

Elizabeth Osder - Story in a Bottle

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0:00:00 Dan Maccarone: Welcome to Story in a Bottle. I'm your host Dan Maccarone. Here at Story in a Bottle, we're hearing about the diverse paths people have taken to end up in the world of tech. And to get to know them even better by sharing their favorite cocktail, while they share their story. As a child growing up in New Jersey, daughter to a Graphic Designer, Elizabeth Osder became infatuated with the idea of making printed material. Inspired her to pursue photojournalism, which led her to the realization that, at her core, no matter what the medium, it was the story that mattered to her most. And as a journalist, it was her civic duty to tell those stories the right way. Over Diet Ginger Beers, Elizabeth talks about how this mantra has kept her at the forefront of technology for her entire career. From helping launch the first version of the newyorktimes.com to shaping the digital focus at NYU and Columbia University's journalism programs, and today, as she helps reinvent the video strategy and experiences for local news companies. While her path has certainly been winding, the charge remains. Never lose sight of the bigger picture, the story.

[music]

0:01:13 DM: So, you had emailed me and said, you want a Pellegrino, and then, last minute change.

0:01:18 Elizabeth Osder: Yeah, that's okay.

0:01:19 DM: To Diet Ginger Beer.

0:01:20 EO: Yeah.

0:01:21 DM: 'Cause I feel like you love Diet Ginger Beer.

0:01:22 EO: I do. I have a loving of it. This is my new favorite beverage.

0:01:26 DM: It's a great beverage. I drink this a lot. I mix it with Vodka sometimes.

0:01:30 EO: And you should. I mean, and I would, but I don't do that anymore, because I did it a lot in the past.

[laughter]

0:01:36 DM: I mean, Diet Ginger Beer on its own is actually... I think it's great, 'cause it's good for you, right? It's healthy, 'cause it's diet?

0:01:42 EO: I don't know what makes it diet, that could be something in it. This is the Australian... Like, this is like a fine Scotch to a soda drinker.

0:01:49 DM: The Bundaberg Diet Ginger Beer, which I knew by the way they sold at Bed Bath and

Beyond around the corner from us, because I bought it there many-a-times. So, I'm glad you switched, because we're gonna have fun drinking Ginger Beer. Pellegrino, we would have been like...

0:02:04 EO: No, no, no. Yeah, I was just trying to be polite about something that was easy. I suffer, like last night when I had to go out for Margarita night, and I was like... I'll have a ginger ale.

0:02:16 DM: Yes. But you can't really make a Mocktail Margarita. It's like Lime juice and water, it doesn't really do it.

0:02:21 EO: Yeah, it's stupid. Wait, there's a pop with these that's really nice.

[background conversation]

0:02:29 DM: This is gonna be delicious. Cheers.

0:02:33 EO: Cheers.

0:02:34 DM: Cheers, Ben.

0:02:34 EO: Cheers. Cheers.

0:02:35 DM: Thanks for coming all the way from Los Angeles to do this podcast.

0:02:38 EO: No problem. There's nothing that's better than living in LA for the chill lifestyle and then coming back to New York to get super charged with activity, and the amount of things that you can do in a day, people that you can see and it revs me up. So, I energize here and then I actually... I make opportunities here and then I go back there to work on them.

0:02:55 DM: That's the way to do it.

0:02:57 EO: It's like my...

0:02:57 DM: I feel like I do the opposite. I go to LA to find opportunities and then I come here and work on them.

0:03:00 EO: Well, that's the way it goes. You got to go back and forth. I guess were amongst the bicoastal these days.

0:03:05 DM: Yeah, life is hard. It's really challenging.

0:03:07 EO: It's tough. It's tough.

0:03:10 DM: Normally, we spend a lot of time on the present, not that we shouldn't and we will talk about the present, but I wanna spend time talking about the past, 'cause I think you're one of the

few people we have had on the show that has this amazingly rich experience in the world of digital. That has kind of been through it all and understands why we are where we are today, as opposed to just that we are where we are today. But, to be fair to you and the future, what're you doing? What's your jam right now?

0:03:39 EO: My jam right now is... Well, I like to think of my work as a portfolio really. I like to be involved in a lot of things. I'm driven by learning things and solving hard problems. And if you're in the industry for a long time, you have to... You can get worn into a thing and you can do a job. I've moved around a lot, because that helps me stay on top of things and see the business from different perspectives. So, I've been working on an interesting field for the last year, almost full-time at this company called, LAKANA that powers about 80% of the local broadcast television stations out there with a platform. It's been a very interesting gig.

0:04:17 EO: And, why I went there was, maybe I'd rather have a root canal than work in this industry, I think, but I went because, I thought it was really important, 'cause I care about local news, and I care about journalism, and I care about those markets. And the truth of the matter is that newspapers have been declining so quickly that local broadcasters really have a hold on local audience attention. And they actually have a tremendously powerful opportunity to correct some of the decline that we've seen in local media across the country. So, I spent the last year sort of noodling on that problem with a very interesting company, that's trying to service those companies, so they can, with platforms, tools and technology, so that they can focus more on local content and local ad sales.

0:04:58 DM: Why do you think the local news has this opportunity, as opposed to local print media, or even where one's failed in hyper local digital?

0:05:07 EO: Well, I think that what's failed is, there are two things, and I'm not saying we have the answer to it. We have the runway, if you work with the local broadcast companies. Local news hasn't failed, but the decline and the hit economically on the local newspaper industry has been so pronounced that they're literally running out of time, and I say this with a great love and affection and respect for many of my colleagues in those fields. But the truth is, a lot of time was lost, those companies are... Many of them owned by private equity. There are very few of them that are locally based anymore and they don't have much longer to figure it out. It's a tough situation.

0:05:47 EO: Local broadcasters on the other hand, it's an interesting situation. With a newspaper, you were lucky, you had two in a market that came from a morning paper and an afternoon paper. Well, those ones have been consolidated or shut down. In local broadcast, you actually have three viable options. You have the three networks, possibly a fourth in a lot of markets. So there is a robust and competitive environment for news in business, which makes for entrepreneurial opportunities. And you also have an industry that hasn't ventured very much into entrepreneurship and experimentation in the industry, which might seem bad, but they may have third mover advantage at this point, in order to do some interesting things. So I felt it was a good opportunity for me to also fill some gaps I had in my resume. And not really my resume, but in my personal sense of knowing what to do next, which was, I had come out of print in Pure Play Digital. I wasn't a native to video, and I wanted to work with video. I wanted to understand the power that local distribution has. Those are incredible sales and marketing machines. There's a lot of power there.

And the way local broadcast is, the economics are fueled different than just advertising and circulation. They're fueled by things like retransmission fees and other kinds of things that have to do with FCC regulations that can potentially give those guys a lot more runway.

0:07:04 EO: So, I went because I didn't know broadcast, I didn't know enough about video, and that it was a fair barter for my knowledge about how to run an entrepreneurial and digital operation, how to build great and forward-looking platforms and how to think on the cutting edge of monetization. And so for me, it's been a learning curve project. And throughout my career, I've always counseled companies to spend their time on those entrepreneurial projects that can actually not only be cool and hot and get people excited, but actually teach them something they need to learn to do. And so, a good project for somebody for affording their way in this business has always been something that you always need to learn something, so you have to go further into the waters where you don't know how to do something.

0:07:52 DM: So what I think is interesting about that, when it comes to first of all local news and particularly local news video, thinking less about television as a medium and more about digital, and the browsers and [0:08:03] , is that every piece of me and every piece of research I do, tells me that news video, I don't mean sexy entertainment video, I don't mean news from a BuzzFeed cat standpoint or...

0:08:18 EO: Meow.

0:08:18 DM: Or even from a person being blown over in a hurricane standpoint. News video international or local tends to test really poorly when we go and do research.

0:08:30 EO: Really?

0:08:31 DM: Oh, yeah. No one I ever talked to, ever. And I've done local research and international research, whether it be CNN or looking at networks of local, people tend to want to scan text and get through things. So it's interesting to me when you talked about the idea of getting into it and seeing it firsthand, what is the opportunity for local news not on TV, but local TV on the browser?

0:09:02 EO: Absolutely. I'm actually on the local TV on the browser side of the business, so that's what I'm focused on. Which is an underutilized opportunity. Let's talk about the first point you made about video. What I wanna say about that is first of all, and I don't know the particulars of the research you've done and it may be exhaustive, but my understanding of local video is really this: Local plays local and local means local, and if you actually really are local, then you will find your audience for that thing. What doesn't play well is national and local. What works well is when something extraordinary happens local and it goes "viral." And I think local video has forever been the first thing that ever went viral, because what you'd have is, pardon me, shit happens someplace, somebody got it on video, and it goes every place. So it's the original source of great content. The question is, in today's world is, whether these guys who got these \$2 million trucks with satellite dishes going around and engineers in them really need all that anymore, when I can Facebook live my news tomorrow.

0:10:08 DM: I guess that's what I mean. When you do research about news and people are looking at video... And specifically, when we are talking about talking hats. When you look at people who are sitting behind an anchor desk and just talking about something on a browser, people are just like, "I don't give a shit." But you talk about... "I'm on the scene," and there's some shit going on, whether it be a hurricane or a cat stuck in a tree, but there's a whole fire department going to rescue it and you're capturing it on your phone, that does resonate more. But oftentimes, there's this reaction from people where video is work. Where unless it's that fascinating thing, capturing that moment that is so cool... And I use the word cool relatively, the idea that I could just read about this or users could just read about this tends to resonate more with people, versus "I'm gonna sit here and spend my time watching a whole edited story about something."

0:11:03 EO: Well, I think it's all about formats. So the broadcast format, I feel is... If I had one project that's in my craw that I'd like to [0:11:14] [REDACTED] with, I'd like to blow up local broadcast news. It is format down to, "Live at 7:00 PM tonight, and I'm standing in front of the hurricane," and it's still working. So these guys have a long runway and the executives... This is an archaic group in a lot of ways. They're gonna go for a long time still doing this, because the money still flows. And if you follow the money and those businesses and the long-term plans of those businesses, they'll keep going with that format. But what some people need to do is take that local broadcast format that's on air and online and they need to create a new experience. And I think that you might be right, that that is not what people want for online, and that that's not what we do online. What we do online is create parodies, experiences, which you might find for a local newspaper, video is supplementary to text.

0:12:02 EO: It's not the whole experience. I think video is transforming now, because with bandwidth opening up, and the ease and the compatibility of video, and the modernization of video, I think that people are consuming more and more video. I've seen a lot of really solid trends, 'cause we have some scale in the company, and now we've got 200 million unique users a month, and so with that kind of scale, I can see some interesting patterns just from my data. And amongst local broadcasters, I think we've seen one of the most aggressive adoptions to mobile consumption, and we've also seen... I think we've made significant investments in the industry in native apps and those things, but it seems to me that mobile web is winning and that 60 to 80% of their... I won't speak on behalf of specific statistics of the company that I work for, but I'm just saying that my inclination is that it's moving very, very quickly to mobile web, and because video is easier consumed on mobile devices, I think you're seeing a lot more pick of it.

0:13:00 EO: But the storytelling format, they need to be transformed, and I don't know if they can be transformed in the hands of the people that control those businesses today. That's a change problem.

0:13:08 DM: I think the way that... I remember being in J-school years ago, and there was a broadcast class I took where they taught us the art of storytelling in broadcast. Now, it's like one of...

0:13:19 EO: The art of storytelling in broadcast.

0:13:22 DM: I think we had tools of journalism class, if I remember correctly. It's been a while. Every few weeks, you'd go from broadcast to radio to print, so you got a sense of everything.

0:13:33 EO: That was actually a very... Somebody who was an educator in this area, by the way in those days, the multimedia curriculum where people were exposed to all forms was radical in the '90s.

0:13:45 DM: Oh yeah. And it makes sense. But I remember...

0:13:47 EO: Radical transformation of journalism education.

0:13:50 DM: But I think it was interesting to learn that in the two days we took the class, but the thing I think about is how you take that idea, this curated, edited story that you'd watch on a local or national broadcast, right? Whether it be a 60-minute piece or a five-minute piece on New York 1, there's something to that storytelling that works really well on television that doesn't necessarily translate to the web, but you probably could to your point, I agree with you, find a way to use video on mobile, especially mobile web, not an app. That is exciting.

0:14:24 EO: I think the frontier of this is gonna be OTT.

0:14:27 DM: Yeah. For those who don't know what that is, what is OTT?

0:14:30 EO: 'Over the top', so being able to... Consider that you got an app on your television and you're actually watching what you might watch on your phone on your TV. So you're getting a broader, more immersive experience, and I think in general, the way all media is going on now... I used to say, "What do print people do when the world goes words with buttons for video, to video with buttons for words?" And I think we are at that inflection point right now. And I found that trying to understand that point, why I spent time doing what I was doing the last year, in addition to the other things that I've been doing in my portfolio, which we can talk about in a minute.

0:15:05 EO: And with that transformation now, if you want to talk about for a second about where we are, where we're going, and I don't want to be... I always laugh about people who wanna predict the future. I used to love being on a panel and there'd be like, "Tell us what's going to happen in the future. Are there no newspapers in the future?" People would play with me when I was at the New York Times, "How could there be a world without it?" And I'm like, "There are no newspapers in Star Trek." [chuckle] There's this place between now and the future. They're going away, right?

0:15:31 EO: So easy does it. The question is: "How do you wanna place your bets? How do you wanna play your cards? How much money do you wanna put on the table during the process?" So, I think we're at the inflection point right now when the world is shifting to video with buttons for words, and it can shift now, because of technology that empowers machine learning, ability to categorize and understand metadata, and understand the content of video, so it can be broken up and programmed in different ways. It's no longer sort of linear. It's actually gonna be assembled on a fly in different ways.

0:16:06 EO: And with that, I think, where things are going, and I'm never gonna say when, I'm not gonna predict the future, but what's... The thing that's happening now, I think, with AR and VR, and where we're going is that, we've gone from the idea of an immersive experience with VR, an augmented experience where you're layering information. And I think the thing that's fundamentally changing right now in the screen time that you're seeing is a sense of presence, that whatever you're doing with this video, you can go from watching it to feeling present in it. And to me, that's the next frontier. And VR does that. It puts you that way. So, if you wanna talk about local news where it's going, well, if something happens, so how are you there? If your grandson is in a football game at the local high school and you're in the hospital, can you watch the clip? Yeah. But if you can put the goggles on and you can look around and see him play in the film, that's amazing.

0:17:00 EO: I used that experience, because I like experiences that explain how, rather than fully focusing on millennials and who's coming and freaking out, which is, "We live in a world where we connect with each other." How do people connect in those experiences? How do you Skype? How you talk across time? I like examples, although they're not always the used case that talk about old and young, black and white. I think those are important, that media can bring people together and they can close some intimacy back in the world, as well as... It's not a magic bullet, but I'm excited about the creation of deeper and deeper presence, and that's where, I think, video and AR play, and where text is not as well-suited, and also has a requirement for an education level and a competency level that doesn't share as much broadly amongst people who should be enjoying information and consuming content. And I didn't mean to go on such a roll there, but that was a roll. [chuckle]

0:17:55 DM: No, but those are good points. One of the questions people in our industry ask a lot or are baffled by a lot, is why no one has mastered the art of hyperlocal yet, right? The Patch failed for many reasons, which I could go into I think, but no one's got it right.

0:18:16 EO: Pour me another drink. [laughter]

0:18:19 DM: I've done research in this area, too. And every time I've done research in the area of hyperlocal, the answers to the question seem obvious. But no one wants to listen to them, because they're not sexy. Or they're not...

0:18:30 EO: Hey, it's beyond what's cool and what's hot. It's what works and what doesn't. And that has been the greatest underminer of innovation, I think in our industry, which is your passion about UX, at some point your passion about things that work well.

0:18:41 DM: Yeah. That's why I had Patch as a client once, I had some of the local plays as clients. And every time we recommended things that the research pointed out... And I'm not always saying the research is right, but sometimes you do research and there's such a glaringly obvious thing to make. And it's not sexy, but it will totally make money. And our clients have always been like, "Yeah, but we wanna make this." And it's like, "No, it's so clear that this is what you want."

0:19:08 DM: And Patch got this wrong too, because they didn't understand how to integrate with local businesses to make things actually work, 'cause local news is only one part of local, right? Communication's part of it and news is a subjective thing, 'cause news is not just headlines of like,

"Man bites dog." It's very much like, "This is what's going on at this school," or, "This is what's going on in the neighborhood." Or, "This is the best joint deal a family can have this weekend." Those all play into your life and your neighborhood that's local.

0:19:40 EO: I'm bullish on local and I don't have a time horizon, because I do know I'm not a knucklehead. I know that people... You are... I think I started off this talk saying, "Local is where local is. It is where you are. It is your people. It is your community." And as much as I love media that can transform presence and allow people to be distant to be close, you still live in a place and you invest in that place more than any other place. I'm not gonna pause it. I think over time, a solution for local media will emerge organically from something that works, that is being created in a world, and for a need that is out there that people who come from other media, who are trying to capture it may just be poorly suited to understand. And that might be a complicated way of saying that, because it's needed, somebody entrepreneurial will get it right.

0:20:34 DM: Yeah.

0:20:35 EO: But I don't think they might get it right funded by a VC who thinks they're gonna get it right. Led by a team of accomplished former journalists who decided to take this on, and got somebody to pay them as much money as they used to make at the newspaper. It's gonna be take on somebody who's scrappy, who's got shoe leather and who finds an audience. And there was that great story, it was a few months ago about the 8-year-old journalist.

0:21:01 DM: Oh, right. Yeah.

0:21:03 EO: That to me is what matters. And maybe she got a lot of pickup, but she had an audience. Journalism is not a profession, it is not a business. It's just the act of believing that if you see something or you're interested in something, you want to tell other people. And, I just think it confounds the business models. So, if I had all the time in the world I might say... If I had all the money in the world to solve local media, I don't think I would solve it any place else, but to go to a local grammar school, high school, and just hand the tools over to somebody and say, "See what happens." But if I wanna extract revenue out of it and have some grand vision, everybody has missed.

0:21:53 DM: Everybody.

0:21:53 EO: Everybody has missed. And the industry itself... Now, I'm kvetching a little bit, is because it's journalism. It is the most covered story. When you think about... And I live in Los Angeles. Homelessness in Los Angeles, skid row should be on the front page of that damn LA Times every freaking day until something happens. It doesn't cover the local stories. It covers the local elite. It covers what they think is important. We're not gonna say that they covered to... They're not actually dedicated to what local really is. The local publication has to come out of the local community.

0:22:32 EO: When I was teaching at USC, I had a student, this guy Eddie North-Hager. And he created these hyperlocal sites in LA just 'cause he had a passion as one of my class projects. And

they're still going. What he's got some AdSense on it. He makes \$40, \$400 a month. It's a rounding error on his job, but he serves his community. Because something happened along the way when journalism became some white collar professional elite class profession, rather than people doing what their community's need is. It's utility. It's the fire department, it's the police department, it's the local newspaper. And that is not what Patch had in mind.

0:23:10 DM: No, well Patch made the mistake of sending the white collar elite-type journalists you're talking about into... Parachuting them into community, and then asking more of them than journalism. You're not only the journalist, you're the ad sales guy. You're whatever...

0:23:25 EO: Yeah.

0:23:26 DM: And to be fair to those people, that's not their experience. That's not what they're used to, so they can't be expected to do that job ad hock. And meanwhile, what's really fascinating about it, is when... This is probably going more to the reason we need to. When AOL bought Patch and you look at AOL suite of properties, they might have local properties that could have complemented Patch and help them do things, is incredible. And they just never did that.

0:23:49 EO: Well, they didn't wanna partner. There's local community news and then there's the question of investigative journalism. But I'll pause at one funny question that I have. I've been around a long time, so I have a lot of lines that I use. You can benefit from them today which is, do you know what a California job box is?

0:24:06 DM: I don't.

0:24:06 EO: Okay. So that's like back in the old days, older than me, back in the 1800s, back on the wagon trains, you could ride away to the series robot catalog and you could get a house or you could get a newspaper. You could get like a kit. And in California job box is what you'd keep all the typefaces in and you could move out to the frontier or some place and you can go, do I wanna be a farmer or maybe I wanna be a cattle herder, or maybe if I can scrape together enough money, I can get the printing kit and I could start a newspaper. I always think of Joe Cowboy out on the frontier going, "Yeah, I'm not so good at herding cattle. Yeah, you know I don't [0:24:46] fastidious. I don't really wanna get dirty. And I'm not that tough." You can see your probably typical journalist emerging here on the frontier.

0:24:58 DM: That's how the web was in 1995.

0:25:00 EO: Yeah, that was what I was in. So anyway, he saves up to have enough money, he gets the thing and he's gonna start the newspaper. So here's the only question I have about the story is, what came first? The story or the ad? What did he do first? Did he sell an ad or did he make a story first? I don't know.

0:25:20 DM: I think he made a story 'cause he could sell the paper.

0:25:22 EO: Yeah. So I just think that that's fundamentally the question now, which is, everybody

should ask when they start with this. What comes first?

0:25:29 DM: Story or the ad?

0:25:29 EO: And I think that what comes first is, you've got to actually have an audience that gives a shit. You gotta have to have an engagement. And if you earn their trust, you can monetize it. But if you go in two prongs at the same time, not so good. It's a little arrogant. It's a little like Wall Street meets Main Street in not such a good way.

0:25:48 DM: So you mentioned that you've been in journalism a long time, let's go back and talk about the origins of this, 'cause you have a rich history in journalism and I only know a part of it. But if we go back pre-grad school, if we think about early, young Elizabeth Osder.

0:26:07 EO: Oh boy.

0:26:08 DM: So where did you grow up?

0:26:10 EO: I grew up in Englewood, New Jersey about five miles outside Midtown Manhattan.

0:26:14 DM: And you went to middle school and high school there?

0:26:18 EO: I went to middle school and high school there. I went to a really terrific school for a good part of the time. It was a prep school, private school there, which was really really helpful to me. I had a rough home and it gave me a real respite. And I got very involved in creating media there actually.

0:26:36 DM: How so?

0:26:38 EO: Well, if you really wanna go back, I'll tell you what captures you to wanna be in media. Go way, way back, which is, there were two things. I think I love when I saw my things in print. My mother was a graphic designer and she had a studio in the house and we used to make things. She'd make things and then they get printed and I would sit at the print shop with her and I'd smell the ink and things like that and it was cool. It's like, "Hey, ma, look what you're making." And then it would come back and it would be a printed thing. So it was cool. I like this idea of printed stuff.

0:27:13 EO: And I think in our house, I think we were New York Times readers and I think that my dad gave me a thought about that at some point which was, "If you want to learn to learn for the rest of your life, reading that paper everyday was an incredible tool." And so, I think that was a part of my life. But in my grammar school, they had a little quarterly magazine and everyday they collect pictures. This was actually like first or second grade. They collect little pictures from all the kids and they'd have like the fall and the winter issue. And to this day, I'm a little embarrassed to show it to anybody, 'cause there's things that show like my real personality, like my armless, eyeless snowman made it into that thing and I'm still so proud of it, but I can't show it to anybody, 'cause it's like the armless snowman, like what's wrong with her? But anyway, I saw something in print and it

made me very passionate, okay? So I think it got my bug, those things. Maybe I'm going on too long about this?

0:28:10 DM: No, no. I asked the question.

0:28:12 EO: So then the next thing was, I had a massively... So this is my claim to fame. When I was nine, I had my 15 minutes of fame and I was the first girl to play legally in the Little League in the United States of America. And I broke the gender barrier for Little League.

0:28:30 DM: You were like the Bad News Bears girl?

0:28:31 EO: I was the real Bad News Bears girl. I was always pissed off at Tatum O'Neal, 'cause he threw like a girl. I should have gotten that part. But anyway, so I had this moment of fame. And to this day, it brings so much to my life. But I was on the front page of the New York Daily News under the headline, "Guys are Playing with Dolls Up at Bat, at Garrity Field in Englewood, New Jersey."

0:28:55 DM: Is it rude to ask what year this is?

0:28:57 EO: 1974.

0:28:58 DM: Okay, wow.

0:29:00 EO: And it was 1974 and it was the year that Title IX was an issue.

0:29:03 DM: It's actually around the time Bad News Bears came out, isn't it?

0:29:05 EO: Bad News Bears was based on the story of the girls who first played Little League. It came...

0:29:09 DM: So it is?

0:29:10 EO: It is, absolutely [0:29:10] .

0:29:10 DM: It's like '76 or '75?

0:29:12 EO: Yeah. So it was all based on the stories. So I was on the front page of New York Daily News and I was up at bat, but I saw my picture in the newspaper, so better than my armless snowman, there I was up at bat, okay?

0:29:23 DM: Yeah.

0:29:24 EO: And so, after that I got really interested in photography and I actually went on to become a photojournalist. That was what my training was, 'cause I saw my picture in the newspaper. And that's why I totally grew up on newspapers, 'cause I think it made me feel special.

They made me feel special.

0:29:40 DM: Did you realize beyond the newspaper, like what a big deal that was to be the first female to be allowed to play baseball in Little League?

0:29:49 EO: You know, the beautiful thing about it is, I still know my teammates today. We're all friends on Facebook. I recently got a message from my coach's daughter, who was born long after he coached me saying, "I always heard of the girl who he coached, that he was so proud of." So I didn't think... I just played. I just wanted to play. I didn't think it was a big deal. It was during the time Son of Sam, and those other kinds of things were going on, and I did get some hate mail. And I think there was like police called in and what would happen. But I didn't think anything of it, really. I just played and I wanted to play.

0:30:25 EO: This is something to say to all the women out there or anybody out there, which is the most beautiful thing about that in my life, if that point in my life, if I wanted to play baseball and somebody had said, "No," because I was a girl, I think it would have changed my entire outlook on my life and where it would go. But it was seamless and it wasn't hard, they said, "Yes," and I had fun and that's all that mattered.

0:30:47 DM: And the teammates treated you like anyone?

0:30:48 EO: Fantastic. We're buddies to this day.

0:30:50 DM: So good.

0:30:51 EO: It's really, really sweet. I love those guys, many of them still.

0:30:55 DM: So you see your picture in the paper, in the New York Daily News and this clicks with you and you said, you start getting interested in photography. At that point, you must've been in middle school right?

0:31:06 EO: Yeah.

0:31:06 DM: So during middle school and high school, are you moving more towards photography? Is that the...

0:31:11 EO: Yeah that was my thing. I remember my first camera, I got my Kodak Instamatic, with the Magic Cube on top, for four flashes and 12 pictures. And I had a whole kit. I was a natural documentarian, I was documenting everything in the neighborhood. I have all these books of little neighborhood documentaries that I would do. And In high school, I was the photo editor of the newspaper. And I was also the editor of the art and literary magazine. And those projects were available to me through junior high and high school. So I was always taking pictures. I got into photography, because it was a way of telling stories that was natural to me. And I just love taking pictures and I did. And I always love doing photo essays and telling photo stories and it was a very natural way of communicating. Quite honestly, I was an uncomfortable writer. I had a lot of trouble

with grammar and some learning differences that took time to come out and figure out.

0:32:07 EO: And it was the best way for me to communicate and it was what I love to do. Everybody from growing up knows me as a photographer. And also, that I went to college, Mount Holyoke College, where I was also the editor of the newspaper for photography.

0:32:24 DM: You were the photo editor or you were the editor of the newspaper?

0:32:26 EO: Photo editor. I was always photo. I always had a dark room. I was always making stuff. It's what I could make. The process was so calming and you could do things. So I kept doing photo, but after college, I didn't know how to be a journalist, "How do you get a job?" It was hard then.

0:32:45 DM: It's hard now.

0:32:46 EO: Really hard. It was hard then too, because... But I actually landed up... I could fill in a lot of years, but I ended up going to journalism graduate school and I went to...

0:32:54 DM: Missouri right?

0:32:54 EO: I went to Missouri, which was the place to go for photo journalism. So I went there and I got my masters in photo journalism, which was the ticket for me to have this as my trade craft, but then something happened. The internet happened.

0:33:09 DM: Wait, so, when did you... Did you have a career in between undergrad and grad school?

0:33:14 EO: Yeah, I was out. I graduated in 1986. And I went to journalism School in '91, so I was like five years, I lived in Western Massachusetts and I worked in non-profit and political fundraising. I did lots of jobs along the way. I worked in a deli whole wheat, rye, mustard, pumpernickel, wheat, Havarti with dill, Havarti with mustard seed.

0:33:38 DM: My first job was in a deli.

0:33:39 EO: Yeah, I like my deli. But I did odd jobs, find yourself jobs during those years, a lot of political work, which is interesting, a lot of Central American solidarity work, a little activism stuff. I organized America's first telemarketing union. I was a union steward, so that was something people...

0:34:00 DM: But all this led into grad school and you said that... When did you graduate from grad school, 90?

0:34:04 EO: '93.

0:34:04 DM: '93. So you really graduated right when the World Wide Web was invented.

0:34:10 EO: Exactly.

0:34:11 DM: Like when Berners-Lee had... That first browser come out, that's your entryway into the real world, if you will.

0:34:19 EO: Yeah. I'm sorry that my life is a long story long, but...

0:34:22 DM: No, no, no, no.

[laughter]

0:34:23 DM: I've been thinking about this a lot lately, because time is a weird thing, right? I think about the internet is... Really, it's 23 years old, if you think about it.

0:34:35 EO: Yeah.

0:34:36 DM: That was the World Wide Web, I'm sorry. I think it's '93, right? Like '93 was when that happened?

0:34:40 EO: Yeah.

0:34:41 DM: And I think about that, in the way where it's not that old.

0:34:46 EO: No.

0:34:47 DM: Like even when I met you in 1998. That's a five-year-old industry, that you had been in for five, six years?

0:34:53 EO: Five years, yeah.

0:34:54 DM: I had been working in probably four or five years, in my own way, in a very different way than you, but that's bananas.

0:35:01 EO: It is bananas.

0:35:02 DM: It's not that old. So anyway, you graduated from grad school, photo journalism and then you're like...

0:35:06 EO: Well no, here's what happened. So, how does one get into the internet? Like what everyone's magic moment where they discovered that things were new? And I wonder now, because it's been around for so long, what happens when somebody... When it's just not assumed, what if somebody get like, what's magic now? That goes, you look at the world differently. And I'll tell you exactly what happened. I had my 2400 baud modem and I was sitting in my apartment, and I actually started at Indiana University in Bloomington. I transferred to Missouri, long story. But

Indiana was one of the few campuses in the country that had tremendous commuting. We all had NeXT computers. The company that Steve Jobs started.

0:35:41 DM: Wow, Steve Jobs... Yeah.

0:35:43 EO: So I went to graduate school. I started there. I had access to the most powerful computer available to anybody. And I would tell that into different libraries around the world to do research, and I had the sense of transcending space and time that it boggled my mind. I'm sitting in my shitty \$200 a month, which was like that most I ever paid for a room apartment in Bloomington in Indiana. And I'm like, "I'm in North Carolina reading the card catalogue. I've transcended space and time, I'm in Indiana." And as a New Yorker and New Jersey kid, it was like, "Indiana was weird anyway." So I could get out by going to these Telnet places. Anyway, I transferred to Missouri, because I wanted to be in the photo program, and I didn't get in the first time, so I reapplied. The story of my life is like, "You know, she doesn't always get in the first try, but she keeps showing up." So I went to Missouri, and Missouri didn't have any internet, and they didn't have any NeXT computers. It was like I left paradise. [chuckle]

0:36:42 DM: Oh my god!

0:36:43 EO: They were there. So I was running around the journalism school and going like, "How do I get email?" And I'm like "Oh... " So I actually made a lot of these things happen in Missouri, and pushed them, I did a lot of first projects there. One of the first projects was, we produced the CD-ROM on the judging of the pictures of the year, where we interviewed photographers on the back stories of their stories. I had to push to get access to technology there. And I went, because they had this thing called a "Kodak D60", I think it was called. And it was about a 20-pound computer you'd wear as a backpack, and you could take four digital photos with this giant camera. And I went, 'cause you needed to use this technology.

0:37:26 EO: But anyway, in Missouri, I was really interested in technology, but there wasn't much going on. So I did the CD project, and what happened was I got a fellowship at the Poynter Institute, which was very prominent then in media size. It was a mini MBA in newspaper management. And I wanted out of my last year in journalism school, and I went down there and your job there was to do what we do in a lot of entrepreneurial things right now, which was to basically write a business plan and pitch it for a new media product. And so, many people, my colleagues did traditional things, like beat reporting and stuff, and I'm like, "What would a newspaper be like online?" Was my project, but there weren't any yet. [chuckle] So, I did a model for taking the same pitch time, so online, and that was my master's project. My friend, Nora Paul, who was a really neat woman who worked down there and now is at the University of Minnesota, saw my project and she said "Hey, that was really interesting. Why don't you come back down here and work for me, and teach us how to put the Poynter Institute on the internet?"

0:38:35 DM: Are they in DC? Or they're in...

0:38:36 EO: They're in Saint Petersburg, Florida.

0:38:38 DM: Florida, okay.

0:38:39 EO: So, I ended up not going back to Missouri, but staying there and working for a year, putting them online. We did it at the same time that, Prodigy, AOL and...

0:38:50 DM: CompuServe?

0:38:50 EO: And CompuServe. They were all moderately around at that point. But it was there that I flew up to Raleigh, where there the News & Observer had an early digital lab where they were playing with technology. And that's where I first downloaded the Mosaic Browser, and saw the HTTP for the first time. And I was looking at the Olympics in Norway, in Lillehammer, that's what was going on. And I saw that, and it just was a second thing from that first moment when [0:39:19] it was like, "Frickin' Lillehammer Olympics, wow!" And like, "hyperlink," not cloogy interface.

0:39:27 EO: So, I always laugh that I went to graduate school as an unemployed photojournalist, hoping to get a job. I actually worked at the AP as a photo editor, when I got out for a while as well. And I came out this weird leading authority of what news could be online. And all of a sudden, I went out looking for a job, and all of a sudden, I was getting jobs for companies trying to figure out what to do. I was offered just a ton of interesting opportunities, and I landed up taking a job... Real life happens, my father had passed away and I really needed to come back to New Jersey. And I was offered a job as the editor of The Gate in San Francisco, which was the Chronicles website. But I couldn't move, I had to come home to help my family. And I actually went to work for the Newhouse family, at Newhouse Newspapers New Media, which at the time, the Newhouse owned Condé Nast random house, and then at the time, the third largest newspaper chain. And I worked... I should tell you about my interview there. I don't know if I'm running out of time here.

0:40:29 DM: No, no. Go for it.

0:40:31 EO: But it's a great story. I actually worked for Jeff Jarvis, who's name is around quite a lot today. And Jim Wellesley, and there was two other people, and we were this little Skunk Works, like what would Advance Publications do with this new thing called The Internet? But my interview, at the time, I was also offered the very first job at The Wall Street Journal, from Neil Budde, who was the first editor and publisher of The Wall Street Journal Interactive. And I was like, "I gotta go to the Wall Street Journal, this is huge." But my interview with Advance was this, they had been doing these experimental projects with the MIT Media Lab, and they were publishing a hyperlocal community newspaper in... Jersey City is a South Asian, Indian community, and they were publishing on these duplex printers in Indian grocery stores, and Delis in Jersey City, local news from India.

0:41:28 EO: And it was an experimental project of The Jersey Journal, with the MIT Media Lab. And they had these duplex printers, and you could go in, and we had signs, you could go into the Deli and you can push the big red button, and you'd get cricket scores from Mumbai. And we had a little newsroom where we were putting this together. And so, I went through my interview, and Jeff and this guy Kevin Cook, they get a call like... The printer is broken down down at the Deli. So

they'd drive me down to a neighborhood in Jersey City, and we all sit on a sticky floor of an Indian Deli, trying to fix this printer as I'm getting interviewed. And I thought, "This is just too weird. I'm going here. Screw the Wall Street Journal. This is like, I don't know what these guys are doing, but it seems like they own a lot of media. [chuckle] So I'm gonna go here and sit on sticky floors." And that's where I got started and I'm always grateful to the team there, Jeff, and the new houses for giving us a broad berth to experiment and try things in some really great early projects that we did.

0:42:26 DM: And I think he's definitely... Say what you will about Jeff Jarvis, I think that what he has done with CUNY's J-School Program is probably the most innovative J-School program that I've seen in the country with maybe a few exceptions here and there, like outside of New York.

0:42:43 EO: I think they're a great example of something that is a lesson learned, which is it's harder to change something that exists than to start it up from scratch.

0:42:50 DM: That's true.

0:42:50 EO: And I think that the problem with saving journalism... And I'm tired of saving journalism. I think journalism is a part of this country that would be... It won't be saved, it will emerge for the function that it needs to be through some other players. They didn't start out to save a program, to save a revenue stream, to save a certain faculty job. They just started a program based on the needs of the year they started it and they've had the flexibility to grow that with that perspective and it's a very, very good lesson. As you know, I've taught in journalism schools for a long time. So it's transforming the academy, might just be more archaic and difficult than transforming newspapers.

0:43:43 DM: That's a bold statement. I mean, not inaccurate, by the way. They're both huge challenges.

0:43:47 EO: Well, and they're both quite honestly, and I'm born and bred from these people professionally, which is, I have the humility today, 'cause I left the world to understand the part of the biggest implement to changes is that when you're a professor at a university, you're big man on campus and when you're editor of a newspaper, you're big man in the town.

0:44:05 DM: Yeah.

0:44:06 EO: And it's very, very hard for people who are constantly being told... It's very hard for a certain class system to understand that the world is changing behind them. Their natural gesture is to hold onto what they have. They continue to hammer that through, rather than realize what it is. That is a thing of revolutions, that is the things of cultural change, and that is the thing that I think is happening in media right now. And that's the shakeout. But I'm an optimist. I'm an eternal optimist that I think, just like, out of the destruction will come the next seed of what actually is needed.

0:44:42 DM: Absolutely. And I think we're seeing a little bit of that here and there right now though. I think it's still burgeoning ideas, and not just in VR and AR, but in just how people are leveraging technology that people give a shit about, whether it be something as millennial-oriented

as SnapChat, or something as old-school as email. There's fascinating things happening in both those mediums that are creating really interesting journalism news. But let's go back to... So you go to New House, you're working with Jeff Jarvis and team there, instead of the Wall Street Journal. What comes out of that?

0:45:16 EO: Okay. Well, first of all, my roots baby. New Jersey online comes out of that.

[chuckle]

0:45:23 DM: NJ Online.

0:45:24 EO: Nj.com baby. And I was passionate about that, 'cause I'm a Jersey Girl. When you get down to it, those are my people, this is where I'm from, I am who I am, and that's my people and I love my state. We brought the New House newspapers online and we created an information service. But what we did was really special there. I have two projects that I cared about was that... We started to tackle news, but I was always more, let's say, more of the feature editor. And I went around and I traveled to the various papers and tried to talk to them about what to do online, and I had a very interesting opportunity. There were two projects that I love that were features. The first one was something called the Yuckiest Site on the Internet, which was the first kids' science education site on the internet. There was no kids' content and science content...

0:46:12 DM: That was the beginning of the internet, so yeah.

0:46:15 EO: Yeah, it was new, and there was nothing on the internet, so it was us to put something there. It was multiple cool sites of the day. I was in Newsweek when I launched this thing. I was famous in the '90s. [chuckle] It was good. It was my rock star years. I burned out. And now, I'm having Bundaberg Ginger beer.

0:46:30 DM: It's still delicious.

0:46:32 EO: So, the Yuckiest Site on the Internet was done in conjunction with the Liberty Science Center. And part of the idea is that you would partner with local institutions to create special content about those places. And so, we were building something called Cockroach World with this woman, Betty, the Bug Lady, who used to be on Letterman and stuff, who did bugs. And the way we created the logo for Yucky was, we went and we collected dead cockroaches from the science center and we scanned them in. So you actually didn't have graphics, that were like an absolute scan of a body part, so it was a really yucky cockroach. And then, he was brilliant. He took shampoo and wrote on the scanner and made this great logo.

0:47:15 EO: Anyway, it was a wonderful site. It got a lot of attention and it showed how a local organization could partner to show a local institution how they could enter into the internet as well. Yucky became franchised. I think it later became part of Discovery. But the other project I did at Advance that was so cool was something called rockhall.com for the launch of the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame. And this was really a pivotal moment in my career, which is... So I go out to Cleveland, and so what do I do with a plain dealer?

0:47:50 EO: A lot of reasons why you couldn't touch the newsroom then was because of guild issues. So, chains wanted their papers to experiment with these new forms to try to figure out what to do, but literally when I walked through the newsroom, I had a paper bag on my hand and I was like, "Oh my god, she's from corporate." It's very serious and guild issues remain both an important part of a workforce, but also an impediment to chain. And that's a whole other conversation. But anyway, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was opening, so I said, "Let's go to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and bring them online", 'cause they didn't know what the internet was either. So we launched rockhall.com and the center piece of that site was a debate about the 500 songs that made Rock N Roll. And it was a forum and people were going back and forth and I had always experimented with online community, it was a passion for me when I got into this stuff. Anyway, it was a big weekend for the opening, I remember wearing a backpack with a scanner and shooting five photographs and uploading them and writing live reports that were like 25 minutes late.

0:48:53 DM: Isn't it like [0:48:54] ?

0:48:54 EO: Yeah. Anyway, it was pretty primitive, but we did it. I remember...

0:49:00 DM: I remember that, I remember the opening of Rock N Roll. Yeah.

0:49:02 EO: Yeah. Yeah. So that was a big weekend. I stayed at the hotel. I met I. M. Pei and he said to me, "Did you see my building?" And he said, "You must walk here to see my building." He was like a little kid who was so excited about his building and I said, "I love your building." And we had this wonderful exchange and I went and I walked and he said, "You have to look at it from this vantage point." So the next day I went and I looked and it's like, "My new buddy, I. M. Told me to look at the building from over here."

[laughter]

0:49:30 EO: But anyway, I was busy, so Monday morning I get back to and I open the tool for learning for the rest of your life, which is the Sunday New York Times at daylight and there was a full page in the Weekend Review about a place called the Internet where people are discussing back and forth, and debating the top 500 songs in Rock N Roll. And it was full of quotes and debates and all this kind of thing, from what I had built out there. And it was like, "Wow, full page in the Weekend Review in the New York Times," I'm a made woman. Until Tuesday when my phone rang at my desk and it was somebody from the New York Times saying, "Did you work on that? Do you wanna come over and talk to us about our website? We need to maybe build a website." [chuckle] And so, that's actually how I landed up at the New York Times, was through that project. I left Advance and New House and that point and took a job at the New York Times. And I was there for the launch team and I was the Content Development Editor, which I lovingly say, I was responsible for anything that wasn't shoveled from the newspaper. So for all the experiments, all the stuff that we did was different, was my portfolio than just shoveling the paper online. And that was a great time.

0:50:43 DM: I can imagine the freedom that's allowed in the early days of the internet, because no

one gave a shit or no one knew what was going on.

0:50:52 EO: Exactly.

0:50:53 DM: But I imagine also, like the New York Times and any corporation isn't stupid, right, they catch onto things after a bit. Was there a point where, you're having fun, you launched newyorktimes.com, you're having fun putting content up there that maybe... Was Lelyveld the editor still at that point?

0:51:13 EO: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

0:51:14 DM: So he's doing the thing with print, probably not paying much attention to the internet 'cause who cares.

0:51:18 EO: But the dark day comes when they notice.

[laughter]

0:51:21 DM: Right. Were you there for that dark day?

0:51:24 EO: There were many different kinds of dark days and there were many many bright days as well. But you're absolutely right, I think what was under the radar and outside the domain, that's why my portfolio was so special. It was sacrosanct, the newspaper and I'll describe a couple of stories, 'cause maybe they're fun and they haven't been told. When the New York Times launched, it was a rectangle, it was a GIF with very pristine lettering that was the New York Times font, all treated like one GIF. And the control over what would launch was so heavy. And I had great admiration for Kevin McKenna, and Martin, and Bernie [0:52:00] , a lot of the people who were there, who managed that relationship with the paper, and played by the rules and kept it in the rules, but allowed some of us to sketch outside the lines. But when it launched, it was... For those of us who had been around, it was like, "That's a shitty website." [laughter] But it's the New York Times and it went through all the blessing.

0:52:23 EO: And so, One of the funny thing was, there's actually a picture of the 20th anniversary, it was up recently and I'm in the back row of everybody pushing the button and probably the only woman in the picture. The gal on the balcony. That first GIF, that picture of the Times was so bad, so another fellow, Will Tacy, who works at Good Magazine today, he's a really great fellow who was on the launch team, we're like, "We have to do something, we need to get alt links". Because the graph, you gotta have the GIF, you have to have the alt link if the graph doesn't load so people have some place to go. So we did this like this 11th hour, long pass of cashing in any reputation we had or favors to anybody just trying to explain it. These were the things that you loved about the Times, this is my accomplishment, that there were little text links for everything that was in the picture, so people who didn't get the picture could get to the content. That was the kind of win that you would celebrate there, because you were so forced to do things a way and then you had to go around the sides to do what was right for the user experience.

0:53:36 DM: Right. I'm guessing that back then... Well, your launch was what? '96? Is that right?

0:53:41 EO: Yeah, '96.

0:53:42 DM: So back then, thinking about how the Internet worked and how things were coded, the idea of a CMS was pretty foreign, what was the concept for the first version of the New York Times online? You said it's a GIF, what is like... I dare to use the word strategy, because I don't even know if that existed back then.

0:54:02 EO: Oh, there was strategy I'll tell you.

0:54:04 DM: Okay.

0:54:05 EO: The strategy I think was... Listen, they did a lot of amazing things. The problem with being the New York Times is that everybody wants to do what the New York Times does. And it's like, you don't know... And when I was there, I was trotted around, did a lot of public speaking. It was probably... I fit the bill to get out and about. Everybody would raise their hand and the local newspaper, "Miss Osder, tell us what you're doing at the New York Times. And I'd say to everybody and to this day, I still say it is, "This is what we do at the New York Times, but this is not necessarily what you need to do, you need to understand the strategy that's right for your community."

0:54:44 DM: Right.

0:54:45 EO: Our strategy was one that came from a position of privilege, great resource. They had a fairly robust AOL experience, so this was driving on the side of that. And a very, very, talented team that had done tremendous innovation on AOL that's forgotten. Because...

0:55:02 DM: Because they were on AOL before they were on the World Wide Web.

0:55:05 EO: Yeah, the AOL team. So this was the web team coming in. I think it was to get it up there and to see what happened. I think that was more or less it. And then there were the traumas about circulation yelling about giving it away for free. They were fun things that no one really knew about. You had to pay if you were international, but it never really worked and we all knew that. You could just get in if you wanted to, but we put up the pay wall anyway. 'Cause it's hard to get it to work. And then there were... They tried some things that were innovative, which was it updated three times a day. There was a guy named Jean Claude who would come from the wire service who would do the 8:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 6:00 PM updates. So there were three short reports that were done off season. A big part of the day was always the page one meeting, when you go around the room, at that stage of the game, it was 18 white guys sitting around trying to figure out what to put in the upper right hand corner of newspaper, so I always looked at it. [laughter] Nobody is gonna fire me, because I'm unemployable at this point. I work for myself.

0:56:13 EO: That's the way I used to look at it. I'd go in there... 'Cause I was looking at the internet and I'm seeing like, "You've got 18 guys sitting here trying to figure out the A1. What's gonna go in

the upper right hand corner?" It's important. But I'm going, "Wow, I got the entire world out there and I got this web thing down the street." I think that they needed to crack online advertising. I think they were very, very innovative early on in ad units. I think Martin was a real leader in forming the IAB and trying to come up with revenue models. But it was also a scene of a lot of real misses. And this is from my own career. I mean in the course of being there, jobs that I've turned down, because I was at the sacrosanct New York Times, the best one was as we were building a version of the book review with IBM and Jeff Bezos had come in. And this was when he was first starting and ended up contacting me and asking me if I wanted to be creative director of Amazon.com. And I said, "No, thank you. I'm building the New York Times book review with IBM." And so, the rest is history. I'm still working for a living. But... [chuckle]

0:57:15 DM: You mentioned how Martin helped build the IAB. The early days of... I don't want to spend too much time on this, but I think about the impact that this has today. The early days of newspapers and magazines having revenue and specifically the creation of the banner ad, which I think we all look back on and we can poo poo. And I do everyday, 'cause I fucking hate banner ads. I think that there had to be something. Something had to come up that people were gonna use.

0:57:44 EO: Yeah.

0:57:45 DM: And so, this is what they came up with. Thinking back on it, since you were there and I wasn't in media at the time. What were people thinking? [chuckle] For a lack of better phrase.

0:58:02 EO: What was interesting is, I can't really speak because it was fairly Chinese wall in the sense that I was on the editorial team.

0:58:07 DM: Right.

0:58:07 EO: But it does evolve further, because then I started the first product team.

0:58:12 DM: But there was concern back then. I remember even I was in J-School in like '98, it was a couple of years after that launch. The conversation of advertising and advertising infringing on editorial and that line and people were really paranoid about it, which is weird, but if you think where advertising is going today, it's way more scary. But...

0:58:26 EO: At that point, there were no systems and platforms available, so you had to make everything yourself. But if you think about it, the separation of advertising and content was really driven through by the creation of ad platforms. And so you simply had separate content management systems for modernization versus content.

0:58:48 DM: Yeah.

0:58:49 EO: Personally, in my career now, what I'm interested about is bringing those two systems closer together and using the same programmatic technologies to automate the programming of content across digital networks. I think that has to happen.

0:59:00 DM: Especially given the different audiences that come to sites, who they don't even know they're on.

0:59:04 EO: Yeah. It was those two systems that kept it apart and allowed for that wall to exist. I think it's the lack of discussion across that wall that failed to find a better way of doing things. If that's... So what were people thinking? Was thinking, is you can't give away the New York Times for free, we've got to make a buck. So how we gonna make a buck? We're gonna do this.

0:59:25 DM: Right. Yeah, yeah.

0:59:26 EO: And the question how to mount classifieds and other kinds of systems for online consumption were a big issue. There were no revenue models. Somebody had to put a stake in the ground and the New York Times was an influential player in putting a stake in the ground. How the industry took it and evolved is wasn't the Times agenda. I mean it became a part of trade associations and so forth. Opposite of the IAB, I formed the online news association for editors later on. So I've been on the other side of the house. I don't mean to shy away from the question of modernization, but I was really asked to figure out how to engage new audiences. And I'll share when I started a product group there, there was a couple of great editorial pieces that we did there that are forgotten. What I find that's interesting is that the only thing you know in news is that a great story is a great story, it's what's engaging. And we did some amazing projects editorially and Cyber Times was a section that talked about internet stuff, and there was a great journalist named Peter Weiner and we did something. We did, it was an AIDS simulator, where you could put in your personal habits and you could get a simulation of your likelihood of contracting AIDS.

1:00:40 EO: Something like that today would fall under the category of data journalism. It had a form of visualization and it was important. It was the kind of story that because you could use interactive technology you could allow somebody to personalize the story to understand how it impacted them. And we did a number of journalistic pieces that they always say were wonderful precursors of data journalism, visualization, simulations, just all kinds of great editorial projects and they're just lost in time now, they're not there anymore. It's rather sad. What troubles me about the news business and a lot of the discussion in the news community is that, news is what is new and the ability to do what a good business person does, which is your due diligence or academic researcher to say your literature review. They constantly think they're reinventing something, but they're just recycling what is done before without the discipline of taking lessons from the past and moving them forward. I think that's where a lot of innovation in journalism has stalled.

1:01:36 EO: But, you might like the story of the redesign, so as your charming [1:01:39] of the New York Times, which was, I started the first product group, which we had to call because of the tension between ad and edit, things weren't working. So, I proposed to Martin that we create this product development group. I took the methodology from consulting firms that I had researched and design shops and then we called it the Geneva, Switzerland. It was the neutral land between ad and editorial. And I had the first cross functional team, I had an engineer, I had a product manager, I had somebody from advertising, I had somebody from editorial. And we would take on those projects that needed to be developed in between, where there was either a new revenue model or a new opportunity that was weird that was coming in. Like Microsoft wanted to give us X amount of

dollars to do Y, but nobody did it there, so we had to spin up or create a new project.

1:02:28 EO: The redesign was the journey from that rectangular GIF to the precursor of every website used today, which is a scrolling site with columns and more of a column layout. And it took almost 18 months and it was about 18 sections and we meticulously did one after another after another and applied the learning from the first to the second to the third. And it was a tremendous design project between the design team, but in order to change the interface, you really needed to get that buy in. And, I think that's where we started building sites that look like they are today. And what I like about that project is that it really showed the kind of collaboration that's required between people of different disciplines to get consensus and move things forward. It also reminds me of the other points in my career, how long it takes to get that consensus and how fast the market moves while you're doing it. So, whereas we might have started out our redesign is the first people moving in that direction, we might have finished up after a lot of other people. There was a couple of other... I'll share one other Time story that's dear to me, which is I also ran the online community there and I said I'd done a lot of that in the past. And, so I ran the forums, and they were...

1:03:40 EO: There's a big story this week about commenting leaving websites. And these were forums were a separate section of the site where we had topics that New York Times readers would be passionate about and they were moderated by experts, like Cox and [1:03:52] [REDACTED] and these puzzle builders, Brinkley, the American historian was [1:04:00] [REDACTED]. I'd call up these experts and I'd get them to wanna do this and I explained to them how to be forum moderators. I was at the Times for five years and I have a lot that I accomplished there that might sound interesting, but the story I told you about those text links under the launch of the New York Times and this story is the other thing that I treasure, that I think were my true accomplishments and this is how institutionalized a place could be.

1:04:20 EO: They were doing a 10-part series, one of these I'm gonna get a Pulitzer series' on the downsizing of America. And, I convinced at that page one meeting that, "Could we have some accompany discussion forums on the website for people to talk about the story that was gonna run over these weeks?" And so we got a little promo box in the story in the newspaper that said, "Anytime the tail could wag the dog, it meant so much to us, 'cause they didn't care about us." Got our little box come on and comment on this thing. And so, the first week went by and we're getting all these great comments and two, three, all these weeks go on. And, I would literally print out the best of those comments, I would take a highlighter and I would highlight anything interesting and I would walk... We were in the Hippodrome building up a few blocks away from the Times and I'd walk down the block, the three blocks to the newspaper and walk around the newsroom and go, "Does anybody care?"

[laughter]

1:05:12 EO: I'm telling a yarn now, but it was like, "Does anybody care? Here's what your readers are saying." [chuckle] And so, at the... It was a nine part series, I think, but in the very last story, they actually use some quotes from the online story and followed up with people that they found from the forums. For me, those two, teeny little things are what I'm most proud of, the work I did at the New York Times, because they represent where the tail wag the dog, where you showed people how it could be different. We improved the journalism with that second experience, and the first

one is, we improved the user experience significantly and they were two small things, but they showed what I spent five years working for those two small things really. Then I thought it was time to get the hell outta there. [laughter] It took a long time.

1:06:00 DM: So, before we get to the transition out of media, I wanna briefly touch on teaching, because I met you around this time.

1:06:08 EO: Yes.

1:06:09 DM: Before you left The Times, but, briefly...

1:06:11 EO: Yep.

1:06:11 DM: You both got me my job with The Times and my next job that became my career, which is...

1:06:15 EO: Very good decisions.

1:06:16 DM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, on your part and mine.

1:06:17 EO: But very good efforts on my end.

1:06:20 DM: So thank you. I have a career. That's nice. Teaching is interesting, but thinking about Columbia in 1998, specifically, because it's an interesting time, 'cause that year that I started there was the year they opened the Center for New Media, at the time and it was a big deal. The internet was becoming this thing that people realized was gonna be important or whether or not people thought it was a phase or a fad is another thing, but they were investing money into it. And universities were... They started the Center for New Media and you had an interesting group of people who were teaching at it, you being one of them. But walking into it, you were someone who at the time... You were one of the people who had launched multiple publications, not just one, and one of which is one of the best known news organizations in the world.

1:07:10 EO: Yeah.

1:07:13 DM: Thinking about what you walked into there, and I'm not asking you to disparage or say anything bad or good about it. I'm just curious. What was your take on... Here's this New Media program, they're trying to teach people about the internet, but no one knows, fucking anything about the internet, 'cause it's brand new.

1:07:28 EO: And you have this... It's basically... I'll say a couple things. The first thing is, potentially the greatest privilege I've had over the years is to be a teacher. And the greatest gifts that I've had is the people that I've taught and to see where their careers are going. When I actually started teaching at NYU and did their first, New Media Online Journalism Course, and I had two classes there before I moved up to Columbia and I developed a class that was slightly different and it's really what a lot of people still teach today, which is it took, for me, it's like... I was doing that in

the '90s... I'm brilliant.

1:08:04 EO: But I had people basically develop new news products just like I had done at Poynter and I'd make them write the equivalent of an MRD, a Markup Requirements Document, so a bit of a business case. Come up with an idea and talk about an audience and whether they like it. So it was fundamentally different than reporting. It was more thinking about the packaging and the consumption of things was the course that I loved to teach. And what I liked about NYU is nobody knew what the hell I was doing. So what I did was, is I got all these great ideas from my students and then I could bring them to my work at The Times and I taught for that reason. And I don't really know where NYU's programs went, but then I went up to Columbia and it seemed like Columbia's a big name, and having been to the other Columbia, you always feel like that's the Columbia.

1:08:49 DM: Right.

1:08:49 EO: It was like when I went through the Pearly Gates there, it was a big deal. And I knew the program that they had there. I think part of the issue with journalism education and I'm not gonna talk about Columbia specifically though, I had a lot of experience. I wasn't touching the classes where all this institutionalizing of teaching was going on. I had two perspectives that have not changed over the year. One is, do not teach people to use software. If you're in journalism school, teach them to tell stories and force them to figure out the software if they want to tell them digitally. And so, my personal feeling was is that everybody was wasting by teaching them how to use software, when it was a rare opportunity to teach people how to shine light in dark places.

1:09:33 EO: Now, I wasn't potentially maybe doing that, because I did these product classes, but they weren't product classes to teach you tools, they were strategy classes to get you to understand an audience, to figure out how to reach them, and create experiences that were special to them and identify the stories that mattered to them. That, to me, is timeless. The software has come and gone. So, the only thing I'll say that's disparaging or puzzling is, is that the fetishization of technology and software by journalists is puzzling to me. There is no... There are two things that I will find that are never... Like the worst things, which is journalists talking about technology who are real journalists and trying to figure it out and I could name many who've delved into these areas and you sound like a fucking moron, so stop. Okay? And the second one is, journalists talking about business models, who don't know them. And I appreciate everybody trying, but maybe there are too many journalists or not enough working journalists, but those are specializations.

1:10:38 DM: Right.

1:10:39 EO: And the gift of a journalism education is to learn how to file a FOIA document, understand a somebody whose story that's not going. It is not... It is to reach people who need information. It is nice to create things that surprise and delight, but you must inform and you have to entertain. And I am so traditionally invested in journalism and my work I've continued... I've done things like work with ProPublica, Investigative News. I've done a lot of really dig deep, big J work over the years, because I care about it. But it's not my revenue stream.

1:11:17 DM: Right, right.

1:11:17 EO: And so my trouble with the schools are, is that they fetishize technology and the foundations. They fetishize innovation, they fetishize that you can invent a new business. Just tell good stories, like the California job box. You show up, do the story first. Everything else will follow. But the journalism schools to me have wasted cycles upon cycles upon cycles trying to innovate, invent, change.

1:11:45 DM: I don't think they understood New Media.

1:11:48 EO: There's nobody working in them who has any experience. So that's what you need.

1:11:50 DM: Exactly. No one knew what they were doing back then, which brings us into where, if you leave The Times and you go to iExcel, which at the time, I think for one day was like the biggest consultancy in the world before MarchFirst took over and whatever the next one was...

1:12:06 EO: It was the great years of the Internet consultancy. I actually have a funny little story. I quit the Times to go be the Head of Product at the Wall Street Journal, that job came back to me. I turned it down, like the worst thing you can ever do in your career folks out there, is you don't accept the job and then walk away from it. But it was just like the New House thing was like, "I don't want to do another newspaper, I want to do something different." So I went to an internet consulting firm, it was called iXL, it's actually RazorFish today.

1:12:32 DM: It is. Which I have worked at both since Sun. And, if I remember correctly, your role was in the Biz Dev side of Media and Entertainment. Is that right?

1:12:41 EO: Yeah, so I eventually ran the Media and Entertainment practice which was... What is Biz Dev? You're really in a consulting parlance, you're really the client partner. You're the senior strategist. It's somewhat sales and business development, but it's also leading and designing the projects, I think at the highest level.

1:13:00 DM: So, going from the world of media and especially whatever digital media meant at a place of New York Times Journal back in 1999 to a company that was huge, right? It was a global company at that point, what's that shift like for you? I mean, that's a different lifestyle, it's a different job.

1:13:21 EO: A lot of getting a little long in the tooth is understanding who you are and what you like. I think at the time I didn't know so well, but I like variety is the spice of life. I get bored easily and that's why the Journal was a... The person who went down to take that job and other jobs I've turned down have had phenomenal careers and they're still at places. You get a lotta opportunity if you're at a brand, but, I'm running around behind the scenes a little bit. Why I excel in consulting was so exciting, for me, was because I could apply the knowledge I had to people who are paying to listen to me versus working at a place that wanted me there, 'cause I had done something, but didn't want to listen to what they needed to do.

1:14:11 DM: Right. Oh, so frustrating.

1:14:15 EO: So, the idea that I could... In the course of my time at iXL, my clients were phenomenal. The Financial Times, NewsCorp, all of their papers. In London, I was the first person to ever bring all their editors together. Time Inc., working on a strategy to bring together all of their financial properties.

1:14:31 DM: I worked on a Time Inc. Thing with you.

1:14:35 EO: Yeah, probably. It was Time Inc. Financial network, so it was code named "Project Phoenix."

1:14:40 DM: Yes.

1:14:43 EO: NPR, Washington Post and on and on and on. So in a few years, I actually had an apartment and I worked in London, I worked in Germany. So, I traveled. I built up a strong business in New York. And I got to see lots of other publishers rather than large, well-known newspapers. I had seen local brands. My passion was local, but to look at a magazine and then you started to have the phenomena of the pure play internet site. So people who were gonna try to go at this on their own. And so, it gave me a broader understanding. It taught me a lot of things.

1:15:23 EO: The idea of having a methodology to break down a problem, to understand how strategy leads into implementation, to understand the important decisions you have to make up front, to build in a lot of the planning. A lot of what is now considered too rigorous a process in an agile software development world, but at the end of the day, it's what you're compressing in an agile world to understand all the pieces of it. So I learned a lot there. The [1:15:48] [REDACTED] was something interesting. I'll tell you, a bit of a yarn, but I think I was at The Four Seasons in Santa Barbara at an iXL management offsite. And I remember I was swimming in the pool with that guy, I forget, that Irish actor who plays James Bond. I was like, oh celebrity sighting.

1:16:09 DM: Pierce Brosnan?

1:16:11 EO: Yes, Pierce Brosnan. He was cute, he was with his family. I was like, "Oh, I'm so fabulous. So incredibly fabulous." We had our big meeting the day before and it was like the stock was 36. I think it was 36 cents by the time I got out of the pool. [laughter] I think we all had to pay our way out of the hotel and find our ways home. Things fell out very, very quickly. Fact checkers, I'm telling a bit of a yarn, but that's how it felt. It was just like, it was very interesting. I'll go on... With iXL, really, we all hung on for a little while and then I think I left.

1:16:50 DM: You went to Yahoo, right?

1:16:51 EO: No, I didn't go... Long story where I went. I actually did a little consulting. I'll just say that during that period of time, I consulted for a company called Applied Semantics that developed AdSense that was later sold to Google. I chose cash, not equity.

[laughter]

1:17:07 DM: So first, turning down Amazon and then turning down... Oh, okay.

1:17:09 EO: And I was working on my passion today, if we really talk about what I'm today in terms of machine learning and automation and where things are going is, I was doing auto-categorization, summarization and metadata extraction and trying to create intelligent middle wear and content management systems. So, basically automate out editorial processes. And that's what I was working on. I picked it up as a consulting job. And then I did something weird. I applied for a night fellowship, which is a journalist's sabbatical and I became the first night fellow who had digital work, and I ended up moving to... In 2001, I moved to Palo Alto to spend a year at Stanford University, which was really how I rode out the bubble. The other thing was just, as we're all New Yorkers here, my moving day was 9/11. And I was very blessed not to be on 93, because I was on the next flight and it was like an Expedia choice of like what do I pick? And the the world really did change, and it's very easy for everybody to forget just what the world was at that day. It was at the same time catastrophic, but also beautiful, how everybody came together in the city.

1:18:25 DM: That's very true.

1:18:26 EO: And I felt very lucky that I actually was still here, because then I left, it was very strange for those of us who were New Yorkers when we finally got out there to spend a year in paradise when everything was going on here. But it was a good year, and it was a good sabbatical for me, and it was a great program. And I had a chance while I was there to air my brain out a little bit. I took the second year at the business school. So I really got proper MBA style training. I did a lot of work in human computer interaction with the lab there. And I did some significant work, I think, that forward my perspective about the disciplines that we're working in and allowed me to see other businesses.

1:19:03 EO: But the 101 from San Francisco to Palo Alto, it was like there were like tumbleweeds going across at that year. I mean everything was dead. Every bit, the billboards were falling off the things. The socket falling off the puppet. It was bad. But it was a great year for me. So that's where I... I was very, very lucky and blessed to get to do that. And things were not good afterwards still a year later, and I landed up getting a job to move to Los Angeles to be a professor at the Annenberg school at USC. And that's how I landed in LA where I live today.

1:19:35 DM: That makes sense. Yeah, yeah.

1:19:36 EO: I taught for two years full time there. And I encountered the same things. I was supposed to be their Internet expert. I did my thing. And then I left, because it was a choice to stay or to go. And this is the the key point, which is if I were... There's nothing nicer than to be at the academy. It's cushy cushy. And they had some cool stuff there. They were doing early VR stuff at Annenberg. Tremendous, tremendous institution. But, do you stay in something and you realize... I got 14 years ago teaching that job, which is what I would not have done or not have learned or not know if I'd stayed there and kept teaching people everything I knew before.

1:20:21 EO: And so, I left. I went back to develop their online communities program. In the

communication school, I went back and developed the curriculum and taught online community building for a couple of years on the side. But I left Annenberg and I went to Overture, which was acquired by Yahoo. And Overture was competing with the technology that Applied Semantics had brought to Google, and it was... We were working on a product called Content Match, which was the the competitor to AdSense for Google. And so, it was interesting and I really crossed over from being very editorially minded, although I've dealt with business issues all over the place in terms of consulting that I was actually working on dynamic modernization products that were the basis of what you'd find in double click and all kinds of ad servers. So I really wanna learn the business side.

1:21:11 EO: I went from Overture when they started the media group at Yahoo. I flipped over in Santa Monica under Lloyd Braun, they did a tremendous job building this media organization there that... We had a great team and I ran product development for the news channels. And it was amazing job for four years. And it's so funny, Yahoo was a heartbreak. There's been a lot of people writing about it. But the group of talent that it was amassed in Yahoo between 2004 and 2007 or eight was just unbelievable. They are running everything today. But no one really talks about...

1:21:49 DM: Who are they?

1:21:49 EO: Well I think, probably the number one person was probably a Jeff Weiner who's running Linked In. I think Chad, who's running Etsy. There's so many people that are just in the ranks of a lot of companies that have actually really transformed the internet. And there was a time Yahoo was falling apart, because it wasn't performing well as a business, but it was a true innovation incubator. We bought Flickr. We were doing really interesting things.

1:22:23 DM: It's such an interesting point of view, given where it is today, which is like the flailing... I guess the flailing 'Former Darling of the Internet' that has lost its way. And looks like AOL doesn't have a sense of place anymore in the world we live in.

1:22:47 EO: Yeah, I tried to be... What I described it was, as an incredible incubator of innovation, we got to do lots of stuff. As a business, it wasn't performing well because the the famous memo was the peanut butter memo that Yahoo was spread too thin across too many things. It also was in a fundamental warfare I think between their search business and their content businesses. And what was interesting from a platform perspective is, a lot of what you can do with content can be built on top of search dynamically or you could build it more traditionally. And that was a fundamental rub. But for Yahoo, we did great projects there and they were all over the company. So, it's like the party disbanded and everybody went other places to do what I think was really the transformation of Web3 Dot0. Those people are just sitting in jobs all over the place that have built other companies.

1:23:44 EO: The sad part about Yahoo for me, about where it is today, is that, I wish it hadn't been such a hard problem to decide whether it was a media company or a technology company. There are two things, and I don't wanna disparage anybody that I would say that were systemic of the issues there. The first one was that the founders always had too much control of the business when it scaled. I didn't know them, but Jerry and David were present. Jerry walked away from the Microsoft deal, which would have been a great deal, hindsight is 20-20, but there was always something that... When a company becomes a public company and a lot of people work there, it's very hard when buck stops with individuals who claim founders' rights. It's almost like you have to resolve those at

some point.

1:24:35 DM: Well, there are things they were good at when Yahoo started, and then it evolves into a business. That's why Google brought in Eric Schmidt, right?

1:24:42 EO: Right. But it was similar to New House when I was there, we were having a party of creativity. We had the research lab, and they were doing amazing projects, and you could have creative conversations. I could dream stuff up, like I had did early in my career. We experimented, and then we all took the knowledge of that experiment and went other places.

1:25:00 DM: But I think that happens in waves on the internet. The idea about experimentation often happens, I think, when people aren't worried about things or, to your point earlier, innovation happens outside of traditional.

1:25:12 EO: Right.

1:25:13 DM: So, either you're doing it in your garage, or we can go as far back as... I don't know, with computers at least, the early 1900s, as to how computer innovation happened, but it often happens outside of those experiences, or there are places where you have the old [1:25:33] park. When you have that freedom and someone gives you that money just to make things... Google does this, devote a third of your time to something that's not a Google product.

1:25:46 EO: Yeah, and to try to reproduce that in a company is... I think Google's actually done a lot of that. I think that a lot of great companies have been... Things have spawned in Google, and then a lot of people have gone outside Google to do things. But I was gonna make a point that's a little bit the things that I think are choke points for success. The one is, in the training of people to innovate, the institutionalization of people who have never innovated or really done much, or just holding that seat, so tenure is a killer. The other killer to me, I think, and this is... I don't wanna get taken out by a bullet or never work again if I speak candidly, but maybe nobody will ever listen through this whole thing.

1:26:28 EO: The other thing that puzzles me is really represented by Marissa Mayer coming to Yahoo. I don't know her, I know nothing about her, but she represents to me a generation of very successful people that grew up in Google for a period of time. They are enormously wealthy, many of us working stiffs never got there, and they had maybe many jobs in that company as it grew, but they fundamentally lacked certain experiences that are essential to building great internet experiences and product. And because nobody had their hands on things. You got good about being in meetings and raising your voice and getting heard, and maybe taking on special projects, or currying favor, or working on something, but creating something that is lasting has one very basic thing that's UX for you, which is, you gotta attract an audience and you have to hold them there. Every product that was developed at Google was developed on the backbone of Google search. The giant, enormous, fantastically wonderful firehose of traffic that when spewed across any little toy that I wanted to make would give it a shot in hell. Google Plus aside, potentially.

1:27:50 Speaker 3: Google Wave also.

1:27:51 DM: Sure. [chuckle]

1:27:52 EO: But really when you look at the experience of somebody who has been many places and experimented, who has failed in the market, and I'm not talking just about me, versus somebody who's been one place and had a single experience. I think that's what's been harmful to Yahoo's leadership now, that it tried to swallow a Google pill, when it was never a Google. And that in building that company up the idea of, "I'm gonna make great products because they're great," without any understanding of what you call TAC, which was the fundamentals of any portals, Traffic Acquisition Cost, whatever that cost may be. Without understanding how to manage the acquisition of a customer and then the retention of a customer, and moving them down the funnel. And I don't know how you can understand that really, from a Google perspective, because you always had people coming in your front door.

1:28:45 DM: I would actually add, maybe take it to a larger point, [1:28:49] [redacted] sum up what we're talking about. If Yahoo is trying to be Google, Yahoo has lost the point of what Yahoo is, whatever it might be. If you're bringing back the news, if you're the New York Times, or you're newjersey.com, nj.com, how you design that site is gonna be different because of the different needs of the [1:29:09] [redacted] and the advertisers. And the problem with the internet is it's so... Not the problem with the internet, what you're talking about...

1:29:16 EO: It's a sad thing for me which is it's the world of lemmings, which is everybody wants to be what everybody else is. There's a couple sets of people. There's those people who belong in the garage, who are the true dreamers, they usually come in pairs, as much as we want to iconize the Steve Jobs...

1:29:36 DM: Jobs had Wozniak.

1:29:37 EO: Jobs was with Wozniak. Usually comes with a couple people because it takes... In the very beginning, I spoke about bringing people together. Collaboration is really the key to creativity and invention, and that's what I believe in my heart, and why making things is so exciting. But you have to know... You have to have a strategy, and strategy has become a bit of an empty word. But you have to know what you're trying to do, who you're trying to do it for, why you're trying to do it. You have to know who else has tried to do it, and you have to understand that lightning doesn't strike twice. So just like people come to you, people come to me and goes, "I wanna be the next BuzzFeed." They're still coming to me and saying, recently, "I wanna be the next BuzzFeed." It's like, it's a little old now, a little long in the tooth.

[chuckle]

1:30:20 DM: 'Cause you would be the next Snapchat, honestly.

1:30:20 EO: Okay, I wanna be the next Snapchat. I had one the other day that was BuzzFeed. I was like, "Okay whatever, we'll consult and I'll walk you off the ledge." But...

[laughter]

1:30:30 EO: That's what you do. I try to deliver people the truth and there's a lot of people who believe that an idea is new, because it's theirs and that they can do it because of who they are. I wanna laugh and say, "For a period of time, I thought I was the go-to gal of every ex-wife of a billionaire in LA who wanted to create a beauty site."

1:30:52 DM: Right.

1:30:53 EO: And they were streaming in and the number of lunches I had, over fine cups of tea, were served to me in palatial spaces was very interesting. And these were lovely people, bright people who were all going to say, "I would like to do something," which is essentially like, "Okay, so how're you gonna get an audience?"

1:31:12 DM: Right.

1:31:13 EO: And I think that's where what you do in UX has such grace, I think, which is to really care and have empathy for who you're using. To have empathy for the fact that people don't need all these choices, to have resilience enough to pick, to find wide space and wanna go there. That's what was magic over the course of this career for me. And that's really what I believe is gonna hatch solutions to a lot of things, especially in journalism that people are hand-wringing, are so bad. What's bad is, you don't get to be a white collar... That a journalist might just have to be a plumber before a journalist is a banker again.

1:31:56 DM: Yeah.

1:31:56 EO: And actually plumbers do really, really well and they provide a great service and...

1:32:00 DM: And it's not an easy job.

1:32:01 EO: And it's not an easy job and I think that, what really just saddens me is that, entrepreneurial work, solving hard problems for people, it takes a good amount of grit. If you don't have grit, take a job some place where you can say you work some place. People care more about where they are doing something rather than what they're doing. But if you care about what you do and not where you do it, then make something.

1:32:28 DM: That's a good point. And on that note, I think our time is up. We are, yeah, it's good. No, it's been great, cheers.

1:32:36 EO: Cheers, that was good.

1:32:40 DM: That's it for this episode of Story in a Bottle. I'd like to thank my guest, Elizabeth Osder, our editor Ben Glowey, and April Kendall, with Crystal Berkfield and Eric Bowie from [1:32:49] for their production support. If you enjoyed this episode, please leave a review for us in the iTunes store. Thank you and see you next time.

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