

Three years of happy servitude reveal that journalism matters

I don't want to write this graduation column. It just serves a reminder that I must now grow up, join the real world and be a responsible adult. The safety net of University life is about to be yanked away, and quite frankly, I'm pissed. And frightened.

For one, how will I possibly survive without my job at the Oregon Daily Emerald? Trust me, it's not the pay I'm talking about. It's just that for the past three years, my life has been rooted here.

I have spent more time at the Emerald than anywhere else on campus. It defines my college life. (Which goes to show you that I don't have much of a life!)

This newsroom consumes you so much that even when you don't need to be here, you'll still come in or suffer from withdrawal symptoms. I'll probably come in on June 11 and the Department of Public Safety will have to drag me away kicking and screaming.

In the past three years, I've watched three editors-in-chief take over and numerous reporters suffer through the workload and quit. Only the really courageous, the overambitious or the crazy survive here. I fall under the crazy. I've worked here so long, I'm almost part of the furniture.

I have to admit that the Emerald has taught me a lot, which is why I've stayed all this time.

I've learned that there is nothing quite like having deadline in 10 minutes and your main source still has not returned your seventh phone call. It gives the word stress a whole new meaning.

I've also learned that there's a special kind of thrill that comes

from chasing a story and staying up until 2 a.m. to get it done like we did on election nights or the night I had to cover the Commentator's budget hearing with the Programs Finance Committee.

I've learned that it's really painful to be scooped on an article by The Register-Guard, but it sure feels good when we scoop them.

I've learned that sources are real people, and contrary to popular belief, journalists have hearts.

There's something gratifying in knowing that a story made a difference in someone's life. I'll never forget the time I wrote an obituary about a student and his parents e-mailed the next day to say they thought the article captured their son's life so well.

I have also learned that what we write holds a lot of weight, even when we don't realize it. The hundreds of insulting e-mails I received after I covered a lecture by Los Angeles Times' John Carroll, who criticized FOX News, taught me that the public will react and not always be civil about it.

I've been surrounded by a great team of editors and reporters who remind me every day why journalism matters. We've covered some phenomenal stories in the past three years. We've made some people really angry. But I'd like to believe that we've given the University community information that it needs, that we have evoked discussion, that we have the set the ball rolling for change.

I will miss the Emerald, not just because I loved working here, but also because it offered me a great way to connect to my university.



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