He goes off: "I can't believe this cat! The cat thinks it owns the house! I might as well sign the house over to the cat!" I said, "Do you hear yourself right now?!" He'd been doing that our whole life. When I was older, I said, "I gotta start writing this down, this is classic dadisms right here." He would just yell. He yelled at everything. You got used to it and then it just became comedy.

**SBM:** (still laughing)

**Curt:** That's how that went down. He still yells. He yells at everything. If you go to his house, you'll hear him. He'll yell at my mom for something... like the other day, she pulled the drawer out of the stove too far and he says, "I don't understand why you had to do that! Who builds something that..." Just go over to the house, you'll see in five minutes where it all came from.

**SBM:** Even - you think they're gonna be stereotype videos - like the parking chairs but no, it's all so true.

**Curt:** It's the way it is. Everyone's cut from that Yinzer cloth. I don't know who started it but it spread like wildfire somewhere in about the mid-50s. They started making that guy and they still make him. Everyone has a little bit of Pittsburgh Dad in them, everyone. Doesn't matter if you're man, woman, whatever. If you're from around here, you got a part of Pittsburgh Dad in you.

**SBM:** What kind of reactions do you get? Obviously pretty much everybody here goes nuts, but what kind of reactions do you get from outside?

**Curt:** We have fans from all over the world. This year we really focused on the Steelers and decided we were going to do a video every week. We have fans who are Bengals fans, Ravens fans, Cowboys fans who say, "I hate the Steelers, but I love your show." The more we keep doing it and growing it, the more it gets to a bigger fan-base. For a while, we were really just regional, but recently we've been branching out. We hope to continue to make it grow.

**SBM:** I'm curious: If the Dad shoes that you lost in the move could talk, what would they say and what stories would they tell?

**Curt:** I wore them for so many episodes. Sometimes we'd film the Zoo episode or Kennywood and there'd be a lot of anxiety because when I'm around a big crowd and filming, I get tense. There's a lot of laughs in them, a lot of tension in them. The soles fell off, that's how much we used them, and I threw them away like an idiot. They served us well for a long time. I wish I had them.

**SBM:** You're talking about Kennywood, and that whole thing with Noah's Ark and bringing back the whale was hilarious. What were some of the coolest things that you've gotten to do with the show itself?

**Curt:** That was really cool, getting to dedicate Noah's Ark. We had been talking about the whale being gone - Chris and I talked about that since it's been gone I think.

**SBM:** I've been complaining about that for a long time.

**Curt:** Oh man. They announced that it was coming back and to get to dedicate it was awesome. I got to write that little tribute to Noah's Ark and the strangest thing was being in the back of Noah's Ark by myself and it's shaking and going back and forth and I'm like, "I'm getting really sick." As a kid, I could probably sit in that thing for hours, but I'm in the back getting sick and I can't hear because all of the animals are going (makes animal noises) and the ride's going (makes a whining horn sound) and I'm trying to hear the cue.

Eventually I just didn't hear it and so I kind of crawled out and they're all just waiting for me for about a minute and a half. I'm like, "OKAY!"

That was really cool to do that. Anytime we get to go to Steelers. That organization just treats you like family, such class acts up there with Mr. Rooney and General Manager Kevin Colbert and Mike Tomlin. The players are really cool. That's always a blast because I get to take my dad up there and he has a great time - he complains a lot to the general manager. Kevin's really cool, he's a Pittsburgh guy. I'm like, "Dad, he doesn't - don't start," and he's going "I don't know why you let some of these guys on the team!" I wish I could just film it. Kevin just laughs. They kind of grew up in the same way, so they have a lot in common.

Getting to go to different parts of Pittsburgh and put a little humor on every part of the town. It's really cool. We love it and we don't plan on stopping anytime soon.

**SBM:** I feel like that's not something you have to worry about.

**Curt:** Chris and I, every week we're down here after the game filming and we're just cracking up. We have to stop forever because we think it's funny and then that line doesn't get any laughs in the show. We have a good time.

**SBM:** I still just think it is the coolest tribute to your dad.

**Curt:** I'd love to get him on an episode once, but he just kind of freezes up whenever you put him on camera.

**SBM:** That's when you just pull in the secret camera idea and go for it.

**Curt:** I know. I really should. I wish I could, but he really swears so it would all be beeped. I would love to set up a camera and watch the game with him. "WHY the hell would you run a tackle on that play? That's the stupidest call I've ever seen! If you lose the game, you'll know why!"

Nothing beat when I was a kid - I was probably 15 or 16 - and we lost Super Bowl XXX. He spazzed. He was up at



the TV screaming at it. He's storming around. I didn't get that into it then because I was still learning how to get really into it. It was hysterical, the level of anger. There's times when I've gotten yelled at, but him yelling then will always stick out when he yelled the loudest.

**SBM:** It's so funny because I was talking to my dad last night and I said to him that I think the two times I remember of him really yelling when I didn't do something stupid were Super Bowl XXX where the dog's hiding in the shower -

**Curt:** (He laughs) Oh yeah. The dogs would always hide.

**SBM:** The dog's hiding, my dad's screaming, my mom's yelling at him for yelling...and then when Hills went out. That was the other time my dad lost his mind.

**Curt:** Stuff like that bothers my dad, too. My mom can't stand watching games with us. If I go over...My mom likes watching the games, but then we get too into it. She'll go, "I can't watch this with you guys. You ruin everything. Why are you screaming? I'm just gonna leave." Then she goes to Target. "You guys make me so nervous. Why can't you just sit down and watch the game?" I'll be behind the couch and then I'll start clapping. She says it's too tense for her.

I don't know how you can sit in tense situations! I pace back and forth, I lay down, I hide under things. It's crazy.

**SBM:** I'm really excited for the hidden camera video now.

**Curt:** He'll just be sitting there with his beer, yelling. He'll just recline and scream. Then he complains about everything else going on. They'll

show the coaches on the sideline, or they'll show the other fans - he hates that. He's like, "Look at those idiots! Who would dress like that?" Meanwhile they'll show someone from Pittsburgh in a skull mask and he's like, "Look at that guy! That's great!"

**SBM:** Your shoes have had a blast over the years. If you could walk in someone else's, whose would they be?

**Curt:** I'd walk in my mom's shoes to understand how she put up with my dad all these years. I don't know how she does. She just looks at me and says, "I can't...I can't deal with your father anymore." The older he gets, the more Old Man Pittsburgh Dad he gets. She's a very patient woman and to walk in her shoes...My dad and I are not patient. She's saint-like. I'd say my dad's shoes...but we had a cat that tended to throw up in his shoes.

**SBM:** (Laughs)

**Curt:** True story! All the shoes would be lined up - don't leave them on the steps because if he trips on them in the morning, he'd throw them outside. He had a couple pairs of shoes, I had two, my sister had two or three, and the cat would always puke in his. (He laughs.)

**SBM:** Well and I feel like in a way, you're already walking in your dad's shoes.

**Curt:** I am! I'm slowly transitioning. My wife will tell you - she says, "You're just more like your dad all the time," and I am. With the heat? She'll start, "Can we -" and I'm like, "It's 65! That's plenty!"

"But 70?" "70?! Don't ask to go on vacation then. We're not going on vacation with running it at 70. No Valentine's presents, how's that?" I never thought I'd be like that. (He laughs.)

**SBM:** What's been the most rewarding thing for you on this whole crazy ride?

**Curt:** Getting to laugh with the city and the people who call the city home. It's crazy that we all have the same memories and we can all relate to the same situations and stories whether it's the pool in the summer or trick or treating in this area or Christmas and New Year's traditions. It's all the same! Slamming the screen door, wasting paper towels - which I didn't realize you could waste paper towels. My dad'd be like, "What are you doing?" "I-probably the wrong thing."

It's funny - parents in other cities get together to brag about the achievements of their children. "Oh, my child's on the honor roll" or "My child is the best in their little league." Our parents would all get together and try to top each other on the dumbass things us kids were doing. "Ah, the other day, my kid's painting and he doesn't set anything down there and it leaks down under and stains the table!" "Well I got that beat. The kid came in with mud all over his shoes and walked up the steps!" I remember! It's not accolades.

But that's it - We're all part of that same family. That's really cool, reading what people post and getting emails saying they were down and it made them laugh or soldier overseas from Pittsburgh saying that's helped them keep a piece of Pittsburgh and laugh in some of the most hostile conditions. That's really cool and I'm really happy about that kind of stuff. ■

For more of Pittsburgh Dad, be sure to check out the show on [YouTube](#), as well as following along on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). You can find Curt at his [Twitter](#) account.

To see more pics and an exclusive interview with Curt AND Pittsburgh Dad see SBM Seasonably Social: Summer 2017!

