Ivor Shapiro 0:00

Well, look, here's what I think is important. The job doesn't get easy. The job stays difficult.

Kevin O’Keefe 0:12

I mean, there's never, no one is ever going to come and tell you that you've done too much and you need a break. That never happens. There's always more to be done. The TV media never gets full. It's always hungry.

Jo-Anne McArthur 0:30

In photojournalism... you're, you have to practice a lot. You're working for the decisive moment.

Kevin Newman 0:39

To be a good journalist, you have to have your own code of ethics. And you have to have your own code of behavior that ultimately you can live with if it doesn't get you the results that you need for your work.

Hannah Mercanti 0:52

Welcome to the series finale of Dear Journalist. This is a show where we talk with longtime Canadian journalists about their careers, They'll share with us some of the lessons they've learned from their years in the field. I'm Hannah Mercanti.

Christina Apa 1:04

I'm Christina Apa,

Yezua Ho 1:05

and I'm Yezua Ho. For our last episode, we don't exactly have a guest to interview and then ramble about. Instead, we're skipping straight to the rambling.

Christina Apa 1:13

The three of us are going to share some things we learned this year and reflect on our four years here at J-School. So stick around because we have a lot to say.

Hannah Mercanti 1:20

Here's our conversation on the final episode of Dear Journalist. So, welcome. The three of us. We're here, we're chillin. We're just having a good time. So at the beginning of the semester, we all volunteered to work on one of the- well, not at the beginning of the semester.

Christina Apa 1:40

Not me.

Hannah Mercanti 1:40

Christina joined second semester,

Christina Apa 1:41

Yes.

Hannah Mercanti 1:41

But at the beginning of this semester, a bunch of us decided that we would volunteer on the podcast. It's even though we don't like, work. To- like our position isn't technically the podcast, like Yezua is a copy editor. Christina is also a copy editor and I'm the head of research, but we just kind of like volunteered to do it for fun. So... how did we all feel about it? Did you guys have any like prior podcasting experience? I know, the extent of mine was Met Radio. I hadn't done like proper podcasting, though, you know?

Yezua Ho 2:10

Mine was, I took the Podcasting Basics with Janice.

Hannah Mercanti 2:14

Stop, I dropped that because I looked at the outline, and I was like, "I can't."

Yezua Ho 2:18

The outline, really?

Hannah Mercanti 2:20

Is that the one where you have to put out an episode every week?

Yezua Ho 2:22

Oh, no, what?

Hannah Mercanti 2:23

Oh, my there's one- There's a third year class where you have to put out an episode every week. And I looked at the outline. And I said,

Christina Apa 2:29

No,

Hannah Mercanti 2:30

no, not built for this.

Yezua Ho 2:31

It was really basic. Like they drove it the fact that it's for beginners or no one. Because the assignments were just like, ow, take any story that you find interesting and try to make it into a podcast. Like it's the first episode in your podcast series, and stuff like that. That was really fun, because you could really do anything you want. So when it came to the Review-

Hannah Mercanti 2:52

What did you do?

Yezua Ho 2:52

Uh, I did a story about...

Hannah Mercanti 2:55

Can I guess?

Yezua Ho

Try, yeah.

Hannah Mercanti

Was it about video games?

Yezua Ho 2:57

Oh, no.

Christina Apa 2:59

Features. I copy edited it.

Hannah Mercanti 3:02

I fact checked it. Look at us, coming together, even outside this podcast.

Christina Apa 3:06

Literally.

Yezua Ho 3:08

My, what was it, the final project for that podcast class was that I was like, 'Hey, maybe I should do something about street musicians in the TTC.' And that was pretty difficult because there was not it because it was just like after COVID it was they were still trying to get back into the idea of like, hey, let's have these people outside amidst the crowd, while we just finished a lockdown and stuff like that. So it's really hard getting sources. So what I would do, I would put on a lav mic, and sit in a train and go from one end of the station all the way to the next. And just like as soon as I heard any semblance of like someone playing electric guitar, you could if you were listened to my recording because I recorded the whole journey. You would hear me suddenly like panic and run. I was like, 'oh my god, I hear music.' And it turns out from like a fast food restaurant in the station.

Hannah Mercanti 3:56

It's some asshole playing speaker.

And what about you? Why? Like because there was a couple things you could have joined, I guess, Christina. Why did you choose the podcast?

Christina Apa 4:08

I love podcasts. I literally I wasn't always into them. And then recently at my job I work in like a warehouse. So there's no question.

Hannah Mercanti 4:15

"Work in a warehouse?" What are you- Are you like the *Saw* guy? You know West 49? Oh, my God, the store that's like always having like, yeah, 50% off sales?

Christina Apa 4:25

So, I work in the warehouse. That is, that ships the online orders. I work there and there's no customers. So we get to listen to our own music all day. And there's only so much music you can listen to in eight hours before you lose your mind. So I was like, let me find some podcasts. I started listening to podcasts, and I really liked them. And then I've always wanted to do my own podcast and because I like to talk and I think they're just so fun. And so when I found out that you guys were doing one and that there was a position open, I was like, “this is perfect.” because I've always wanted to try it out and see what it would be like so I thought that would be really fun and, and yeah, yeah,

Hannah Mercanti 5:01

I- Okay, so one of my favorite podcasts—this is like, I'm a journalist and I don't listen to a ton of journalism podcasts. I listen to a lot of comedy ones. One of my favorites, is- Do you guys know Cody Ko? Yes, he has a solo podcast and I really like it. And there was like one of his most recent episodes, he was like talking about podcasting logistics. And he was like, “It's hilarious right now that I'm podcasting about podcasting.” And that's this entire episode for us. But I mentioned that not only to talk about myself, but like, do you guys have any favorites? Like, did we have any inspiration drawn from anywhere like I'm a big comedy podcast guy, I listened to Al-Jazeera’s daily podcast. But other than that, I don't listen to a ton of news podcasts. Just kind of shameful.

Yezua Ho 5:47

The journalism police is just gonna come knocking down-

Hannah Mercanti 5:48

No, literally, it's Bill.

Christina Apa 5:53

Yeah, I have one. You guys know Penn Badgley from You? He does this—

Yezua Ho 5:57

Ohhh! Him,

Christina Apa

Yeah. he does his podcast with I think just two of his friends called *Podcrushed*, where they interview like celebrities that they've interviewed… Ayo Edebiri, and like those kinds of celebrities. And it's basically a whole podcast about your middle school days. And like, a question that they ask is like, “Who was your first love? And why did you fall in love”— it like they like really dig deep into like, their old days. I'm like, it's like a really good conversation. So I really like that. And then there's this other one that I listened to a lot. It's basically it's kind of this, but instead of journalism, it's pop culture. They basically rewatched their favorite show and like, critique the entire episode.

Hannah Mercanti

I love when people do that.

Christina Apa

So I listened to the one for the show called Dawson's Creek, so they will like, they will like listen to the whole thing. Don't even and then I love I've literally almost every single episode, it's so good. Um, it's called Dawson's critique. It's so good. And so that's what I listen to at work all the time. And I think it's so fun that you could just like talk about your interest and people will listen because they also are interested in those things.

Hannah Mercanti 6:57

Yeah.

Yezua Ho

Touched upon this in the last episode Ivor, but uh, our first years in journalism,

Hannah Mercanti 7:04

Oh, my God. Okay, this. I mean, it wasn't middle school. It was like late high school. Right. Okay. So I have a long history with the TMU journalism program. In seventh grade, I took a quiz on a website called Career Cruising. And it— you remember that you had to do that? Yeah. My teacher made us do it. And it said, I should be a journalist. And I was like, Okay.

Done. They don't worry, less,

Hannah Mercanti 7:29

say less. And so I searched up like best journalism programs in Canada, and I saw the chair mu one and I was like, this is I'm doing this, this is 100% what I'm doing that was also see, I'm gonna say this because I don't have any shame. In those days, I wrote a lot of fanfiction. I thought I was gonna be a creative writer, like an author. I suck a creative writing. It's really bad. And so I kind of I found the journalism program and I was like, okay, I can still write. It just doesn't have to be about Attack on Titan. Putting myself on blast here, but like, I don't know, I like I found out about it when I was really young. And so I kind of just worked towards like most of high school, like I knew, I always knew, I was like, I like I took classes that aligns with it. I guess I shot so Career Cruising. If you don't know what you want to do take that quiz. They nailed me on the head.

Yezua Ho 8:25

I know it's so funny, because I also wrote,

Unknown Speaker 8:28

oh, my gosh. Real, like

Yezua Ho 8:33

it was like, Well, I hate you. I mentioned it now. Because it shows growth. That's the most important part here. And yeah, when it came to writing, I remember because the reason why I even took journalism, my eldest sister actually knew how to friend knew a friend of a friend. That was in the journalism program at Tmu. And we set up we set up a quick little interview, I guess I was my first pseudo interview as a journalist, but like, it wasn't good. But they they did some convincing, I think one of the biggest things they mentioned was that you don't exactly have to be you don't have to become a journalist. After you graduate. There's like so many fields that you could have, there's so many things you could do after journalism that the program helps you with. And that's been coming up a lot recently, in this fourth year, which is, I don't know, maybe it's like, yeah, it was foreshadowing or something. Because I remember, I was fact checking someone I believe her name was Maya Cybil. I forgot I forgot it was from one of our stories. And then she mentioned I think we were talking about I was asking her a question and and she went on to say like, the beauty about journalism is that you could there's so many things you could do after you don't feel confined towards writing new stories, writing hard news stories, being an anchor and stuff like that. There's so many skills in the field that you learn that can be applied to so many things, that you're really limiting yourself by believing journalism is just one simple thing as just telling the news and stuff like that. Yeah,

Hannah Mercanti 9:53

that is a big thing. I was talking to one of the chefs at my work and his I think his daughter is nice or something went to journalism school. And he was like, Yeah, sure works in PR now, like, there's like a whole host of stuff you can do,

Yezua Ho 10:08

I think. I mean, I think it brings up a question of the question of like, was there something you wish people told you and your first year of journalism, that you that you wish you were told sooner? For me to get up for myself? Because at first year, we had this huge journalism group chat on WhatsApp. I remember it, it somehow had no, we're not gonna go into that. We're not going to rehash that. But yeah. And I think at some point, someone said, I think they're going to rant about like, if you're in journalism, and you're not passionate about journalism, what the hell are you doing here? And I read that and

Hannah Mercanti 10:47

Joe Rogan group chat, like, what do you out and

Yezua Ho 10:51

told, like, I don't know, months ago, that message was in my brain and green in my brain for so long, where I'm just like, Oh, my God, what am I doing here? And so what I'm gonna do after, because I'm not passionate about like telling the hard news and stuff like that, is it is this really the program for me? And there's like, so many points. I'm like, I should probably switch out to like RTA and apparent because a lot of people do that from journalism. Tartine media. And what really helped me was that in the review room, I think this was like before winter break. Someone mentioned said those exact words, but not like, not like they're saying it to someone, they were just quoting it. Whereas like, and then what they said after was like, if you say that, if you're not passionate journalism, what the hell are you doing here? That's not really fair. Yeah, that's not fair at all. And I was like, yeah, what am I think that that's? Yeah,

Hannah Mercanti 11:36

right. Yeah. So like, what are you the university major police? I'm paying to be here. Thank you very much. Yeah, like, for

Christina Apa 11:45

me, while you were talking, I actually thought of when I think for me, what something I wish someone would told me is that you don't have to have a specialty is kind of going back to last last episode too, because I was talking about specialties. Like you don't have to have a specialty right away. Because I remember in first year, there were so many people in our year, who knew exactly what they wanted to do, right at the beginning. And I was like, I have no idea. And to be honest, I still don't really have a firm idea. And so I really wish someone would have just been like, it's okay. And they do tell you that it's okay. But I feel like you don't really believe them, especially when everyone else around you knows what they want to do. And it can be really stressful because you're like 18. And everyone's like, when I graduate. I'm going to work here and here and here. And I'm like, I don't know. Good luck with that, though. And so I really wish someone would have would have said that to me.

Hannah Mercanti 12:34

Yeah, I don't know, I wish someone told me that you're not going to be good when you start. Like, it doesn't matter how much you read before you start writing. If you're not going to be good in first year, like it's not going to be your best work. It's some of it is gonna be crap. And like, that's just how that's how you learn. Like you have to practice to get better. And I remember being like, Oh my God, this sucks. I can't write a lead. Oh, no, I don't know how to write a deck. And like I couldn't in first year, they all sucked. But like I learned now, like, like, you're not going to be good right away. When you start. Like you need to write some crappy stories and do some subpar reporting to like, learn. Like just to learn how to do it correctly and what works for you. And it's just you're not going to be good when you start. It's okay if you're bad. Yes, exactly. Like, especially if it's like if it's for story day, for example, not to give anyone like traumatic shivers act a story. It's not getting published. It's literally exclusively just to learn with like, it's just just send to your professor and have them tell you if it's right or wrong. You don't need to be changing lives with your first year hard news pieces. Like it's for you.

Christina Apa 13:49

Especially if you don't want to go into hard news because I remember writing hard news and being like, the stories were important that I was writing, but I just wasn't passionate about writing them. I was like, Yeah, this is good. Like, I did a lot of mine on events because that's me too. We had and

Hannah Mercanti 14:07

that's literally the only guidelines they gave tarried saw hard, hardly bad.

Yezua Ho 14:13

It's really just because the first two years especially we're focused on those hard news and it takes a you have to like survive. Yeah, you have to survive until you get the option to be like Okay, now we're gonna branch off and you can figure out what you want to do because you get introduced a lot of stuff in third year like video. Yeah. What else we magazine? Yeah, magazine

Hannah Mercanti 14:33

editing. I took my photo journalism class and third year, like,

Christina Apa 14:38

there's fashion. Yep.

Hannah Mercanti 14:39

There's like a bunch of stuff. It's yeah, third year was so much better. Yeah. And first and second.

Christina Apa 14:46

I think my favorite course was and I think Hannah, you took the opposite. The other version of it was the magazine editing workshops. Yeah. I took it last last year and third year. It was so good. It was so much fun. Because you really got From start to finish, you got to make your own magazine about what you were passionate about and what you liked. And also, our, our teacher Laura Hensley shout out, she, she brought in like guest speakers every week to talk to us about the magazine industry and all the different types of roles that you can have and everything like that. And I really learned so much. And I think it really did prepare me for the review when I came to the review time because you learn about the difference between like a feature and a front of book and like all that kind of stuff. So I'm like

Hannah Mercanti 15:30

production and schedule stuff. Oh my God, it was such a big help. I had eternity for that class, which was awesome. She was awesome. And she was actually the one who told me about the review. And showed said to her, this was great for my confidence. She told me to go for Editor in Chief. And I was like, that's not gonna happen, because I'm undergrad. And there's master's students and also No, yeah, but like, thank you. But that yeah, that class was so beyond helpful. I loved it. It was so much fun. I also liked I mean, okay, I loved my photojournalism class. I'm ass at photography. I'm so bad, but it was so much fun. Like, there's nothing quite like, like, I went on vacation that year. And I it was like, middle of that photography class. So I brought it with me. I was in New York, and I was walking around New York for five days with this rented out camera and I was like, Oh my god. I'm so quirky. I'm a journalist in New York. I'm Anne Hathaway in The Devil Wears Prada. They were also mediocre. But photography is so much. Yeah, it's so fun. Like, I'm glad I know how to handle a camera. Now. I'm definitely no photo journalist. But like, it was just I liked those classes where you can just like pick up a skill. Like because it's good. You need to have it.

Yezua Ho 16:49

And it's so nice. I took photojournalism too. And there's so many times don't worry. No now, Gary, it was one of the new or props at the time. It Marta, Marta, you annek Oh, she was super nice. And she really was like she understood like, yeah, we most of us don't know how to handle a camera. It created a lot of scenarios where he took a picture, it was probably the most mediocre thing you've ever seen. But you're like, Yeah, I didn't.

Hannah Mercanti 17:15

Exactly like it would be like, Whoa, is this fierce? Is this awesome? Like I took a picture of a bird taking off. And I was like, oh my god, I'm both wildlife photography,

Christina Apa 17:25

and national geographic coverage.

Hannah Mercanti 17:29

You guys need this.

Yezua Ho 17:31

If he had to leave one piece of advice to next year's masthead, whoever's listening, but one is more believable than the other I guess.

Christina Apa 17:42

Next year, if they continue to your, your journalist next year's mass head might listen to this to understand what it is that we did here, you better be

Hannah Mercanti 17:53

on LinkedIn, you get this far into dear journalists, so I know you listen.

Yezua Ho 18:00

It was a bee, I believe one piece of advice to either students like first year students is going into the journalism program, or just journalists in general, emerging journalists.

Christina Apa 18:10

I was actually thinking about this earlier, because I feel like this is one of the questions that we were gonna ask. And I think mine would be just to literally try everything. Even if you think you're not gonna like it, just try it. And then like, it goes back to what I was saying. Like, I'm not a huge video person with like cameras and stuff like that. But I didn't know that until I tried it. And then I realized, Oh, this is actually not what I'm interested in. But at least I know that now because I tried it. And they do tell you that in first year, but I feel like I personally didn't really listen. Cool. Yeah, whatever. But I think now being here for four years, I realized, if you try everything, at least you know that you know what you don't, you don't you don't like you know what you do? Like, like, for example, I didn't know that I enjoyed writing about like tech in business and medicine until I tried it. And now I do enjoy it. And I think if you just try then then you know, it's

Yezua Ho 18:59

only it's only as fun as you can make it. Yeah, like you have. It's up to you to be like, Okay, I want to do this and not just do what I expect journalism is supposed to be Yeah,

Hannah Mercanti 19:08

you need delusion. Delusion, because Self confidence is one of the most important things and it is so hard to be 1718 and have self confidence and also to be in a program like this and off the hop be like, I can pitch people will accept me, my writing is good. Like, you kind of need a little bit of that delusion of like, I'm good enough I can this story is gonna be great. People are gonna get back to me and like you really need to kind of be your own biggest fan. Because like, it's hard. Like who was it was either literally, literally like it's hard. It's hard. It's never gonna get easy. It's always gonna be hard. So you need to be your own biggest fan. And sometimes that requires a little bit of delusion of you being like, I can do this. I can do this because I think I can and because I'm smarter than I find I'm the best and I'm talented like sometimes you really just need to lie to yourself to succeed.

Yezua Ho 20:06

I don't think it's likely it's it's not fake it till you make it because at some point you're gonna reach that idea of yourself. You're gonna get

Hannah Mercanti 20:13

to that point where it's not fake anymore right? I was profound should we be therapists?

Christina Apa 20:19

Maybe

Yezua Ho 20:22

this has been dear journalist for the review of journalism. For more episodes, subscribe wherever you get your podcasts while you're there, check out reviewed. It's a celebration of 40 years of the review of journalism of conversations from future writers and emerging journalists.

Christina Apa 20:36

Make sure that you also pick up a copy of the 40th anniversary issue of the review of journalism available on newsstands across Canada in April 2024. You can head to review of journalism.ca To find out more. For extra online content. You can also connect with the review on x and Tik Tok. I'm Christina Apa,

Hannah Mercanti 20:53

I'm Hannah Mercanti.

Yezua Ho 20:54

I'm Yezua Ho. Thank you to all of the incredible journalists for sharing your stories and wisdom with us.

Unknown Speaker 21:01

And thank you, dear journalist for listening

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