



15 Stories

By

Mark McGee and Friends

Something New For You

I will continue to share my thoughts in 2023 about covering news but wanted to add something new this year. Many of my journalist friends through the years left journalism for other occupations. I've heard from other journalists recently who are looking to leave the profession for various reasons. One of the questions they ask is: "Is there life after journalism?" The short answer is "yes," but I think it might be good to share some ideas about what comes next and how to prepare for it.

Just like the 1967 Beatles song, *With a Little Help from My Friends*, I've asked many of my friends who left the "news biz" to share their experiences with you. My purpose is to encourage journalists who are thinking about changing vocations.

Journalists develop a special *skill set* that translates very well to other types of occupations. The articles you will read this year will include insights into using the skills you've developed as a journalist for those other job opportunities.

My Story - In 99 Words

I did my first radio news story in 1967. I retired from television news in 2009. As I approached retirement, I considered what to do next. I wasn't ready to stop working, so what would I do? The answer came to me by way of a friend. He owned a business and wanted to start a communications department. I told him I was planning to retire, and he asked me to join his company. After praying about it, I decided to start a new career using my journalism skills to build a communications department and learn a new business.

The first guest article about life after journalism comes from a dear friend and colleague from our days together in Tampa area television. It was awesome to watch Lalita grow her skill set from producer to executive producer and manager.

Did those years as a television journalist prepare her for life after TV? You bet it did!



Lalita Llerena

The real question is: is there life without journalism? You see, I believe once a journalist, always a journalist. The instinct of a journalist is like no other. You may leave the newsroom behind, but you're still a curious communicator who does your research, asks all the right questions and pays close attention to the important details. If you were ever a good journalist, no matter what role you play now, chances are you're persistent,

passionate and objective. Journalism is in your blood. It's what you do, no matter what you do. That's powerful stuff.

After 12 years as a TV news journalist, I made the leap into communications. My journalism background proved to be extremely valuable in all the roles I played since – from community engagement specialist to senior communications director to internal communications manager.



Internal Communications Manager at Tampa Electric

Since I have experience inside a local TV newsroom, it's natural for me to continue strengthening my relationships with reporters, assignment editors and producers. Having done what they do for more than a decade, I respect and acknowledge their deadlines and workloads. Without even realizing it, I'm helping make their job easy because I used to do it. By providing them with all the elements they need to make a good story, I help them pull off their assignment seamlessly. That's because I know exactly what they're looking for in a story pitch and help them execute it effectively.

Since I had to write for a living as a TV journalist, I am able to interview subjects and tell their stories creatively and effectively. As a journalist, you are already writing the story in your head as you're chatting with your interviewee. You know what to ask initially and depending on their answer, you know what follow-up questions to ask. This is true for any sort of communications assignment – whether it's a video, podcast, blog or company news email. Everything involves a story and you're a storyteller. Be a journalist and you'll nail it each time.



Executive News Producer, Bay News 9

Even if you're not considering a career in communications, the skills you acquire during a journalism career can be translated well anywhere. For instance, think about your sense of urgency. No matter what type of journalist you were, I bet you consistently wrote, proofread and made important decisions under extremely tight deadlines. And if you worked in TV, you probably had to turn important facts into on-air

stories within seconds. Likewise, details are extremely important in journalism because one mistake is seen by hundreds, if not thousands (or millions in many cases) of people. It is vital to communicate the accurate information at all times.

It might be a huge relief to walk away from that never-ending newsroom stress but guess what you walked away with? The innate ability to thrive and excel in deadline-driven environments where multi-tasking and accuracy are crucial. Any organization would appreciate and value those strengths.

If you can't tell, I am proud of where I come from and wouldn't trade my journalism background for anything. I truly believe it's shaped me into the dedicated, passionate storyteller I am today. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunities to work with some remarkable people at amazing organizations. Along the way, I've never stopped being a journalist and I am better off for it.

Thank you, Lalita!

My next guest believes there is life after journalism. She's living proof of that fact.

Dorothy White and I worked together for many years in television news. She is a close friend, and a great producer and executive producer. Here's her story.



Dorothy White

Is there life after journalism? Most certainly there is! Just be aware that you might leave journalism, but your instincts and training might not leave YOU.

I worked in radio, newspaper and television news for more than 20 years, then moved to government communications for another 20+. The drive that kept many of us in journalism becomes a part of your DNA. I always thrived on spot news. Even in government comms, I still do my best work under deadline pressure. Yet, I have a better balance between that adrenaline rush and what many might consider a more “normal” working environment. That balance has given me more opportunities to nurture other talents and skills along the way.

Of course, many of us who left journalism for other professions were looking for another type of balance — that much-sought-after balance between real work and real life. Many of my peers in public communications come from journalism. It still makes me chuckle the first time one of those folks doesn't have to go into deep negotiations to get Christmas Day off. The best is the appreciative tone in their

voice on the phone when they call to check in on an ice day. While they may have to work from home or creep slowly into the office later in the morning, they don't have to make their way to some hazardous overpass before the sun comes up to say "don't get out on these roads if you don't have to."

I have found great satisfaction and purpose in my post-journalism life. I've also found that many of the skills and principles that came with that profession are serving me well in other career moves — that sense of immediacy, the drive to be both accurate and quick to respond, and the realization that there are always multiple sides to every story.

Anyone considering a career move from journalism from another field — you have great assets to take with you in that journey. Move forward and keep learning new things. It's a great adventure... have fun with it!

Thank you, Dorothy!

My next guest believes there is definitely life after journalism.

Beverly Taylor and I worked together in television news for several years. She's a good friend and one of the hardest working journalists I had the privilege of knowing.

Beverly turned her strong work ethic and journalistic skills into innovative businesses after she left journalism.

How did she do it? Here's Beverly's story.



Beverly Taylor

Is there life after journalism? Absolutely!! Many of my former colleagues joined public relations teams at universities, p.r. firms, and non-profit organizations. One meteorologist went back to school for an engineering degree. Another former journalist started her own business during the pandemic coaching sales people about how to conduct presentations in a virtual world. And yet a couple of others won elected political positions.

My journey has been a little different. Five years before I left the business I earned a master's degree in Dispute Resolution. Conflict resolution has always been an interest of mine. I wanted the degree to validate my expertise in the field since most people only knew me as the TV news anchor/reporter. But having that recognition has brought other opportunities: freelancing in media relations for a public relations firm, podcast host of The 411 Live, voiceover artist, workshop facilitator, forum moderator and audiobook narrator. I also formed two companies: Beverly Taylor Voice LLC and BTG Mediation LLC.



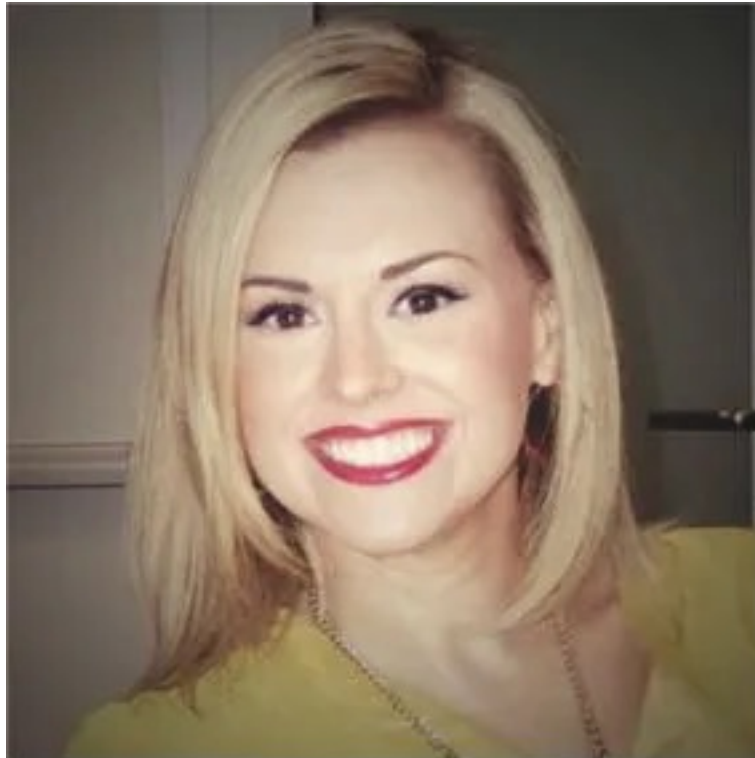
I was blessed to be in TV journalism for 30 years and feel just as blessed to be able to explore and enjoy different ventures. Journalists contemplating leaving the business should take inventory of all of the skills they use in their work. Those skills transfer to many other opportunities outside of journalism. Find the ones you are most interested in and GO FOR IT!!
Beverly Taylor

Thank you, Beverly!

Jacqui Del Villar and I worked in television news together for several years in the Tampa Bay market. She is a good friend and has accomplished a lot of great things since leaving journalism.

Jacqui has worked for HSN Network, NBCUniversal Media, Netflix, IDW Entertainment, Legendary Entertainment, and Paramount Television Studios.

Here's Jacqui's story.



Jacqui Del Villar

Yes! There's a life, but part of you will always miss journalism. Every time a big story breaks or during elections, I wish I was in the newsroom - learning the details as they come in.

I will say no matter what career you end up in after working in journalism- you will be a rockstar in your field. Journalism kicks out the most diligent and quickest workers. I actually got one of my first jobs in Los Angeles because of having news on my resume.

Thank you, Jacqui!

Walt Huntsman and I worked in television news together in the Huntsville, Alabama market. He is a good friend and has had a fascinating career since leaving journalism.

Here's Walt's story.



Walt and Teresa Huntsman

Is There Life After Journalism?

By Walt Huntsman

After marrying Teresa in September, 1993, I left journalism completely and returned to school, obtaining a B.S.Ed in 1995 and an MA in English in 1997. After completing coursework toward a Ph.D in Writing Studies, I concluded I was not cut out for the academic life. I worked for a while as a Help Desk Analyst for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign before moving to Boise, Idaho in 2003. I spent roughly three years as an Accounts Payable Specialist and then five years as Pricing Specialist for Albertsons, I was laid off from Albertsons in 2013 and moved into a full-time role as a Community Support Worker for my autistic son, Christopher. After we were able to find someone for that role, I essentially retired. When that person left for family reasons last October, I resumed support duties for my son on a part-time basis.

These days, I mostly work on music, recording and performing with my wife under the name Seattle Goes South. Our music is available on streaming platforms, including Spotify and Pandora. When we aren't performing or recording, we try to travel as much as we can in our 35-foot motorhome. Because of our son and his needs, we don't venture too far afield, sticking to places around the Pacific Northwest. To make a long story longer, I would definitely say that there is life after journalism, although I'm not sure my answer helps provide anything that might help others, except to say that hobbies can help keep you sane, in and out of journalism.

Thank you, Walt!

Today, I'm going to share an article written by a close friend who preferred to be anonymous. That's something I offered to former journalists when I invited them to participate in this project. Even though the author is not identified, I know them very well and can attest to their journalistic excellence during our years working together.

I believe there is certainly life after journalism. I continue to benefit from the key skills and abilities I gained, in part, from you and other mentors. As you know, there is always a lingering itch that needs to be scratched - even decades after being out of the business.

The most beneficial skills I derived from journalism include trying to look at everything from the audience's perspective. With whom am I speaking about this topic and what do they know, think and feel about the subject matter? Whether I'm telling a story or arguing a position, considering my audience (even of only one person) helps me hone in on what is hopefully a succinct and convincing message. That can benefit me whether in personal conversations or in writing an email to my boss. I also tend to think "in outlines" on just about everything, usually limiting those thoughts to three (3) bullets. I've got a certain amount of time (or attention span) to tell a story or argue a position.

What points do I absolutely HAVE to make to achieve my objectives? Two things still stick with me that come directly from you: eliminate unnecessary words, particularly adjectives and "it is farther - not further." (Or it is further not farther.) "More than" is also better than "over" when quantifying something. The thing I probably miss most about journalism is ending each day with a sense of resolution. We do the best we can with the time we have, but eventually we run out of time and the end product MUST BE finished. That gives one a great sense of resolution at the end of each day.

With my subsequent careers, I have had more luxury of time to fine tune everything - however, I miss that sense of resolution at the end of each day. I get a similar feeling from doing lawn work. Row-by-row I mow, bush-by-bush I trim, then I get to stand on my porch and look at what I finished.

Thank you, my friend!

One of the joys of working with journalists is covering important stories and getting them on air or published accurately and objectively in a timely fashion. Another joy is watching those journalists grow — professionally and personally.

Kathryn Simmons White and I worked together in the Tampa Bay Area. Kathryn came to work every day ready to do her best. I was her executive producer, so having fellow journalists who want to work hard and do a great job every day is a wonderful thing to behold.

Every former journalist has a unique story to tell and I'm glad Kathryn is here to tell hers.



Kathryn Simmons White

Is There Life After Journalism?

By Kathryn White

When I was fresh out of college, I started climbing the stairs toward my dream job --- to be a TV News Reporter. It wasn't an easy climb. In fact, I started my reporting career as a one-man-band journalist. I can still feel the weight of the massive camera on my shoulder and the sweat it took to shoot my own stand-ups/b-roll/interviews, write and edit my stories --- all before the evening news hit the air.



That challenging time at a small cable station called GNET (Gwinnett News and Entertainment Television) eventually led me to bigger markets down the road to stations like WALB in Albany, GA, NBC2 in Fort Myers, FL and Bay News 9 in St. Petersburg/Tampa, FL.

At the time, St. Petersburg/Tampa area held a market rank of 14 out of more than 200 cities in the country which meant I was possibly only a hop skip and a jump away from my journalism target – to report in my home city of Atlanta – ranked eighth in the country. The problem, after more than a dozen years of life as a reporter with a ridiculous schedule, I was burnt out. I also got married and started a family. As soon as I saw my baby girl moving on an ultrasound, I knew it was time. Time to veer away from working holidays and the annoying 2:30 AM work alarm and jump toward a “normal” life. I’m not gonna lie, it was terrifying to leave my career aspirations and a steady paycheck, but family priorities outweighed everything.



I left TV News and became a stay-at-home mom of two wonderful children. In the beginning, I became a freelance writer for a global company and laughed at their non-urgent deadlines that were weeks and sometimes months or years away. The corporate communication world got a taste of this reporter's efficiency in getting things done fast. It was good money, good hours and good for the soul to continue to write professionally.

During this time, I used my journalism skills to research and investigate how to take professional photos. This led to starting Kathryn White Media. I wanted to encompass my passions for all things – photography, writing and video while making my own hours.

My journalism background comes to the surface daily. I use communication skills with my family, clients and even with the many volunteer jobs I have like Yearbook Co-Chair, Girl Scout Leader/Service Unit Director/Camp Volunteer. All these positions (paid and unpaid) require teamwork, deadlines and sometimes a creative eye.



My early years of reporting and shooting my own videos trained me to think outside of the box during photography sessions. It's about looking at something ordinary and seeing something unique – a different way for me to tell a client's story while making them feel comfortable with me invading their personal space. Instead of a microphone and video camera, I now use a DSLR – snapping moments in their lives to remember forever.

I don't miss the daily stress of news deadlines, coming up with story ideas (this was a recurring nightmare for many years after leaving TV) or knocking on doors to interview the unfortunate ones who lost loved ones, but journalism will always be a part my work ethic and I wouldn't trade my twelve years on air for anything. In short, there is life after journalism – it's a less hectic life, but a good one.

Thank you, Kathryn!

Our next former journalist has had a fascinating experience from working at a small-town newspaper to becoming a television producer, and eventually owning his own successful business.

Anderson Williams and I worked together in the Huntsville, AL market three decades ago. He was a hard worker and strong producer. Anderson also did the overnight “news briefs” each hour from the newsroom. What he learned in many years of journalism prepared him for great success in the business world.

Anderson asked me to send him some questions for the article, so I sent him seven. I think you’ll find his answers both revealing and helpful as you consider your next step.



Anderson Williams

1. How long were you a journalist?

Newspaper: 1985-1989

TV: 1989-2001

I have been fortunate to always work in journalism while studying it, learning a lot on the job.

My first job in “mass media” was right out of high school working for a small-town trip-weekly newspaper catching press runs, stuffing inserts and filling the paper racks. On breaks I would listen to the stories of an elderly, hard-nosed reporter named Mae Streit and she encouraged me to pursue a news career. When I started college that fall, majoring in journalism, I moved to another weekly paper and worked in their composition department. It was a shopper’s guide, but they eventually allowed me to write material to fill up some of the space around the display ads and classified. I used to shoot used cars for ads in the morning then go out and cover a city council meeting in the evening. They were early adopters of desktop publishing (1986) on the Apple

Macintosh. (This experience helped me get a new job in 2002.)

I was on track to be a newspaper reporter/editor, but I made a mistake: I forgot to fill out the paperwork for my journalism practicum and the only availability that fall was the local TV station. In 1989, my first job was taping up hand-typed scripts and running them through an old-style conveyor belt teleprompter. This was a one-man band shop, somewhat primitive even back then with its tube cameras and first-generation 3/4" tape decks. But I learned more about daily news gathering there that I really ever did in college.



WOWL-TV - Anderson is standing in the back row, far right

(Side bar: this was of course, WOWL-TV. One of the first spot news stories they ever sent me on was a shooting in Littleville at a notorious Colbert County honky-tonk. It was a somewhat of a big story because the victim was some sort of well-known sports star. I was the only news person there and I asked myself, "What would Al Whitaker do?" So, I proceeded to light up the camera, walk into the bar and start shooting the crime scene. I was about 15 seconds in when I was promptly thrown out by the bartender. I was then berated by a deputy who

screamed in my face, “You’ll never make it in this business!!” He then put up the crime scene tape he should have put up in the first place.)

After college I worked as a bureau reporter at WJSU-TV (1992-1993), then 18 months later I joined WAAY as a line producer (1993-1997). Next was WBRC (1997-2001) where I started out as weekend EP then wound up producing “Six on Your Side.” Later, I joined WBNS (2001) for a short 20-month stint for “Consumer 10.”

(I was hired **30 YEARS** ago this fall by a very pregnant Dorothy White to work overnight and do the on-the-hour news briefs!)



2. When did you move from journalism into another vocation?

That would be November 2001. Earlier that year I had just taken a new job in Columbus, OH to oversee a start-up consumer and investigative unit. But after the events of September 11, advertising revenues tanked and I was one of eight employees the station laid off. I wasn't too worried; I had three months of severance and job interviews in Houston and Atlanta for similar roles. But suddenly, six months had passed and all the jobs in TV journalism had seemingly dried up due to hiring freezes.

I did a few freelance jobs and then accidentally wound up at a small marketing communications firm. In mid-2002 I was sitting in their lobby and overheard their graphic designer struggling to fix their Mac's printer connection. Because I spent my college years in newspapers, I knew how to get it back online. The next thing I know I was hired as a freelance designer at \$60/hour. I joined full-time six months later and over 20 years later I'm still here, except now I own the company, SEME Resources, Inc.

3. Have you worked in more than one type of vocation since leaving journalism?

No, I would consider what I do today “brand journalism.” Our company represents building material suppliers in a very specific niche (cement, concrete, aggregates and concrete products) and my job for the last 21 years has been essentially telling our clients’ stories. A lot of what I do today is very similar to what I did in my TV News days: listen, interpret, summarize, and report.

4. Did you go back to college to get another degree for your new vocation(s)? Any other type of specialized training?

No, I still rely on all of the skills and abilities I acquired early on in my career: photography, videography, writing, editing, and reporting. One skill I worked to refine was web development, working out a streamlined content management system to quickly deploy a website and populate it with the content we generate for clients.

5. What do you enjoy about your new vocation?

Well, it's nice being the boss now and not stressing over money. I'm sure the one thing that hasn't changed in journalism is the low pay. But with the right mindset everything you learn today will probably benefit you years down the road.

6. Do you miss being a journalist? If so, what and why?

(Photo - WAAY-TV Anchors)



Sometimes, but I don't miss having doors slammed in my face, the relentless deadlines and stress of the business. I do miss the teamwork and the feeling you're filling a vital role in society. I do worry about all the young kids doing the same job I did but in a very different time, both politically and safety-wise. However, I am jealous of all the technological advances they have today. No hauling a 50-pound camera tethered to a boat anchor or a recorder.

7. What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about leaving journalism for another occupation?

I would say look for an adjacent occupation that would benefit from all the valuable skills you've gained: multi-tasking, strong time management, the ability to perform and deliver quality under a tight deadline. I can still amaze clients with our company's ability to go from concept to script to finished video in a matter of days. I tell them, "Remember: I used to have hours not days to knock something out."

Thank you, Anderson!

Paul Lindsley and I worked together in television news for many years. I could always count on Paul. He worked hard and smart. We've been friends for three decades, so I definitely wanted to share his thoughts with you about life after journalism. I emailed Paul seven questions to answer.



Paul Lindsley

1. How long were you a journalist?

A little more than 8 years.

2. When did you move from journalism into another vocation?

The end of 1998, when I left the assignment desk at Fox 13 in Memphis for my first PR job at Opryland Hotel in Nashville.

3. Have you worked in more than one type of vocation since leaving journalism?

Nope, only public relations and communications.

4. Did you go back to college to get another degree for your new vocation(s)? Any other type of specialized training?

Yes, when I was 40, I spent two years earning a Masters of Arts in Corporate Communication online while working at Saint Thomas Hospital. I'm glad I did, because I secured my next job at HealthStream because I had a masters degree.

5. What do you enjoy about your new vocation(s)?

I love promoting, protecting and publicizing a company's good works. And like journalism, it's different every day.

6. Do you miss being a journalist? If so, what and why?

Yes. I miss telling stories with video and sound. I especially miss it during breaking news. The adrenaline rush I suppose and hard work to inform others and get it right.

7. What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about leaving journalism for another occupation?

Because journalists wear so many hats, moving into marketing or communications is a natural transition. Knowing what the media needs and wants is crucial to success in communications. I've been working in PR for 25 years now and I still get excited when I earn media coverage.

Thanks, Paul!

Katie Camario and I worked in television news together for several years in the Tampa Bay market. She is a good friend and always did a great job covering the news.

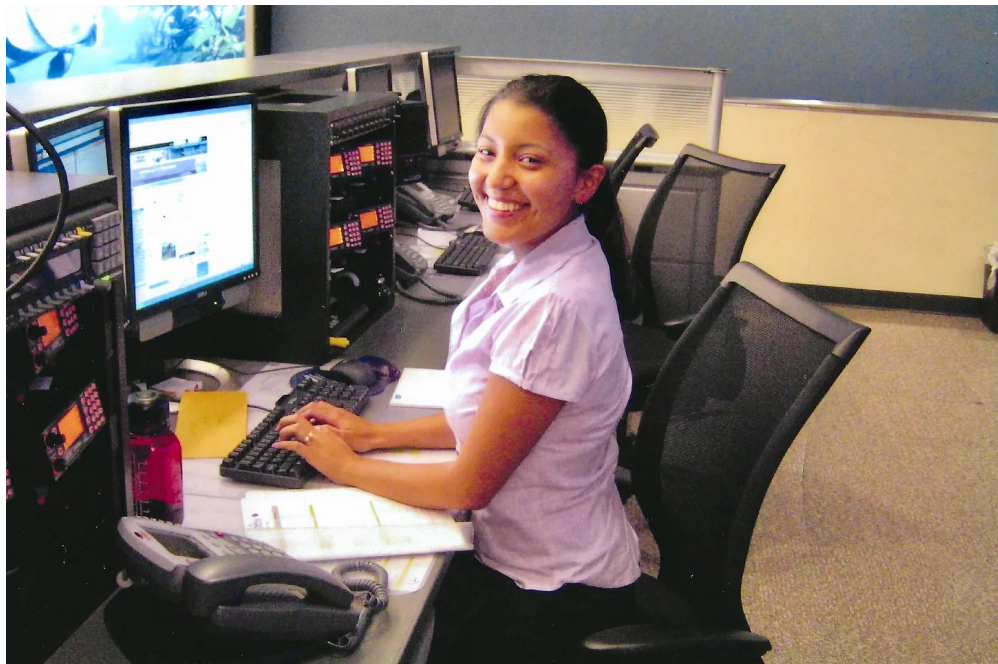
Katie's experience is a little different than other former journalists we've heard from this year, but her experience is something many journalists deal with today. I'll let her explain.



Katie Camario

Is there life after journalism? Of course there is, because what drove you to the field and what your interests are don't end when you leave a job.

You see, when I left my career in the fast paced world of 24-hour TV news, it wasn't something I had planned. Instead, it was due to the military move orders my active duty husband had received. For the second time in my career, I'd leave a job in journalism to move across the country following military orders. What is different this time, was what followed: five moves, in five years and across four states.



Katie at Bay News 9

The moves took us to beautiful remote areas of the country. However, things were not so pretty when it came to employment. News jobs were few and far between and it was challenging to get employers to consider me since I could move within months of hire. However, the draw to news, journalism and communications never left me.

So when we moved to a new base, I volunteered with the spouses club to run social media and do PR. At the next base, I volunteered to be a Key Spouse, which meant briefing service members before deployments and helping connect spouses with resources while their members were downrange.

Things finally stabilized and it became possible to rejoin the workforce. But, by this point, I was enjoying time with my family and decided to keep the focus on them. The moves had caused continuity issues to my kids' education, so we became a homeschooling family. Believe it or not, those were some of the best years as a stay-at-home mom, and as a communicator and creative. That's because as we journeyed

through the lessons together, I got a refresh on many of the basics like grammar, sentence structure and writing.

During this time I continued to volunteer in various communication roles for multiple organizations. Turns out, when word gets around that you're a communicator and creator you're asked to share those talents with your community a lot! Of course, I was happy to do so because I was helping organizations that had missions I valued. I found joy in the work.



When my husband retired from the military, I'd been out of journalism for more than a decade but felt like I had never left the communications world. Armed with the content I created during all those years of volunteering, I put together a portfolio and applied for jobs. I knew I didn't want to go back to TV News, so I looked for employment in the nonprofit world. This time around, I wanted to work for an organization that was making a difference in the world. Within weeks, I was blessed to receive and accept a job offer which launched me back into the workforce. I was so thankful for the opportunity!

After a while, I decided to take leap of faith and go at it on my own. I now do communications and media consultation, freelance writing and corporate photography. I also stay busy volunteering for different groups in my community and helping them with video production.

For me it's the best of both worlds. I get to write and create like I did as a journalist, but now I get to use those skills to spread good news! Win Win!

Thank you, Katie!

Television news producers are a special breed of journalist. Imagine someone trying to keep ten plates spinning on top of sticks with one hand while juggling a dozen tennis balls with the other hand. They have to be on top of everything going on in their community, state, country, and the world. They work closely with reporters, photographers, newscast directors, audio operators, graphic artists, executive producers, assignment editors, news and sports anchors, and meteorologists to ensure that each newscast is complete in its coverage and scope. That's just on an 'average' news day. Throw in a hurricane, tornado, or major accident on the Interstate, and things can get a little crazy for everyone — especially producers.

Dana Wiederman and I worked together at a 24-hour news channel in the Tampa Bay TV market for several years. She was a wonderful news producer who did her job very well, every day. Dana moved from television news to corporate communications several years ago, and I'm delighted to share her story with you.



Dana Wiederman

TV News is a job like no other — the adrenaline, the (organized) chaos, the race to be first and pride in providing important, sometimes life-saving information. For some, it's a true calling and passion that make the long days, crazy hours and intense pressure worth it. For others, it's an incredible training ground building critical skills and a strong work ethic that will set them up for success in other careers.

I spent the first ten years of my career in the newsroom as a producer and executive producer, then transitioned over to corporate communications for a bit more 'normalcy' in life. But that decade provided some wonderful memories, lifelong friends and a wealth of experience I've relied upon time and time again in subsequent positions. Four things specifically stand out that I can't imagine I'd have learned anywhere else:

- 1. Appeal to the human in all of us.** Despite the memes that give us all a chuckle, corporate America isn't full of jargon-plagued robots, but regular folks with hearts and feelings. They're smart, funny and drawn to compelling, human-centric stories that get to the heart of any message we're delivering as communicators.

Remember scouring entire interview for that one heart-wrenching soundbite for a headline? It's a skill that lives on when producing that internal video, writing executive talking points or crafting a PR pitch. We poke and prod through those meetings and interviews to pinpoint messages that matter and connect with all of us at a deeper level; details that highlight our common ground, our impactful business projects and our talented people; stories that slightly pull at our heart strings, summon a smile or make us stop and think.

2. Digging below the surface. There's always more to the story, and our backgrounds in TV news prep us well for asking more questions, reading between the lines and looking further into what's left unsaid. That curiosity is an asset in the business world as well, as we dig into details, look for unique aspects of our companies and people, and really unearth those 'pitch points' that aren't obvious.

3. The power of ‘getting it done’. This may be one of our most differentiating qualities as former newsies. We’re trained to operate at almost superhuman speeds during breaking news, non-stop live coverage of a hurricane or catastrophic event. We become masters at compartmentalizing everything else, focusing on what needs to happen in the next 30 seconds, 2 minutes or 30-minute broadcast. There’s no time to overanalyze or procrastinate. We simply must keep going and get it done without the screen ‘going to black’ or leaving your anchor stranded without any plan or information.

While we may not encounter quite as many urgent scenarios as that (depending upon your role), corporations absolutely need reliable professionals who understand how to take a project, and move forward and execute with or without clear direction. That proactive mentality and sense of urgency kicks back in often, whether it’s a true business crisis or a sensitive topic that needs full attention.

4. **Developing thick skin.** Conflict will naturally come up in any industry, but especially so in the harried, fast-paced environment of TV news. Airtime, facts, perspectives, quality and egos are all at stake. Opinions will absolutely differ, and tempers will flare.



Greenville, North Carolina

I remember (very early in my career) getting chewed out by a sports anchor for trimming his time towards the end of a broadcast. This shy, sheltered 20-something was shocked and humiliated. But I stood my ground and gave it right back to that tenured anchor, and, ironically, he backed down. We never had an issue after that and got along perfectly. That wouldn't be my only confrontation with reporters, assignment editors or photographers, but we all learn conflict resolution techniques along the way. Developing thick skin and learning to debate respectfully are necessary skills in any workplace.

Broadcast journalism is a one-of-a-kind industry, but one that develops a multitude of professional skills. So, if you're just starting out in that field, embrace the rush and lessons it brings. For those who've moved on to other fields, we'll forever be grateful for the experiences and perspectives it provided. (But not for the hours, right?)

Thank you, Dana!

Richelle Hoenes and I worked together as executive producers for a 24/7 cable news station about 15 years ago. Richelle was a hard worker and did a great job guiding her team to cover the kinds of stories that a major television market throws at you every day, all day long.

Richelle sent me a great photo that reminded me of our years working together and the wonderful people we got to work with in the news biz.



BayNews9 Team

After many years in journalism, Richelle decided to make a big change and move into corporate communications. Was it a good move for her? Here's her answer —



Richelle Hoenes

So, the question is, “Is there life after t.v. news?” And the answer, in my experience, is, “yes, absolutely!” But, I also think there’s a lot of contemplation, fear, anxiety and worry about taking that step out of the newsroom. I know that from experience, too.

Am I the only one who thought after the first couple of years that the job as a reporter, anchor, producer, editor, whatever role it may have been, was one that was not sustainable as a lifelong career? It wasn’t necessarily the hours, the moving to new places or the low pay, it was more about the sacrifice of time, missed holidays with loved ones, birthdays at work and canceled plans with friends because of breaking news. But also, breaking news was great. And telling stories was great. And making a difference was great. So, I was hooked.



In those first few years, when colleagues were getting corporate jobs, and becoming PR experts and PIOs for hospitals, schools and government agencies, it was hard not to consider the move. But I wasn't there yet.

For me, it took over two decades to reach the point I was ready to leave the newsroom. The job had fed my soul, my type A personality, my competitive spirit and my desire to live in a multitasking, fast paced environment. The overnight gig was my home for half of my career - producer, anchor, reporter. From a small market where I made a daily 7-11 stop for cappuccino at midnight, to a major market where I made a daily 7-11 stop for mountain dew and mac 'n' cheese, I fit the sunrise model. And my physical and mental health didn't mind it. Then, I dabbled as a news director and spent the last half of my career as an executive producer at a major market 24/7 cable station.

During the last five years of my broadcast career, the idea of leaving 'the business,' hung over every contract renewal. Should I stay or should I go? I had a husband now, then a baby, then another baby and with every life shift it got harder to balance my time. The missed holidays, birthdays worked and canceled plans made a deeper dent in my heart. But I loved news, I thrived on it. So how could I possibly leave?



A routine mammogram at age 42 turned into a breast cancer diagnosis and that's when it finally seemed like the right time to go. I needed to slow down, be more present, have more time I could call my own, and a schedule that didn't change like the weather. I needed it for my health. (All those stories I'd written about overnight work leading to more stress and higher risks of cancer seemed to make me a statistic!)

I intentionally sought out communications positions that advertised themselves as fast-paced, 'like a newsroom,' and aggressively growing. And in a few months, I'd landed what I saw as the next best thing to being in the newsroom, building one for a national health care company. As a director of corporate communications, over the last five and a half years I've had the opportunity to flex my storytelling skills, leadership skills and even my anchor skills. I built a fully integrated team of internal, external and social media communications for an entire division, and converted a human resources training room into a full t.v. and production studio. As a team, we relied on our journalistic backgrounds to develop first-ever standardized communications for 16,000 employees by seeing them as our 'viewers,' cranking out over 300 stories a year to pitch and place in local and national media, launching social media channels with growth rates over industry standards, and producing a weekly newscast.



The go-go-go I loved, the hurry up competitive culture, and the need to multitask and work with multiple departments on projects satisfied that t.v. news junkie I still was inside. But with better pay, better benefits and better hours.

Now, as I look at what comes next inside this communications world and still out of the newsroom, I think I'm finally ready to let that high stress, fast paced part of me go. To really slow down, work strategically, with intentionality about where I put my time and effort, where I leave my mark and how I use my skill set to serve others.

If you're not there now, you may be someday. And, again, you may never be. But yes, there will be life after news if you do leave. It's just the next development in *your* lead story.

Thank you, Richelle!

I worked full-time for my first television station in 1968. It was a 'small' operation. When I say 'small,' I mean 'small.' I covered the news, wrote the scripts, produced the rundown, and anchored the program. Then, I walked out the door and did the same newscast on the radio station side.

Well, we've come a long way from those days.

I was working at Bay News 9 in the Tampa Bay Area when I retired from TV news 41 years later. I continued to produce programs for an independent television program for several more years but consider Bay News 9 my last experience in a large television newsroom. It was big and all digital.

As one of several executive producers at the 24-hour-a-day local news station, I had the privilege of working with many talented producers, anchors, reporters, photographers, editors, engineers, graphic artists, audio operators, camera operators, directors, etc. (if I left someone out, please forgive an old man's memory).

One of the talented producers I remember well is Jaime Moore. She was smart, accurate, fast, and full of life. Working with her was a joy, so I am honored to share her story of how she left journalism — without really leaving it.



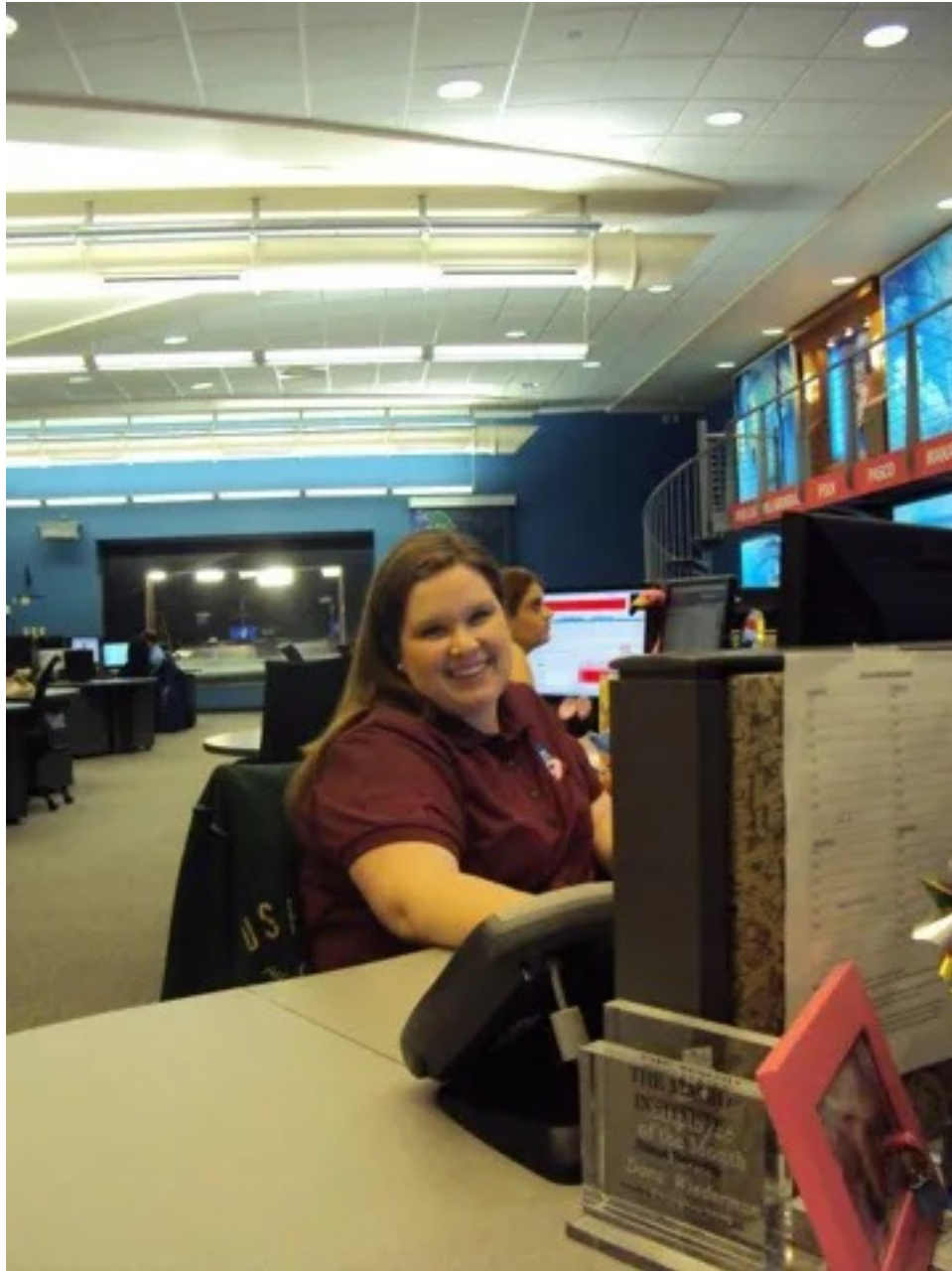
Jaime More

I still consider myself a journalist. I technically left the news industry after 11 years at BayNews9. I left once I had a baby as I felt as though news was keeping me from family with the chaotic hours. From there, I moved into Marketing as a Brand Journalist. During that role, I found a love for internal communications and created an internal communications program at a company with about 500 employees.



Jamie in Control Room at BayNews9

Now, I work as a Senior Manager of Internal Communications for a region of AdventHealth- communicating with 15,000+ team members up and down the West Coast of Florida. I did not go back to college or get any new certifications or training for my new roles outside of news. I enjoy most the ability to impact culture and tell the beautiful stories of our very talented and compassionate team members. I miss working in news sometimes during the big things. As dysfunctional as it sometimes was, we were family in the big moments- we went through a lot together. And that sense of belonging was very deep. I also miss being able to be in the know all the time when there's a helicopter circling haha.



Jaime Producing at BayNews9

I think a lot of people stay in news because it's comfortable—even in the chaos. I would tell people to take a look at other opportunities that align with their interests and skills. For me, as a producer, that was writing, organizing, calm in chaos, multitasking, decision-making, storytelling and keeping an audience informed. Really understand how your skills translate to other arenas and capitalize on that. It's sometimes hard for employers to understand and translate the skills from the newsroom. I needed to leave when I did and I've never looked back. I feel more valued and respected than I ever have at my current job and that was something I needed to feel whole. Work-life balance is also a HUGE part of why I needed to leave and I'm so grateful to have the flexibility and graciousness that I do.

Thank you, Jaime!

Kim Albright stands out in my memory as one of the hardest working journalists I've ever known. Kim had the heart of a journalist; that deep desire to get the story to the viewing audience no matter the cost.

Why did Kim leave journalism, and did he find life on 'the other side'? Here's his story.



Kim Albright

I began my career in broadcasting while still in high school. One of my best friends was a weekend DJ at one of our hometown radio stations. He coached me into what would become a 32 year career in broadcasting. I became interested in electronics and two way radios when I was about 12 years old so becoming involved in radio and TV broadcasting was almost a natural progression. I majored in radio and TV broadcasting in college, working part time for an AM/FM station in Gadsden, Alabama.

News and especially spot news was a big thing in Gadsden and very competitive station owners/managers made spot news reporting very intriguing to me. After getting my Associate Degree in Applied Science I went to work for a small radio station in Scottsboro, Alabama where I introduced the idea of spot news reporting to the station owner. Not long after going to work there I was covering a bank robbery in the small town of Stevenson, Alabama when I met a man named Dick VanValkenburg who was THE spot news reporter for WAAY-TV in Huntsville.

I never knew what Dick saw in me but for whatever reason, he took me under his wing and taught me more about spot news than I could have ever learned in school. Dick and I developed a lasting friendship that spanned slightly more than 10 years before he passed away. Unbeknown to me at the time Dick had set it up to have the owner of WAAY offer me the position of spot news reporter before posting the job publicly.

I thought more of Dick's recommendation than I would have a Pulitzer Prize. I finally had the chance at my dream job! I enjoyed almost 14 years at that position and would like to think I contributed a small part to the long standing tradition of keeping Channel 31 in the number 1 news slot in our market. I had planned to retire from that station in another 15 or 16 years.

However, In September, 1999 it was announced that the station was being sold. The new owners cut a couple of dozen positions the night they took over. One of those was mine. I was devastated! I didn't want to leave north Alabama but wasn't sure how I was going to pay the bills. Four weeks later I got a call from one of the other TV stations in Huntsville and

offered a position as Assignment Manager. That extended my broadcast career three years, but after several general management changes and a new news director was brought in, my contract was nearing renewal. I will never forget the words I was told, “your work is exemplary, but your position has been reclassified to entry level and your pay will be cut substantially.” I again found myself unemployed.

Trying to find a position in TV at 50 years of age is virtually impossible, so I decided to re-invent my career. Using my radio and TV background combined with my photography skills, I started working for several real estate brokers doing picture and virtual tours on-line. This sustained me until the housing market crashed in the mid-2000’s.

Not long after I got a call from a former newspaper photographer I had met years earlier who had pursued a career as a graphic artist. The sign company he worked for was in need of someone with electronic troubleshooting experience and who was not afraid of heights. I interviewed and landed the job the next day. It has been almost 14 years now and I am still with that sign company. I moved to the graphic art position after my friend left, and open-heart

surgery and bad knees made it hard for me to climb around and operate a bucket truck. I enjoy what I do now almost as much as I did my job at Channel 31. Even though I am past retirement age, I still go to work every day.

I am living proof that there is life after broadcasting but only through the grace of God, my Lord and Savior. When I got into broadcasting it was a career you could say proudly you were a part of, and people respected you. With all that has happened over the past 25 years in the journalism arena, I personally do not believe the profession commands the same respect it had when I started. I am very thankful for the 32 total years I spent in broadcasting, but after broadcasting I have much more time with my wife of 48-years, I get a good night's sleep and when the weather is bad, especially in winter, I sit by the fire, look out the window and think to myself, "Ain't it great!"

Thanks, Kim!

I hope you've enjoyed reading these 15 stories and found encouragement in them. If you are currently in journalism and thinking of leaving for another career, the advice shared in these personal stories may help you make a decision that works best for you.



[1960s Radio News, © Mark McGee](#)

Copyright © Mark McGee and GraceLife, 2023