

# B-town Podcast Tells Backstory of Classic ‘It’s a Wonderful Life’

by Elizabeth Ellis

Local podcast producers Ray Nowosielski and his wife, Ruth Vaca, are on a mission this holiday season—to share the true backstory of the beloved holiday classic *It’s A Wonderful Life*.

Nowosielski and Vaca are the creative minds behind the production company True Stories that has launched a 10-episode podcast in partnership with iHeartMedia, titled *George Bailey Was Never Born*. The premise is that our current world is the alternate universe proposed in the original short story by Philip Van Doren Stern (*The Greatest Gift*), wherein the titular character, George Bailey, immortalized on film by Jimmy Stewart, doesn’t exist.

“[Author] Philip was interested in the power of dreams and fantasy to bring ideas to people they wouldn’t be able to take in a more nonfiction setting,” says Nowosielski. “We took Philip’s original idea of the multiverse, which is inherent to the movie itself, and expanded it to make it a device that lets us do our journalism and research in our world.”

The audio documentary moves between the part of the multiverse where the events of the movie really happened and the one in which George Bailey was never born. Three episodes focus on Menzo Case, a real-life Georgy Bailey, who helped establish “Baily Park” with the Seneca County Habitat for Humanity in Seneca Falls, New York, the inspiration for the film’s Bedford Falls. Case was a local banker who died October 13, 2023. Nowosielski plans to donate a



*George Bailey Was Never Born*, a 10-episode podcast, shares the true backstory of the beloved holiday classic *It’s A Wonderful Life*. Courtesy photo



Local podcast producers Ruth Vaca and her husband, Ray Nowosielski, are the creative minds behind the production company True Stories. Photo by Martin Boling

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portion of the podcast’s proceeds to this cause. “All the small acts of kindness ripple through the universe and lead to a different future,” says Nowosielski.

Vaca says she jumped at the opportunity to diversify True Stories’ typically darker content and produce a deep-dive podcast centered around Nowosielski’s favorite movie—and show off his more wholesome side. “I told him, ‘This podcast has been in your head for 25 years already,’” says Vaca.

Bloomington-based actor Roy Sillings adopts the role of the story’s character, Joseph: Angel First Class, to provide the narrative thread for the podcast in a “fireside chat” atmosphere. The podcast was recorded locally at Airtime Studios under the direction of David Weber.

Other Bloomingtonians involved include executive producer John Duffy, sound designer and mixer Jon Autry, music score composer Zachary Walter, co-producer Mallory Keenoy, and publicist Ron Kadish.

Learn more at [savegeorgebailey.com](http://savegeorgebailey.com). ✨