

TO: Posy Henderson, Professor of Prof & Organizational Comm

FROM: Savannah Krause, Student of Prof & Organizational Comm

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SUBJECT: Informational Interview with Mike Warren Kobs, Former Editor for MMC

Previous Informational Interviews: Tim Norlin, Vice President at Roehl Transport

When deciding with whom to conduct an informational interview, I weighed my options between an individual who I have not yet introduced myself to despite the connection having a high likelihood for positive influence on my career, or an individual who has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember, whose opinion and guidance I value greatly; I chose the latter. My uncle Mike, otherwise known in his profession as Mike Warren, has been in media communications and journalism for most of his life, beginning in his early 20s. He made the decision to pursue this career because he had the dream of becoming a radio host, which led him to be exposed to the world of journalism. Through dedication and passion, Mike was able to attain his goal of working as a radio announcer for WDLB and later becoming an editor for the Marshfield Hub City Times, Multi Media Channels LLC, and more.

Broadcast Journalism: Successes, Challenges, and Inspirations

Mike recounted his first professional triumph as a deeply personal milestone, lauded by many, but most notably, by his now late mentor, Thom Gerretsen. We have all heard the phrase “getting the inside scoop,” though many fail to recognize the commendable act it is to truly be the first to become privy to a story of great magnitude. Mike was dubbed “Scoop” by his team after being the first to break a story twice within mere months of each other. The significance of this accomplishment was illustrated by highlighting the reporter who all other sources must depend on to cover this story for their respective broadcasting networks.

As journalism is often a thankless job, I asked Mike what inspires him to continue in this line of work. Due to the complexities of news sharing in today’s culture, I found it easily understandable that his craving for the satisfaction of putting out a solid, factual story is what drives his passion.

He described a tangible pride in knowing that he was the person that provided society with a well-developed, unbiased report. Setting the record straight with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude is a liberating display of confidence in one's work—though potentially intoxicating for some. Mike then described feeling inspired by himself, as he stated, “The longer you do this, you develop a historical perspective and internal database that gives you the chance to draw upon past experiences at any time.”

When I inquired about the challenges he faced, Mike described two correlated obstacles. The first is establishing public credibility. He stated that it was difficult in the beginning to gain rapport with the community, which aids in the acquisition of their future trust and reliance. The second hurdle, prominent now more than ever, is modern technology allowing for social media to infiltrate news reporting. Well-researched, reliable stories are now eclipsed by the culmination of fast-spreading misinformation, audacious news-reporting influencers, and the immense reach of the internet.

Many people often wish to change something within their industry. Given my limited experience with the culture and complexities of media communications or journalism, I became quite curious about the changes Mike desired within his field. Unsurprisingly, his answer was intertwined with the challenges associated with this career. He stated that if it were possible, he would turn the clock back to the time where news reporting and broadcasting was limited to radio, TV, and newspaper. This wish derives from his frustration regarding the influx of ways to disseminate information, opinion pieces that take precedence over the already limited availability of factual sources, and the overwhelming goal of steering the conversation that news outlets have adopted.

Demands of the Job

I presumed that the largest surprise working in this field would be surrounding the unexpected opportunities and privileges; however, I overlooked the demanding workload that comes with being in media communications. Mike shared this surprise, as the initial excitement realizing his dream outweighed the strain of being devout. This inquiry led him to answer my next question regarding the aspect of his job that goes unnoticed and unappreciated by others. Mike thoroughly described the required work completed during his off-hours, further conveying his commitment to ensuring perfection. He recalled the long hours covering stories, followed by the behind-the-scenes preparation done between dusk and dawn that would aid in his success in producing an air-tight report. These necessities are easily ignored by most, as their only role as a recipient of such information is to digest it.

Connections & Guidance

My final question was a request for guidance based on his experiences, which further underscored my deep respect for his achievements and the high value I place on his opinion. My uncle stated earlier in the interview that the most important thing he has learned in this profession is to never burn a bridge. He further clarified that people will always cycle back into your life, making all connections pay off in the end for both parties. Mike advised me to develop partnerships, not just relationships, and to value collaboration over competition. Additionally, he described the importance of making oneself available, as it may present opportunities that others may have declined or been unaware of. It was refreshing to hear his perspective on his own life, as he pointed out that his current circumstances are a direct result of showing up, doing the hard work, and being determined to develop a career for himself. Mike's words will continue to ring in my ears, as I have always found his successes admirable and inspiring.

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