

Bittersweet goodbyes — Kaylie and Alex reflect on growth, struggles and saying farewell

Owen McDonnell and Ceci Heinen join graduating seniors Kaylie Sirovy and Alex Lassiter to look back on favorite stories, newsroom memories and personal transformations in this emotional sendoff episode of In The Know.

CECI HEINEN: Ceci Heinen.

MCDONNELL: And we are here for our final podcast of the year with the two graduating seniors, Kaylie Sirovy and Alex Lassiter.

ALEX LASSITER: Hey guys.

KAYLIE SIROVY: Hi everybody.

HEINEN: Prepare to cry. That's all I have to say.

SIROVY: Yes, it's gonna be very emotional.

HEINEN: Yes. Well, you guys have given so much to this desk. You're both my absolute idols. I just wanna start off with getting both of your histories, like where you started at the Daily and what your progression was to where you are today.

SIROVY: OK, well, let's flashback to end of sophomore year. It is spring semester and I decide to apply for the podcast reporter position on a whim. I was not a journalism major at this time. I was like, "What am I gonna do with my college career?"

And so I get hired by Alberto Gomez. Absolutely love him. What a king. And for two months, I write two stories being a podcast reporter. And then everyone on the desk graduates. Stella leaves, she used to be the other reporter, she leaves because I'm pretty sure she was studying abroad. And Alberto was like, "Do you want this position even though you haven't been here for very long?"

And I'm like, "Sure, don't worry about it. I got this." Then the summer of 2023, yes, I started being the podcast producer and it started off really rough. It was just me and Kindra. What a queen. I miss her.

I published stories, I create stories. Kindra reports. Yeah. It's just whole back and forth for the whole summer. And then we hire more people in the fall and it was better. But, yeah, that was kind of my history and then I've been here ever since.

LASSITER: And so then I come in a little bit later around late winter time-ish. I just, I used to be on the campus admin desk and I got so burnt out halfway through my junior year. I'm like, "I cannot take this anymore." And I come up to the editor in chief at the time, Alex Steil, and

I'm like, "Dude, either I've gotta switch desks or I've gotta leave because this is not, this is not working for me."

And he is like, "Oh, we don't have any open positions you wanna go on the podcast desk?" And I'm like, "Yeah, it sounds like it could be fun." So I talked to Saniah, who was on the podcast desk at the time, just to learn a little bit more about what it would entail. And she was saying like, "Yeah it's only one story every two weeks."

I'm like, "Whoa, you had me at that." Going down from two stories in one week to one story and two is like, ugh, it's so perfect. So I came over to the podcast desk, and it really allowed me to flex my creative muscles in ways that I had not yet anticipated.

I found out how much I love playing with audio and love playing with just talking to people for things that aren't Board of Regents meetings.

Yeah, I got to do a lot of fun stories. I got to talk to Dakota Lindworm, who ran for the US Olympic Marathon team.

SIROVY: That one was so good.

LASSITER: I got to talk to Sarah Marsh who was in a Hallmark movie and Marty Kind who works for Salesforce and he just has this obsession with Hallmark movies and so he charted whether or not AI could write the plot for one. It was so fun. I wouldn't get to do that type of stuff on admin, and so I got to be really creative with the ideas that I had.

And audio was such a fun way to actually produce them. Like I feel like the stories that I had, if I wrote them, they would not have had the same impact they did if I, as I had done them over audio.

SIROVY: And we just made the wine story on the YouTube. Which you got to do a wine tasting.

LASSITER: That was so fun. So fun! Not only was it my first video project at the Daily, but it was Drew Horton. That guy, I interviewed him for a separate story back in November about like weird holidays in November, and I talked to him about international Merlot Day.

And he's like, "You should come do a wine tasting later in the year." And I'm like, "OK, let's do it Drew." And then finally I reached back out to him. It had been in the works forever.

SIROVY: Yeah. I think we talked, we had at least one conversation like every month for this story.

LASSITER: Yeah. I had been like soft pitching it at least once a month. And then it finally gets to like March and I'm like, "Kaylie, do you mind if I do this, do mind if I do this for my, like my last story in April?" And you were like, "Yeah, let's go for it."

SIROVY: It was an incredible last story to do, like, come on.

LASSITER: It was really good. So I drove up there and we tasted different University of Minnesota wines because they breed their own grapes. Oh, it was so fun.

And I loved actually shooting the video too. I shot a standup for that story. I shot three different standups and it was just way too windy to use any of those.

SIROVY: Yeah. I saw them and I was like, “Oh, he’s trying his darndest right now.”

LASSITER: I, that last one that I recorded was perfect. It was literally so good. And then I listen back to it and it’s like, but so wind, it’s so wind.

SIROVY: So wind, so much wind. Yes.

MCDONNELL: As were like talking about stories that we enjoyed, what was the story that you guys were most proud of, that you worked on here?

SIROVY: I think one of the stories that I’m like the most proud of, because I think it was just really well done, it was when I was a reporter. I did a story on the solar vehicle project before they went on a race in Australia.

My roommate at the time was on the team and so she was talking to me about this. She was like, “Hey, you guys should totally interview us for this.” And I was like, “Heck yes.”

I didn’t interview her, but I interviewed the people that she got in contact with and I got to see the car and the shop and I got to talk to all the people and the person in charge and it was really fun.

And then I think another story that I am, I don’t know if I’m most proud of it, but I just, I had a blast making it because I just learned so much. This was back in the early days. One of the first stories I did as producer was the “Going Out, Coming In.” That was the queer history in Minneapolis.

They did an exhibition in The Mill City Museum at the time, and so I gotta talk to the people who like created it and like the history that they were walking me through. It was so fun. I learned about so many things.

And then, I loved putting your guys’ running stories together. Ceci did the 5K one and then Alex did the marathon one.

HEINEN: We had a running beat for a while.

LASSITER: That was really fun. We should have kept it going. We should have kept it running.

HEINEN: I know. Maybe I'll do it again next year.

SIROVY: Those were really fun to listen to. And then Owen's Timothée Chalamet. I loved hearing the interviews that you did.

MCDONNELL: They were, uh...

SIROVY: They were so excited.

MCDONNELL: They didn't really have a direction.

SIROVY: Nope, nope. They're just like, following as a mob.

HEINEN: Just Timmy.

MCDONNELL: People screaming.

SIROVY: Just Timmy.

LASSITER: The marathon stories were some of my favorite too, just because, the first one I wrote, I got to run. And it was, it was really fun because I got to experiment with the character of Marathon Alex.

HEINEN: Marathon Alex!

LASSITER: Where I just, you know, recording some of that natural audio like from the moment. And that was really fun. I, all the other stories I brought up too, I mean, like, there are so many, when I'm able to pour myself into my work like this, it's like, it's hard not to be proud of the stuff that comes out.

But the one that I enjoyed working on the most and it had like the most relevance to when I did it, was the one about the LA wildfires. I really liked that one, really liked the angle that I put on it too. Talking to a UCLA student who's from Minnesota and a U of M student who's from LA.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: I think that that was a really cool perspective to get on how both of them were impacted by it. And I really enjoyed it.

SIROVY: The UCLA student, she was like. This was her beat. This was her, yeah.

LASSITER: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was like what she was working on too.

SIROVY: Yeah.

LASSITER: And I think she was also the one who had been through another wildfire before. So it was like, it was really, really cool to learn about that from that angle.

And it's like, how the heck do you tie, like it's a big thing going on, but how the heck do you tie it to Minnesota? We're all the way across the country from each other.

HEINEN: Yeah. You should be really proud of your Board of Regents coverage too.

SIROVY: Yes.

HEINEN: Because that was an era of your life and you did a great job with it.

SIROVY: Did a great job.

HEINEN: And you sat through that, which yeah.

LASSITER: Yeah, sat through for sure. But yeah, it was, my whole beat back when I was on campus admin was the presidential search coverage and it was nuts, you guys, it was crazy. They had so many panels and so much stuff to do and so like in the middle of my midterm season I would just be going out and just like sitting there and like close to my final season too.

I'd just be going out and listening to them yap on for like an hour and a half and then they come to the final Q&A and it's me, Liv Hines, the campus admin editor, and Liz Navratil from the Star Tribune. And it's just the three of us sitting there for seven hours.

MCDONNELL: That's hilarious.

LASSITER: Listening to them get asked questions, and then they finally choose Cunningham. And all four of us, us three reporters and Cunningham, are all exhausted. We walk into the room for the press conference and then the video people, the ones who come for the local news stations, just go and they ask the exact same questions that were just asked during the seven hour Q&A.

And you could tell Cunningham just wasn't having it. She's like "Agh." And then Liz pipes up and she's like, "How are you feeling right now?" And I'm like, if you didn't ask it, I would have.

HEINEN: Yeah. That's commitment to your craft for sure. That kind of goes into the next question, which you might have just answered this. But, which story that you guys worked on was the hardest, either emotionally taxing, like you were really connected to it, or just most difficult to either produce or to write.

SIROVY: I don't know. I don't think I felt that for any of my, any of the stories I either produced or published. I just had fun with most of my stories. There was one that, it kind of reminds me I was talking about the SRTs and like how they actually work.

Do the professors read them? Can they read them? Or is it just like administrators? That one was pretty eye-opening because everyone kind of had opinions about it. And I know students have a lot of opinions about the SRTs. That one felt the most impactful for me, but I don't know if it was like I got like emotional with it.

It was just like, let's figure out how the U actually takes our surveys. And sometimes they can change depending on what the students say, but most of the time it's just like what the administrators, what the what the people say to then change the classes. It's sometimes the students, sometimes not.

LASSITER: The one I, I mean I've already vocalized the two, the LA wildfires one for sure. Because I actually like started tearing up on the call with them. And the presidential, like actual sitting in the room one, because that was like three separate stories in essence, where I just had to keep updating the subhead over and over and over again.

I had to skip all my classes for that day. I had like maybe a 30 minute break to update all the subheads and write. I was basically writing the story, I wasn't taking notes as the meeting happened, I was basically writing the story as the meeting happened over and over again, three separate times.

And so it got me emotional in the sense that my emotion was just kinda like, blaaahh, you know, like by the end of the day and my brain was a puddle of sludge.

SIROVY: It sounds like the breaking news lab that we have to do for news reporting and writing.

LASSITER: Yeah. Well that's actually, I was gonna bring that up because it's like if we wanted a different, there was one more that comes to mind because it was a breaking news story. It was a piece that Hannah Ward and I worked on together about the school shooting threat that happened. I think it was last year.

SIROVY: It was last year, yes.

LASSITER: And I, I think it was because I was assigned on the breaking news piece and then she did a bit more of the investigative work. But we were just both like scouring Facebook to find out about this guy's business, to find out about like, prior incidents.

And that took up, I was expecting it to take up a morning and it ended up taking up like six hours just to keep going through it. And it was worthwhile because it won a Best of Sno award. So that was good. That one was really tough and it was not something that I was expecting unlike the other two.

SIROVY: The only story that got a Sno award was something that Maya Atherly-Larsen did talking about seasonal depression. And I don't know if this is kind of at Spencer or at Amelia, but they didn't really submit podcast stories for a Best of Sno award. And the one time that they did, they did it like five times, but like one of the times that they did it got a Best of Sno award where I was like, well okay.

MCDONNELL: What is a Sno award for like people who are listening and don't know.

SIROVY: It's basically a recognition that the story was really well written or it was unique. It was a different perspective. Basically, they did a really good job. Sno is the hosting website. So you submit a story to Sno like one weekday for all like Monday through Friday.

And they like look over it, literally every other college newspaper publication, submits also through Sno. And they have like a big conference in the fall for this basically recognizing the best stories of the year.

But it's basically like, "Hey, you did a good job reporting." You did a good job like finding a good story. Being just basically a great reporter.

MCDONNELL: So we've been talking about the podcast room, we've been talking about The Daily, but we're gonna move a bit beyond that now.

SIROVY: OK.

MCDONNELL: And we're just gonna be talking about you guys and how you've changed since freshman year. How has your experience since freshman year been and what has changed about you to right now?

SIROVY: A lot. I am a completely different person. I may look the same, but I am very different. OK. Lemme take you back to fall semester of 2021. I apply to CSE, I get into it for Earth science. I am super excited.

My classes are so busy, I literally have no time for myself, um, except maybe on like Sundays or something. Because I'm taking physics, chemistry, calculus and I have a lab with chemistry then. Chemistry class, and then chem, chem lab, which was for like three hours and it was only one credit. I hated how they do that, but that's beside the point.

So fall semester 2021. I'm gonna get a little real with you guys. I was so depressed. So depressed, so homesick. I literally was like, "I cannot be here or I will lose my mind." And I'm like, someone take me out. And so my parents, if they're listening to this, they remember this. I kind of blacked out for most of it 'cause I was so depressed.

I say that joking now, but it was not a joking matter at the time. And so they're like, "Just make it through this semester and then we'll figure it out, you can change majors." I'm like, "But I really wanna be in earth science because I love the environment and I love volcanoes

and earthquakes.” I still do.

So I switch, I do a complete 180 and I’m like, “OK, lemme look at all the CLA classes.” And then I, I’m just scrolling through all the classes when like you can pick your schedules and I see one called intro to cultural studies and comparative lit.

And I read the description. I’m like, “Oh my god, this sounds like so much fun.” And I take the class and I fall in love with it. The stuff that I’ve learned is, is very, there’s a whole bunch of like topics, but they all get very specific and I relate to them so much.

Shout out Matt Hadley. He was the professor that I took and I absolutely love the man. If you can take one of his like, I call them funny classes because I know him, but he does like a comedy class. He does the monsters, robots and cyborgs class. He does an aliens class. Those were all very fun, but still I learned a lot.

Yeah. Then I start finding my niche. I’m like, “OK, this is what I like.” And then, yeah, I apply to be a reporter and I’m like, “OK, I actually also love journalism.” OK. And then I apply to be in the Hubbard School because you have to apply and they have to accept you. And I get in and I’m like, “Oh my god, thank you so much.”

But, freshman me would not have, she couldn’t imagine a future at that moment. Fall semester, she had no idea what the future would look like. And I think that was causing her the most anxiety because she had this opinion of herself. And it had to be at the top. It had to be a hundred percent.

And looking back, I’m like, I didn’t have to get, I didn’t have to reach for those good grades or I didn’t have to. And shout out, also, shout out to my roommate Annmarie. We were kind of in the same boat, but she actually stuck with it. So she’s a chem major right now. She’s graduating in that.

But we kinda went through, we kinda went through hell in that first semester. Because high school to college, especially at the U in CSE, the College of Science and Engineering. They expect you to be the best. And those first classes are weed out classes. They want you to fail basically.

At least that’s the vibe that I got. And I was like, I don’t want this to be my college experience. I don’t want to be miserable my entire four years here, so yeah. And I became more extroverted. I got really good at being able to just talk to people and I’m really, really proud of all of the work that I have done and all the friends that I’ve made.

All the, the stuff I have published, the desk that I have developed. And I’m just really proud of myself at this moment.

HEINEN: We’re proud of you, Kaylie. Thank god you switched majors. Thank god.

MCDONNELL: Yeah, right?

SIROVY: Yeah. I would not be here. You guys probably would.

HEINEN: We wouldn't be here if you hadn't done that.

MCDONNELL: Yeah we wouldn't be here either.

HEINEN: We would not be here, for sure.

SIROVY: No, yeah.

MCDONNELL: What about you, Alex?

LASSITER: Very similar experience actually. Dialing it back to freshman year blolololop. You know, like timeline. That was a horrible flashback sound. Uh, anyways.

Yeah, so freshman year I came in wanting to be a theater major. I was so serious about it to the point where I'd wanted to go to NYU.

SIROVY: Whoa.

MCDONNELL: Lore drop here.

LASSITER: Yeah, I was willing to shell out 66 thousand a year.

MCDONNELL: We didn't know that.

HEINEN: Jeez yeah.

LASSITER: That would've been a horrible mistake though, I think. Because I came here and then like within the first year, I'm just kinda like, "Yeah, this is not for me." I loved, I was in super into theater in high school and I loved, being a part of it in college, but I'm just like, as a career it would be way too competitive.

Everybody's just like way too much at each other's throats and every friendship is just kind of like very transactional, very conditional. And so I took a journalism class, wasn't even looking to join into journalism. But I took a journalism class. It was the, the video games one.

SIROVY: Oh.

MCDONNELL: Really? Oh my gosh.

LASSITER: Because I'm a little bit of a gamer and I'm like, the part of that that attracted me was not the, the journalism part, it was the video games part. And so I ended up taking that class and I'm like, "Huh, this is pretty fun. Maybe I could take journalism 1001 just to see what's up."

And I ended up taking that with Sid Bedingfield. And I'm like, okay, yeah, I can, I can do this. I can lean more into the writing side. And that was the end of my freshman year. I'd ended up declaring my journalism major sophomore year. And then fast forward to midway through junior year and I hit a brick wall.

Like I hit a brick wall. I was majorly depressed. It was, it was a rough time. I was super, super overwhelmed with all the work that I had to do. Campus admin workload was super heavy. All of my classes were super heavy.

I was really depressed and I thought I was gonna drop out of college at that time. I was pretty sure. It was, it wasn't even something that I was able to change either. It was like I had a super intense spiritual experience one night. Ended up accepting Jesus into my life that night. Texted Seth Richardson like the very next day.

I'm like, "Hey, I just had a really weird experience and an existential crisis. Could you gimme like a little bit more time to finish up my assignments, please?" Yeah.

SIROVY: Oh my God.

LASSITER: Yeah, and so it wasn't even something I was considering or pursuing. But he just kind of like landed himself into my life. And ever since then, things have been totally different. Like my circle of friends has completely changed.

I have way healthier community, way healthier relationship with my self image, with my classes, with my workload. And one of my best friends who I met through my church is getting married two weekends from now.

HEINEN: Yay!

MCDONNELL: Let's go.

LASSITER: I know. It's great. It's super.

SIRVOY: Are you in the wedding party?

LASSITER: I'm the usher.

HEINEN: Slay!

SIROVY: Ahh!

MCDONNELL: Wow!

LASSITER: As if you'd expect anything less from me. But it is like, yeah, before then, I wasn't really extroverted. I wasn't really like a people person, you know, but it's like, I just like having that relationship with God has allowed me to open myself up to other people and to

really, genuinely want to learn about people.

That's why I think the stories that I've done about like the UCLA one, I keep coming back to that. But it's just so great because it was just like such a personal humanitarian story and I was actually able to really have like a personal relationship with it, care about it.

And that would not have been possible without what, what I went through my junior year and how I rediscovered my faith in God. After college, no idea where I'm gonna go. I've got stuff lined up, but like I am, it's so different like night and day.

SIROVY: Yeah.

LASSITER: I went from being a theater major. Who have been doing professional productions in the Minneapolis area, to a journalism major who is probably gonna end up working in some kind of nonprofit slash ministry area. Totally like night and day. It's nuts.

HEINEN: Yeah.

SIROVY: The depression era. That's relatable.

LASSITER: Yeah.

SIROVY: Little too much.

LASSITER: Yeah, A little bit. Yeah.

SIROVY: I, I, that was a moment that I try to forget about.

HEINEN: Um, well, this question might be a little poorly timed, but.

MCDONNELL: Yeah.

HEINEN: If you guys, looking back either to your freshman self or to like, when you were both kind of experiencing that mental time of struggle. If you could go back and just tell yourself one thing, what would it be?

SIROVY: You will not be perfect. You will not even come close to being perfect.

LASSITER: Mm-hmm.

SIROVY: You will be average at best.

LASSITER: Mm-hmm.

SIROVY: The, the you in high school, she has no idea what's going on. She has her own bubble. The bubble is much bigger in reality. I have made tons of mistakes. I have regretted moments. I don't know if I regret going into CSE. I regret putting myself through it, but I don't

know if I, because like I wouldn't have made that switch.

I probably would've been an English major if I didn't go to CSE at the beginning. But yeah, you're gonna make a lot and a lot and a lot of mistakes. And there are gonna be times where you're embarrassed. Where you embarrass yourself so hard that you like cringe every time you think about it.

HEINEN: Mm-hmm.

SIROVY: And you just have to accept the flaws because everyone has them, even though you don't see them.

LASSITER: That's really good. That's really good.

SIROVY: Thank you.

LASSITER: OK. Same vein, same reasoning. Just let me, just let me cook a little bit. I wouldn't say anything to myself. And it's the same reason, like nobody's perfect. We've all made mistakes. All, all of us in this room, myself in particular, but I think I had to make those mistakes to get to where I'm at.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: And I wouldn't wanna change that. I wouldn't wanna change anything of what I went through. Because what I've got now is pretty great. And it sucks that I just allow myself to go through it, you know, instead of offering any advice. But if I did offer any words or any advice, it could, I could risk changing like where I'm at right now.

And it sucked to get there. But it's just so, it's so freeing and so gratifying to be there. And I wouldn't have gotten there if I hadn't made those mistakes and if I hadn't been forced to trust God with my entire life. Because, I wouldn't have made those decisions if some future version of me had popped his head out of a wormhole and said.

MCDONNELL: For sure, yeah.

LASSITER: Yeah. And said like, "Don't open the door on Thursday, January, whatever, 2023. You know what I mean." And it's like, I, I wouldn't have had these formative experiences in my life. I wouldn't have the relationships that I have now if I tried to force them. Whatever is genuine and whatever is true, it can't be forced.

And so I would just, if anything, I would try to like look back through a peephole and just see what I'm doing, at that time. And, and just knowing what I know now, I'd be like, "Yeah, he's gonna be okay." But it would still be cool to kind of watch myself going through it again and just being like, "Yeah, I know where it leads, so."

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: It sucks in the moment, but it'll be fine later.

SIROVY: It sucks a lot in the moment.

LASSITER: Yeah. Yeah.

SIROVY: Oh my God. Yeah, just learn to trust in yourself.

MCDONNELL: Yeah, that is very good advice and good answers from both of you. And they're different answers because one has no words and one does have words. Guess moving out of the sentimental aspect, let's go into writing style. So think about your first story here versus your last story. How has your style changed?

SIROVY: First story, it kind of feels like a paper. The way I was writing it, I was like.

HEINEN: Structured.

SIROVY: Structured like it. I had no idea what leads were.

MCDONNELL: Right.

SIROVY: I had no idea what attributions were for AP style. I didn't know what I was doing. Shout out to Alberto for like, being so nice and just trusting me through it. But I started to let my voice flow a little bit. Sometimes in my writing I can get maybe a little too academic.

Because like in cultural studies and comparative lit, we write a lot of papers. And very long papers. And so sometimes it's hard to like break academic writing and AP style journalistic writing. But for a podcast writing, it's different than how a written article would be.

So you can really let your thoughts flow here. As the poster on the wall says, there is no inverted pyramid in podcasting. You put that information where the story fits. Because it's, it's a narrative. You're going through the steps as you're talking about a story.

And yeah, I think I just remembered that I have a voice outside of academic writing. So, I haven't really thought about that. Now that I think about it.

LASSITER: My first story was about bees.

SIROVY: Was it the bee lab?

MCDONNELL: The letter or the, uh.

LASSITER: I think it was, yeah, it was, it was the, the animal.

MCDONNELL: OK.

LASSITER: But I'd have to go back and read through it just to see exactly how it's changed, but. Kind of similar to what Kaylie said, you know, like very beep boop, formulaic. You know, I was fresh in my journalism classes at that time too. And so what I was learning how to write there, it was like that was my trial run.

And so it probably did not sound very fun to read. And as I got to the end, like I have been able to condense so much information in a very digestible way, into especially the last of my like, written pieces. But I will say, and this is good advice too for audio, is to write the way that you talk.

SIROVY: Oh, yes, yes.

MCDONNELL: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: That's the best advice for writing I've ever received is to write the same way that you would talk. Especially even for a written article, like casual conversation. You're just explaining something to someone who doesn't get it.

SIROVY: Yeah.

LASSITER: Or, or, I mean, that's kind of what our jobs is, right? We're journalists, we hear something from something else, and then we have to play telephone with that a little bit to make sure that our readers understand what the person is saying.

SIROVY: To everybody.

LASSITER: And there are so many scientists, so many lawyers, police officers who have used jargon that people won't understand.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: And I'm like, "How do I make this sound good for people? And how will they understand what I'm saying?"

SIROVY: We're like a little funnel.

LASSITER: Another really good piece of writing advice too, is to, if you are a young journalist or if you're gonna be in a career where writing is your thing, write outside of your comfort zone. Don't just write about stuff that you know about or that you care about.

Because I'm gonna be honest, I don't care about science that much because like, I, I don't know enough about it to be able to be like, "Oh yes, the frontal cortex gets scanned by the machine," and it's like, yeah, I don't know that much.

But it really helps because, A: you can relate it to people who also don't know what's going on.

HEINEN: Yeah.

LASSITER: And B: it expands your palate and your repertoire, so you can actually write about stuff better if you don't know about it because it forces you to learn.

SIROVY: Jack of all trades, master of none.

LASSITER: Exactly. Exactly.

MCDONNELL: There it is.

HEINEN: You kind of talked about being the funnel for listeners. Do you have any words for people who listen to In The Know and people who've like, read your stories? Like just any words for the Minnesota Daily listeners.

SIROVY: It's like pulling teeth to get feedback from people. At the end of every episode we say, "Hey, write us a comment, write us an email." I've gotten one email and that's from Owen's uncle.

MCDONNELL: Yes.

SIROVY: About his story. He was like, "Great job on it." And I was like, we both did really good.

MCDONNELL: Yeah, we did.

SIROVY: Tell us your opinions. On a lot of the stories too, like my grandma would comment, and I'm sure she's listening to this.

HEINEN: Love seeing your grandma comment.

SIROVY: I know. She loves all of you too. She's like, "Oh my god!"

HEINEN: We love her.

LASSITER: It's very easy for written pieces to get feedback, especially if they're contentious.

SIROVY: Yes.

MCDONNELL: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: There were so many pieces that I wrote for the Board of Regents beat that had people being like, "This policy is rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah." And then people would be like, "Your comment about this policy is rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah, rah." Yeah. And it's like you start an accidental flame war in the comments. There was a story about, um.

SIROVY: There was a lot of those.

LASSITER: There was a story on admin after I left about like wolves and wolf conservation.

SIROVY: Oh my God. Yes.

LASSITER: The comments in that one were going crazy.

SIROVY: The Voyageurs Wolf project.

LASSITER: Yeah.

SIROVY: Yes. They talked about that.

LASSITER: It was nuts. The comments on that one were popping off and it was just like, "Dude, why do you have so much beef with like what people are saying about wolves." Like what?

SIROVY: Wolves who are naturally supposed to be here.

LASSITER: I don't know. It's, but I guess something that helps is having a contentious story because that's what I've seen drives up the most traffic.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

MCDONNELL: There you go. Yeah.

SIROVY: We did have one comment on your story, Ceci, about last summer.

HEINEN: Mm-hmm. I talked about the election.

SIROVY: The election. Yes.

MCDONNELL: Oh boy.

HEINEN: Yeah, I remember that because I talked to Carrie Booth Walling, who's the head of the human rights Department. Yes. And she said something. I think she was talking about Palestine and someone commented just like.

SIROVY: It was like one sentence that she talked about it.

HEINEN: Yeah.

SIROVY: And someone wrote just paragraph after paragraph for it, and I was like, "Ceci, have you seen this?"

HEINEN: Oh my god.

MCDONNELL: You gotta wonder like, how does that happen? Like that's out of every.

HEINEN: I'm just glad they listened to it. Honestly.

MCDONNELL: Yeah out of everything that you talked about, the one sentence prompted a, like a three paragraph or so response.

SIROVY: Yeah.

LASSITER: It's like they're like a sleeper agent.

MCDONNELL: Exactly.

SIROVY: They hear the words.

LASSITER: It's like, yeah. People just love to cherry pick about things that they have strong opinions about.

SIROVY: I also wanna know how they have this much time to write three paragraphs on a student journalist story. What are you doing during the day? That you have this much time to do this.

MCDONNELL: Yeah. Right. Well, we've been gabbing for a while, but. Let's shrink it down a bit. Your Daily experience in three words.

SIROVY: OK. Stressful at times. But, absolutely wonderful.

MCDONNELL: That's four words.

SIROVY: OK, OK, OK. Stressful, comma, absolutely wonderful.

MCDONNELL: OK I see.

LASSITER: No Oxford comma.

SIROVY: No Oxford comma.

MCDONNELL: No Oxford comma, true. Good work.

LASSITER: That's great. I'd have to say, and mine can work multiple ways, but pretty freaking formulative, that works. It works as a full sentence. But it was pretty, because if you look on it from like looking back, all my stories and stuff makes for a pretty nice portfolio, I think.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm.

LASSITER: Freaking, because I have been freaking out in like unimaginable ways during my time with the Daily. And formative, because without it, I would not have nearly as much experience or efficiency or proficiency at producing the type of content that I do. I have learned so much in my classes. But I had no idea how to put it into action.

SIROVY: Yeah.

HEINEN: Yeah.

MCDONNELL: Right, right.

LASSITER: The Daily gave me that playing field.

SIROVY: Yeah.

LASSITER: And I'm so glad it did, because all of these wacky, wonderful ideas that I've had that I wouldn't have had a place to put otherwise. And probably wouldn't have had as good of correcting or guidance from. It's been incredible just how much I've been able to learn by actually doing stuff hands-on in the field.

SIROVY: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I feel so ready. You dropped me in the middle of a newsroom, I could probably figure it out.

HEINEN: Taking kind of your three words that you just gave us. Pretty freaking formidable and stressful, comma absolutely wonderful. Looking back on everything since you got here, what's your fondest memory?

SIROVY: I have spent so much time with my co-editors. We have had many a bar hangouts, many a house hangouts, many a party. Honestly, for me, fondest moment was when recently in the fall we went to New Orleans and that was absolutely incredible.

I got so close with my editors and we were all bonding and we were going through the same boats and we got to see a wonderful city and go on Bourbon Street for Halloween. And just that whole week I just had a blast. And I look back on it and it's just, my heart gets warm, you know? Because we would, at the end of the day, we'd go in someone's hotel room and just sit there and watch TV. It was great.

LASSITER: I definitely should have utilized this more during my time on the podcasting desk, but in-person editing was really fun. I also appreciated Amelia's affinity for Mario Kart music.

SIROVY: Yes.

LASSITER: And Kaylie, you had your own too, so it's like.

SIROVY: Yes, I did.

LASSITER: We just kind of like as an office, people really appreciated playing Mario Kart music as we worked and it helped a little bit actually with the editing.

SIROVY: Last time I was in the office, I played the Minecraft soundtrack.

HEINEN: Nice.

MCDONNELL: I think I heard that. Yeah.

SIROVY: Yeah. Owen was there. Owen was there for that.

LASSITER: It's so great having gamers on the staff.

SIROVY: Oh yeah. I am a gamer.

HEINEN: I need to get into that so I can bring that energy to next year because I don't game.

SIROVY: Well not everyone on, on staff games either, but they, they have their moments.

LASSITER: Well you can do this and I can do that but I don't game.

HEINEN: I'll just go to Alex's YouTube channel and I'll play your remixes.

LASSITER: Yeah. Yeah, please do.

MCDONNELL: Oh that's right.

SIROVY: The remixes yes.

LASSITER: Oh yeah.

SIROVY: Just a little plug.

LASSITER: Yeah. Shameless plug.

HEINEN: Yeah, whatever.

MCDONNELL: What's the at just by chance?

LASSITER: Kirbtastic.

MCDONNELL: Kirbtastic.

HEINEN: Nice.

MCDONNELL: Like Kirby?

LASSITER: Like Kirby yeah.

MCDONNELL: OK.

LASSITER: He's just a little guy. I love him so much.

SIROVY: He's just a little guy.

LASSITER: I love him so much.

SIROVY: God forbid he'd just be a little guy.

MCDONNELL: Well, this is our last question and this is sort of a send you off into the sunset question. So, what is next for you both and where do you want to be in five years?

SIROVY: OK. Where I wanna be in five years. I have thought about this. I would love to be a radio person, like radio reporter. I absolutely love it. Like NPR or on The Current or, any of those, I would absolutely love it.

End goal is to be like a digital producer hands down.

But I would love to be a multimedia reporter in the middle of that. I would love to be a radio reporter in the middle of that. I would maybe love to make my own podcast, but I don't know. I love putting them together more. But for this summer, I have nothing.

HEINEN: That's beautiful, honestly.

SIROVY: But I do still need to pay rent, so I will be getting a job probably in retail.

LASSITER: I have an internship lined up with a nonprofit over in St. Paul called Avivo. Will help people who have been suffering from long-term homelessness, substance abuse problems.

SIROVY: Wow.

LASSITER: And I'll be working on their communications team.

MCDONNELL: Geez.

HEINEN: That's awesome.

LASSITER: So I'll be getting to talk to people who have been through the program, share their stories. I'm really excited.

SIROVY: Good for you, Alex.

HEINEN: That's amazing.

LASSITER: Really excited for it.

HEINEN: You're gonna be amazing at that.

LASSITER: As for what's coming up next in the next five years, I have no idea. I have learned very quickly that it's God's plan, not mine. And last year I got to the final round of WCCO interviews. This year I got to the final round of NPR interviews.

MCDONNELL: Oh.

LASSITER: And I didn't get either of them. And so I think that's me just being told that like, I'm good enough, but it's not where I'm supposed to be. So five years from now, I would really just like to continue helping people, doing hands-on work, learning more about people and connecting with people on a people level.

I'd really like to just be connected and ingrained into the community. You know, working with people and learning about their stories. Because that's kind of what journalism is, right? We're hearing about the individual's story and how individual people tie into anything, whether it's a political thing, whether it's a natural disaster, whether it's just something you'd never expect.

You're hearing from people on stuff that's going on around them. And so you may be writing about like Timothée Chalamet, or you may be writing about like crochet or something, but it's the people who are, you know, wanting to see Timothée Chalamet.

HEINEN: Yeah.

LASSITER: It's the people who are crocheting the bags together and just hearing everybody's individual perspectives and their stories. That's what I wanna keep doing, you know? Like five years down the line, I wanna just keep meeting people where they're at.

MCDONNELL: For sure.

HEINEN: You both are gonna do such amazing things. And I just wanna say before we kind of close it off that, Alex I did my first story ever with you when I got hired here and I was terrified. I didn't even think I'd get a job here.

But then like coming and seeing you, teaching me how to interview and how to write a script. You made me feel so comfortable and made me feel like I belonged here, which I just, I really appreciate it. And now I'm gonna cry.

LASSITER: I'm actually gonna cry too.

HEINEN: And now I have to talk about Kaylie. You've taught me.

LASSITER: Not easy to hold the tears back right now.

HEINEN: You've taught me everything I know. And I love you so much. And you're like my mother, literally. And yeah. I just, I'm gonna miss you guys a lot.

SIROVY: Let's take a moment.

MCDONNELL: Yeah let's take a breather.

SIROVY: Five minute recess. Oh my god, you guys.

HEINEN: It had to be done.

SIROVY: Had to happen. It was gonna happen. I was like, oh god. It's gonna be the end I know. I just get train you for the whole month of May.

HEINEN: I know I'm so excited. I'm so happy and I'm excited that me and Owen can carry on your, your legacy and you've both just done so much for the desk, and I know that it's changed a lot from when you've been here.

SIROVY: Oh my god, yes.

LASSITER: It's gonna change even more, I hope.

SIROVY: Oh my god, yes.

LASSITER: You're gonna do such amazing things for it, and I know that you're gonna carry it to a new place that's gonna be just, it's gonna be so great.

SIROVY: Yes. I'm so excited.

LASSITER: And you've got two very loyal listeners.

SIROVY: Oh my god, yes.

MCDONNELL: There you go.

SIROVY: I'll be commenting on the YouTube all the time, for sure.

HEINEN: Is there anything else you guys wanna, wanna say?

LASSITER: Yeah, when I, when I say it's been formative for me at the Daily, I mean that, not just in the work that I've done, but the people that I've met too.

Like again, talking about stories and hearing peoples' stories and getting to know people. The people that we've gotten to know the most are the staff, and I've worked with so many people. Some of them have graduated since, some of them left while I was working on the same desk, some of them I left to come work at this desk.

And now I'm the one graduating and it's just kind of nuts how full circle it is. And just how many more people will be coming through afterwards. The connections that I've made and the people that I've worked with and the friends that I've made have just been. I, I have no words.

SIROVY: That's another point of advice. Lean on the staff. Make friends with them because they will be your lifeboat. In this stressful environment that we work in as journalists.

Thank you so much for listening everyone. This episode has been produced by Kaylie Sirovy and Ceci Heinen. And, as always, you can reach out to us in our email inbox at podcasting@mndaily.com.

LASSITER: And please do. We want to hear your feedback.

SIROVY: Please, please, please, please, please, please, please. I'm begging you. With any comments, questions, or concerns. I'm Kaylie.

LASSITER: And I'm Alex. This has been In The Know. Take care y'all.

SIROVY: Bye everybody.