

Self-Analytical Essay

My journalism journey began on an overcast day at Daytona International Speedway in early January.

It began when as a nine-year-old I decided to document myself meeting my favorite NASCAR driver, Brad Keselowski, using my yellow iPod Touch. I recorded that video as if I was live for millions of viewers; that minute and a half video was my first broadcast.

A few hours later, during a question and answer panel, night had fallen, and the metal chairs audience members sat in were freezing, but that didn't stop me from sitting down and asking question after question of the drivers on stage; my first interview.

It wouldn't be until my freshman year of high school that I'd do another. I signed up for Brit Taylor's Journalism 1 class because I was in Milwee Middle School's Digital Newspaper Club. My parents told me I had to find my niche, and I hadn't gotten into TV Production 1 like I wanted, so I spent my freshman year learning about news stories, features, and InDesign.

By sophomore year, I had become enamored with the newspaper, and I joined The BluePrint. At the same time, was placed into TV Production 1. These would be two-thirds of my electives for the rest of my high school career.

My first year on staff saw me developing my writing and interviewing abilities and carving a presence on social media. With Sports Editor Justin Baronoff, a senior, the only returning staff member who regularly covered sports, I was called on to do stories he could not. This included Live Tweeting football and baseball games. I saw the possibilities of multimedia journalism.

In addition, I had also taken a particular liking to editorials and reviews, and my first published story was an editorial defending then-candidate Donald Trump. I wasn't blind to the fact that many disliked him, but it was something I wanted to say. On the day the issue was distributed, I prepared for the worst. Would people shout me down in the hallways? Call me racist? Sexist? Yet, no one said anything negative. In fact, several of my classmates actually praised my article for meticulously explaining my points. This gave me confidence to talk about any topic and strengthened my resolve for solid reporting.

Two other major moments occurred at the FSPA conventions that year. I had always been a lover of competition, so when I saw that FSPA offered contests, I jumped on the opportunity. At the District 3 Workshop, I won First Place in the Breaking Multimedia Coverage category with coverage of a Trump-Clinton debate, and at the state convention, I won an All-Florida for my review of the Netflix Original Series "Trollhunters." From a writing standpoint, my first year with the BluePrint was about gaining confidence in my abilities.

At first, I thought I was going to inherit the Sports Editor position upon Justin Baronoff graduating. However, due to my success with live tweeting, and my utilization of Storify as a

means to present them, Mr. Taylor tabbed me as the Online Editor. However, with only an 11-person staff, I began taking on a lot more responsibility: I kept up the website, while I wrote sports stories, editorials and reviews.

That year, I wrote three major feature stories. The previous year, I approached features with dread. It meant conducting more interviews and a longer writing process. But these three stories were different. "A Football Life," "Cheer Gets Back on Top," and "Crash Course" netted me three of my five All-Florida's with "A Football Life" even earning a Best of the Best in the state. Funnily enough, it wasn't until the next year that I finally figured it out, and it came with the help of TV production knowledge,

It took me two years, but I finally made it to onto the WOOF TV staff for my senior year. A year prior, I had so many ideas for videos, and when I finally became a staffer, I was ready to go. Over the first semester, I created several videos that promoted football games, but it was more than that.

When I created these videos, it felt like I was telling people's stories. Whether it was about a game-winning drive the previous week or about one of our school's traditions, I wanted people to come away with my videos having learned something. That was when everything clicked.

I was a storyteller.

If I hadn't fallen in love with journalism before, I did now. I realized that I loved using my platform to not only teach people about the world around them, but I also loved learning about it myself. Whether it was about the girl next door, the latest political protest, or the latest major film release, I wanted people to know.

I was always eager to help my fellow staffers, but with this changing outlook, I'm hoping to inspire future staffers, one of whom is my brother, to be the best storytellers that they can be.

It is a hard time to be a journalist, with claims of Fake News and media polarization more rampant than ever. Many times throughout history, storytellers were able to bring people together, and I know they can again.

When I was 9, I desperately wanted to know the perspective of a NASCAR driver.

When I was 18, I wanted to know what it was like to be a retired pilot teaching foreign exchange students to fly.

Journalism helped me find my passion for life. Whenever I feel down, I get inspired by my favorite interviews. Their stories keep me going.

Whether it's news, feature or review, whether it's written or filmed, every story has something of value to share with the world. It could be a different perspective, an inspiring story, or an awe-inspiring experience, but the stories are there, calling to be noticed. It's a journalist's job—it's my job—to answer that call.