

This transcript was exported on Jun 13, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Myka Bailey:

Welcome to I Am WT. This is Myka Bailey.

Thomas Rodriguez:

And I'm Thomas Rodriguez.

Myka Bailey:

And today, we have a very special guest, Fili Avila.

Filiberto Avila:

Thank you, Myka. Thank you, Thomas, for having me.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We're excited to have you. We've had a few students on in the past. We don't get that very often, so it's a nice opportunity to have more in our circle type thing. So tell us about yourself, your major, where you're from, all that stuff.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, so as you said, my name is Filiberto Avila, and I'm a senior digital communication and media major here at West Texas A&M University.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Whoo-hoo. Yeah.

Filiberto Avila:

And I was born in El Paso, Texas, but I was actually raised in Spearman, Texas. Graduated, I did all my schooling there, and so I'm a proud Lynx. In that way, I'm a proud Buffalo, of course. That's a little bit about me. One of the things that I like to always start and talk about is I'm a Hispanic first generation college student. And I always say that because a lot of the way that I see the world and specifically in higher education stems from that identity. So that way it gives context to people as to where my perceptions come from or maybe my ideas come from. So it stems from that identity.

Myka Bailey:

That's awesome. Also, we got all comm majors in the room.

Filiberto Avila:

That's right.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Let's go.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah.

Myka Bailey:

So what made you want to come to WT?

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah. So funny story, I... WT was never on my radar at all. I had heard about it, of course, being just from a few hours away, but I did not want to come to WT. It's that perception when you're high school. I was like, "Well, I went to high school with these people, why do I want to come and see them again?" And I actually was planning on going to St. Edward's University. I had a full ride over there with the college assistance migrant program.

However, at that time, I'm very close with my younger sister, and so she was a year younger than I was in high school, and she really needed me at that point in her life. We've always been very close, so I decided to stay closer home for her. So I came here and it was definitely the best decision I've ever made. I do not regret that one bit. I also came here because of the college assistance migrant program that WT has, so that brought me here and I've been here ever since.

Myka Bailey:

That is so sweet. I'm also really close to my brother. He's two years younger than me, and he's here now.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, no.

Myka Bailey:

I love that. I get that.

Filiberto Avila:

Right. Siblings bonding.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I [inaudible 00:02:19] my sister. It's fine. She wants to go to a different school. That's not my problem.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, that's funny.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We're three years apart. It's fine. It's not something to worry about. It's always nice to hear about people's individual experience with how people come to WT, because everyone's got a story on how they ended up here and they also always have a story as to why they stuck with WT. Mine is just like, I like it here. It's nice. Everyone's got a reason, I'm sure. So let's talk a little bit about what you're involved with on WT.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, for sure. So I think what people mostly attach me to always is student government. Of course, I'm highly involved in student government. I've been through it since I first came here. I've also been involved with the Hispanic Student Association, the first gen organization on campus, and I'm also currently a senior scholar for the Rogers LEAD WT program. So there's a little bit of everything there. And then the department and our department of communication, I've been for some semesters a contributor to The Prairie News, so that's been fun. It's been a lot of work, but it's been fun.

Myka Bailey:

You're honestly involved in almost everything, I feel like. If you can get your hands in it, I feel like you get your hands in it.

Filiberto Avila:

No, you're right. You're right. I try to just get as much experience from different sides of campus to just make me a better person, a better individual, so yeah.

Myka Bailey:

And it shows you were recently named Fulbright Scholar, so do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, so Fulbright. For those that may not be too familiar with what Fulbright is. It is a nationally competitive scholarship, and so Fulbright is what we consider the pinnacle of cultural exchange with the United States to other countries. It has three different types of programs within the Fulbright program. We have the English teaching assistantship, which is what I was a recipient of. We have a research-based Fulbright, and then we have a master's.

So pretty much what you do is here in the United States, you apply to the program and you think about a country where you want to do one of those three things. For me, it was English teaching assistantship, and I don't want to say we have commissions, but we have partnerships with, I think, about 160 different countries across the world. And so when you're competing for it, you're competing with students that want to go to that same country. So for me, that was Spain and it's a very lengthy application. I will not lie, lots of essays. It opens in April of every year and it closes in October of every year.

During that time, I started working. Honestly, I did not stop working on my application until late September, so I was rushing it. I knew I wanted to do it, but I was that posture feeling that we get a students that like, "Well, am I good enough?" I'm not just going to be competing against people that I know. This is nationwide. So that stopped me for the longest time in the summer of not really looking into it, but I finally decided to do it and best thing ever, I was selected for it, so yeah.

Myka Bailey:

So do you get to go to Spain?

Filiberto Avila:

Yes. So with that, I got the English teaching assistantship, and so I'll be working with IE University in Madrid, and they also have a campus in Segovia. So I'll be traveling back and forth. I'll be helping teach English courses as well as Spanish courses, so I'm very excited about that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Sounds like a complicated application process. For this, they just said, "Hey, you want to record a podcast?" And I said, "Sure. That sounds fun."

Filiberto Avila:

That's funny. Hey, I wish they did something like that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Lengthy essays. No, thank you. I'm good. I don't want any part.

Filiberto Avila:

That's funny.

Myka Bailey:

Why did you want to pursue the Fulbright scholarship, specifically the English teacher assistantship in Spain?

Filiberto Avila:

Going back to communications, of course, and my emphasis and my just little area of interest, cross-cultural communications. I think that aspect, Fulbright is what that is for the cross-cultural, the cultural immersion in two things, right? The other side of that is because I know I want to stay in higher ed and I think something like this will definitely add to my resume, but it also will make me more of an empathetic leader in the experiences that I will gain in that I can bring home with me. And it doesn't stay with me, I will be able to share that with other people. And I think that's what learning and knowledge is about. If you learn it and you keep it to yourself, you're really not doing much.

I think the important piece, and this is where I see teaching and educators all across from K-12 to higher education too, and not necessarily in a formal setting, just educators anywhere. I mean, our job is to share knowledge. Our job is to share what has helped us to others. So I think that that was a big component in me wanting to do the Fulbright and specifically the English teaching assistantship.

Myka Bailey:

Wow, you're going to be a great teacher.

Filiberto Avila:

Oh, thank you.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You were talking about long essays and stuff. What was the application process like?

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah. So the application opens in April and then like I said, closes in October. And so specifically, the first component you write, I kid you not maybe three to five different essays. Some are longer than others, some are shorter, some are more about getting to know you as the person. Some are more about what are your intentions if you get it, what do you plan on doing there? How do you plan on bringing what you learned back? It's a little bit of all of that information. You have to have, if I'm not mistaken, if I remember that correctly, three different references that recommend you. Specifically for Spain, you have to have an English language evaluator to make sure that you are okay to speak the language of that country. So that was easy for me. I'm a native Spanish speaker, so that was kind of easier.

Different Spanish, we have Castilian Spanish and Spain, Tex-Mex, Spanglish, whatever you want to call it here. After that, you don't hear from them for about two months. So it's a very scary time because right now, during that time, the national committee... Actually, let me go back a little bit. So after you submit your application to the study abroad office here, a committee of different university professors or staff, people that know you will be gathered to evaluate your application, give you feedback, have a mock interview to see is this really what you want to do? Are you sure this is what you want to do? So I had that.

After that is whenever you submit the application, you get the approval from the university committee and you move on, right? You don't hear back from the national committee for about two months, and then you get one of two things. You get either you're a semi-finalist or this is where your application stops. And you are just waiting for that. I was fortunate enough to get a semi-finalist, and so I was like, "Okay, what does this mean? Is this it? What's next?" So during that time, they send it to the commission of the country if the country has a commission. So Spain does have a commission in Madrid that they work with, so the commission will review the application and they will place you. You don't necessarily get to choose where you're going. For example, you get to share an idea of what you would want to do. For me, I shared that I wanted to work with high school or college level students, which that it's even more of a challenge because that's usually given to students with already a master's degree.

So I wasn't really expecting that. I'm like, "I'd be okay with K-12," their version of K-12. Anyways, early in March, I got an email back with a interview to meet with the people of the university that they wanted me to work with, which is IE. So I got to meet with their executive director. I got to meet with a Fulbright commission officer and stuff like that. So they interview, look similar to a job interview. After that, you don't hear from them, you just wait it out, and I did not hear until April about a decision, and so I was a finalist, meaning that's as good as it goes. There's not really like a winner. It's just the finalist is the winner. And so yeah, I know that's a long process, but that is the process.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I'm thankful day after day that they just said, "Hey, come do the podcast."

Filiberto Avila:

This is its process too. I know all the editing and the behind the scenes and preparing for it, so I respect the world that y'all do.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yes.

Filiberto Avila:

It's intense too.

Thomas Rodriguez:

The process for us was, "Hey, come host this podcast for us." And I said, "Okay." And that's all they needed from me.

Filiberto Avila:

Hey, you got the talent. They saw that-

Thomas Rodriguez:

That's fair.

Filiberto Avila:

... so they brought you over.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Big boost to my ego. I can say that much.

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah. There you go.

Myka Bailey:

How do you think that this scholarship changed you or does it mean something special to you in some way?

Filiberto Avila:

Being a Fulbright scholar, it's such a cool thing because you get to be a part of a network of people that have, based on being a Fulbright scholar and the work that they've done afterwards, Nobel Prize winners, very nationally recognized people that you get to form a community with. And so it's something I changed my life in that way.

And going back to what I said earlier about being a first-generation college student, my goal when I first thought about higher education, which that term didn't really resonate with me, I had no idea what higher education meant. I can talk about it all day now, but I just wanted to get a bachelor's degree in education and go back to Spearman and teach, which I love that. I thought that was a great idea, and I still think it's a good idea to some extent.

But being here and seeing all the opportunities at WT that students are able to get and to be able to be a part of, I mean, Fulbright is just one of them. There's so many other things we can talk about, but for me, it really would change so many things. It would give me a cultural and global perspective in a lot of different ways. On a personal level, I can't imagine how many new friendships, just different people I'm going to be able to connect with, so I'm very excited for that.

Myka Bailey:

Would you say that's the most exciting part about going to Spain, or is there something else?

Filiberto Avila:

No. Yeah. Last summer I actually completed my internship in Madrid, so I've already been there before, and so I've already had some connections that I left behind, and when I talked to those friends that I left behind that, "Hey, I'm actually coming back for a year to teach." It's super exciting to be able to connect with them, but also advance on a professional level. It's going to be awesome. I can't wait honestly/

Thomas Rodriguez:

You were talking about the many opportunities people have for scholarships and that kind of stuff, and I think that's something that a lot of students don't realize is just how much these people want to give you their money. These people who are putting up the scholarships, they want to give you money. Just apply to everything and see what comes back. And, obviously it's worked out for you. You get to go to Spain, which is super cool. Can't say I've gotten to do something as cool as that. Best I can do is New York, unfortunately. But hey-

Filiberto Avila:

Hey, I've never been to New York.

Thomas Rodriguez:

... I'm not upset about it. New York was awesome. I had a great time. Only got rained on really badly once, so I had a good time.

Filiberto Avila:

No. Hey, I've never been to New York, so I definitely am jealous on that. I think I want to experience New York too.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, fingers crossed they let me go back next year. I'm really hoping. So you've traveled to Spain. Is there any other places you've traveled to?

Filiberto Avila:

So I go every year to Mexico. That's where I have a lot of family. So not necessarily maybe on a leisure type of way, more of go seeing families, cousins, my grandma who I'm super close with, she's my everything. And so I try to see her as much as I can in Spain. I did some traveling while I was there, so I'm very excited.

Myka Bailey:

Is there anything in Mexico you would suggest for someone to go to?

Filiberto Avila:

So most of my family is from Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, and so I mean, just tacos. You have to try authentic Mexican tacos. It's the best. I don't know if you like spicy food though. Their sauces are so good.

Myka Bailey:

The problem is I love spicy food, but I am bad about handling it, so I'm like, "It's so good," and I'm sweating. I'm just like, "Oh, it's so good."

Filiberto Avila:

No, I understand that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I can only say as far as Mexico's concerned, I've only been to the cruise destinations, like the Cozumels and all that kind of stuff. But I mean, it's still cool.

Filiberto Avila:

It's still, yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Mexico is awesome. I love it there.

Filiberto Avila:

There's so many things to see in Mexico.

Thomas Rodriguez:

It's hot though. It's like [inaudible 00:13:43].

This transcript was exported on Jun 13, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

Filiberto Avila:

Yeah, it is. It is.

Thomas Rodriguez:

That's fine. It's fun. It's cool. I like it there as well. So can you tell us a little bit more about your internship?

Filiberto Avila:

Yes. So I interned last summer in Madrid with a company called Mamook Real People, and it was a sustainable and vegan fashion company, specifically shoes, female shoes in Spain. And it's something about Spain, and you'll see this in the fashion and the people, the places, they're very, for lack of a better term, very colorful. They're very vibrant, they're very lively. And so this company focused on creating sustainable shoes.

My role, I was kind of like... The title that they gave me was community managers. So I did some of the marketing. I did some of the photo shoot, some of the editorial aspects of things. I helped with a little bit of designs. They were not good, so I needed to get better at that. But it was really fun. I got to try a little bit of everything. I was there for three months. My supervisor, who is the CEO and founder of the company, I mean, we have a great relationship. We still keep in touch. She's been a great help. She's already reached out to me with this whole Fulbright. If there's anything I can do, please let me know. So I will tell you that the Spaniards, they're very welcoming and very friendly.

Myka Bailey:

Why do you think that it's important for students to have internships?

Filiberto Avila:

It really will show you two things. One, if that is really what you want to do or if that's not what you want to do, it really help you in both ways. Sometimes we get into a program or a degree that we think is the one for us. Then you go out into the field and try and it's like it confirms, "Yeah, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, or this is not what I want to do. This is not what I thought it was going to be."

The other aspect of it is networking. That's another advice I would love to share with anybody, not just students. I mean, networking is such an important skill to have, and there's a difference between, I think people always think of networking as superficial surface level, but genuinely good networking has helped me build some of the most authentic relationships, has helped me in some way, get more opportunities, get introduced to other people that can help me along the way and that I can help them. It's always a reciprocated thing. It's not what am I getting out of it? It's also what can you provide? What can you bring to the table? What advice can you share? So yeah, I think that those are the two things that I would say. Internships are important for

Myka Bailey:

I'm like, if people can't see, if you're not proof that internships matter, then I don't know what is. He's going to Spain. He's going to Spain.

Thomas Rodriguez:

He does get the cool one. We'll be right back with more of the I Am WT podcast with our guest, Filiberto Avila.

Speaker 4:



Donors to West Texas, A&M University give more than their material support. They devote time, expertise, and commitment. WT would not be what it is today without individuals dedicated to our forward progress.

Myka Bailey:

Welcome back to I Am WT. We are still here with Fili. You have been serving as a student body president. You want to tell us a little bit more about that experience and what it means to you?

Filiberto Avila:

This year I was lucky to serve. I'm actually 106 student body president, and I just learned that, what was it, maybe a month ago, I had our office team dig through the archives and see how many student body presidents we had. So it was so cool to know that on 106th, that means that this organization has been here since 1919. Those numbers don't add up, but the organization itself has been here since 1919.

Being student body president has honestly been the experience of our lifetime. It's taught me, of course, so much about leadership, but more than that, it's taught me about people. We have so many different types of people here at this university, and when we just talk about students, I mean that's its own diverse range of things, of different perspectives, different ideas, different cultures, and that has been the most exciting part to get to meet students where they're at, why they came to WT. Much of what you're doing with me, I am so excited to be able to do that with them. What brought you to WT? What keeps you at WT? What are your dreams? What are your passions? Where can I help you? Where does student government fit into that?

I'm a people person, and I think that's why I say communications. I just love talking to people and meeting them, talking to administrators and working with that administration, and seeing the behind the scenes that students don't always get to see or stop and think about, this is going on, or it's not because the institution wants to hammer down on you. It's because there's so many more things that go behind the scenes. And just being able to be a part of those conversations, but bring those students in some way with me to those conversations, it's just been awesome.

One of my favorite highlights from being student body president is we have this thing at the A&M system level, what we call the Chancellor Student Advisory Council. And so I get to work with all the student body presidents across the A&M system and just share ideas. And I can just tell you right now that some of my best friends come from that network of people, and it's just been honestly so amazing.

Myka Bailey:

That's awesome. You've clearly impacted WT and the people here. Do you think that there's something that impacted you the most?

Filiberto Avila:

I think so many things. I always consider and try myself to give myself into everything that I can, my emotional self, but my leadership experience. And so what probably has impacted me the most is just being able to sit with people and have genuine conversations with them, being able to understand what they feel, what they think. Just so many different things. And I always go back to if I had to talk about one specific group of people that have impacted me as student body president at this university, I will always say the international students. I think the international students are some of the most courageous, some of the strongest, and most resilient people that I have encountered in this role. They bring such wealth of experience and knowledge from their home countries and their ideas. And every time I have the opportunity to sit with an international student or talk to them, I learn something new. And that's with everybody, of course, but they're just so... I don't know. I have such special admiration for them, if that makes any sense, but yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I'm always surprised by the number of international students that end up here at WT, and there's the kind of culture that surrounds that kind of area. Because it's always surprising to me, I see the people in the digital media communication department, and half of them are from other countries, and they bring their experience into this, and I'm like, "Wow. This is a lot more diverse for a campus that is out in the middle of nowhere that a lot of people will write off because they don't really think about it."

Filiberto Avila:

No, 100%. I think I have the same feeling every semester when I sign up for a new course, and that's like, "It's crazy to think you're from all the way across the world and you're here with me sitting down. This is so awesome." But yeah.

Myka Bailey:

Yeah. They bring something different.

Filiberto Avila:

Yes.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yes, they do have that different life experience. That's super cool though. That's an opportunity that you don't really get. I haven't seen that you could get anywhere else, but you get that here at WT, which is amazing for such a small campus. We're considered pretty small compared to a lot of other colleges, at least the ones that people tend to know. And the fact that you can still get that experience is just, I think that's really cool.

Filiberto Avila:

No, I agree with you. I think going back to the communication aspect, two of my focuses that I really like to study when it comes to communications is cross-cultural as well as the Hispanic media landscape. That's what I like to focus with. And being surrounded by international students, I don't want to say easy, but it's so accessible. I think that's a better way to put that. It's so accessible to be able to talk to them and understand just nuances and different concepts that to us maybe so foreign to them makes sense and vice versa. So I love it.

Myka Bailey:

Culture is so beautiful.

Filiberto Avila:

Yes. Yes.

Myka Bailey:

I love it.

Filiberto Avila:

I agree.

Myka Bailey:

Any chance I can, I want to immerse myself in it or different types of... Even opera. I went to an opera here, and it was all in, I believe, Italian and German. And okay, I love English, but when they sing in German and Italian, I'm like, "Ooh, why does that sound so much better?"

Filiberto Avila:

Gives you the chills. Yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

They're really good at this. How do they do that? So you graduate in May.

Filiberto Avila:

I do not to drop the future on you too quick.

Thomas Rodriguez:

What are your plans for the future?

Filiberto Avila:

Oh, that's a million-dollar question here. In late August, early September, I'll be moving into Spain for that Fulbright grant, which I'm so excited about. But thinking longer term than that, I want to get my MBA maybe from WT. I mean, we have a great college of business, and so I would not be opposed to that in any way. And I definitely want to get a PhD sometime. We'll see how long that takes me. But I want to teach stay in higher education.

For the longest time, I've been debating whether I want to stay on the academic side of things, just solely teaching and researching or if I want to move more into the student affairs. So I don't know if you have any tips for that, but that's the goal. I mean, I like to stay very involved with nonprofits and different things just that I'm passionate about. So I know I'll always be a servant in some way. So I'm very excited to just keep on now that I'll have more free time. We don't have any more assignments, at least for this semester. I'll have more free time to help out in different ways.

Thomas Rodriguez:

That's what I've been looking at is this finals week. I'm like, "I have no finals. Yes." Well, I can't speak personally from experience from our last guest that we had who was talking about teaching as well as my parents, they talk about teaching. Teaching is not a rewarding job in the paying side of things, but it's a rewarding job in the experiences that you give to other people because you get to watch how you affect someone else's lives. Yeah, that's a sentence. How you affect someone else's life. And it's just cool to see that play out because my parents, they have students that have graduated 15, 10 years ago that they still talk to them, that they're like, "Yeah, they call my mom Ms. Rod, "Ms. Rod, I'm going to go teach at this place." It's cool that it's still connected.

So teaching is rewarding. I know you have your eye on a wide variety of ideas, but from what I can tell, teaching is still rewarding despite what some teachers may make you think. So that's what I can speak of at the very least. So you're going to be alumni soon. How are you going to stay involved with WT?

Filiberto Avila:

That's tough. Obviously, after graduation, we're not making big money, so I can't say I'll be donating. Eventually, that's a goal of mine too, to where I can become a donor in some area, maybe our department, maybe specifically for different organizations on campus. But I guess immediately, I love mentoring

people. I didn't really consider myself a mentor until this year. People started using that term for me, and it's like, "Okay, you really think I'm good? Okay, sounds good."

But I still have a lot of friends that are not graduating this year, and I have a lot of students that I was able to connect this year on my different roles. And so I think while that may not sound all big and fancy, just being able to stay in touch with those students and just being a support system from wherever I'm at, that's how I want to stay connected to WT. And all these professors that we've had, I've made great relationships and friendships with them to where I know that I will be keeping in touch with them. So yeah, small ways, I guess, not huge ways just yet, but we'll get there.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah. We got to become rich and famous before we can start donating.

Filiberto Avila:

That's right. That's right.

Thomas Rodriguez:

But you better believe if I become rich and famous, there will be money going back to this radio station.

Myka Bailey:

You talked about being a mentor a little bit. So what is a piece of advice you would give students right now?

Filiberto Avila:

One of the things that has helped me, and not just in college, but I think in life in general, and I know it sounds so deep and emotional, but it really has changed my mindset in a lot of ways, is I'm a big believer that you get out of things what you're willing to give to things. I am a huge believer in that. If we were talking about it here at the college level, you give it to those courses, what you're willing to get out of those courses. You give into those programs, what you're willing to get out of those programs. That has been, I think, a mindset that I've had for many years now, and I feel like that's what has helped me be successful, "what I consider successful."

Everybody, of course, has their own definition of that, but being able to be intentional and be there, be present, I think it's such a topic that people don't tend to think about or talk about enough, and that's in everything in life. I mean, you decide how you want to look at life and what you want to get out of life. So if you're looking at life in a negative way, well, that's what you're getting out of life. If you want to look at the positive, then that's what you're getting out of life. And so many different aspects of just the things that we do here. But yeah.

Myka Bailey:

Well, that's so good. That was so good. So true.

Filiberto Avila:

Well, thank you.

Thomas Rodriguez:

So what are you going to miss at WT?

Filiberto Avila:

Honestly, probably my friends. I am such an emotional person. I love, I love people. I love my friends. Campus, honestly, especially during this time of year, I mean, everything's so green now. The squirrels are out and about. They can be a little vicious. But I love the campus squirrels. Just being able to sit here and I'm thinking about it going to Madrid, it's going to be so different. It's an urban city, and here you can just breathe and everything will be just so calm and just beautiful. So just that, honestly, it's just that piece of the Texas Panhandle.

Myka Bailey:

And the wind, right?

Filiberto Avila:

I don't know about that. I don't know about the wind, but it definitely adds a little bit of the culture aspect to it, right?

Myka Bailey:

Oh, boy.

Thomas Rodriguez:

It's my favorite thing to hear at 3:00 AM against my window. Oh, hooray.

Filiberto Avila:

But it can put you to sleep too. It's like an extra layer of sound and just I love it.

Thomas Rodriguez:

It's true.

Myka Bailey:

Until you're out in it.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You were talking about the million-dollar question earlier. That wasn't quite it. Oh, we have an our actual question that we like to drop on everybody. It's fun to see their reactions out of it, but here we go. It's time for the big question.

Filiberto Avila:

It's time.

Thomas Rodriguez:

What does WT mean to you?

Filiberto Avila:

Oh my goodness. WT, for me, in a lot of ways is really my life and my passion, and this goes back to also being a first generation student. I have such a strong sense of loyalty for this university because it's giving me unique opportunities that I never thought I would be able to have. And if I did, I thought they were

impossible to reach. And I mean, WT really means everything to me. The people here, the experiences here, the memories, it's just this place is home and this place is my life, and I know that a part of me will remain here. Maybe WT doesn't want that. No, I'm kidding. But I know a part of me will stay here in some aspects. So I love this place. I really do. I love everything that makes this place what it is.

Myka Bailey:

You got a little buff written on your heart.

Filiberto Avila:

Yes. Yes.

Thomas Rodriguez:

That buff branding thing is true. They were right the whole time. Well, thank you Fili for coming on our podcast.

Myka Bailey:

It's been a pleasure. I'm really glad you could come.

Filiberto Avila:

Thank you, guys. I appreciate the work you do, and if there's anything I can do, let me know.

Myka Bailey:

Although we've really enjoyed talking to Fili, we want to let our listeners know that this is actually me and Thomas's last podcast.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yes, that's right. We've recorded 16 wonderful episodes with some fantastic guests, and although our time here is ending, the I Am WT podcast will continue through the next academic year with two brand new student hosts.

Myka Bailey:

Do you mind going ahead and telling us a little bit about yourself?

Brooke Nemeth:

Yeah. Hi, everybody. My name is Brooke Nemeth. I am a senior digital communication and media major with a specialization in digital journalism. I'm really excited to be here and learn a lot this year.

Myka Bailey:

What about your hometown? Where did you grow up at?

Brooke Nemeth:

So I was born in Levelland, Texas. I lived there until I was about 19, so I've lived in Amarillo for about four years now.

Hunter Sparling:

This transcript was exported on Jun 13, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

My name is Hunter Sparling. I am a sophomore here, and my major is digital media and communication with a specialization in broadcast journalism. I am from McLean, Texas, small town about hour and 45 minutes away from here.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Digital media major. Woop woop. What interested you in hosting this podcast?

Hunter Sparling:

I've always had a passion for radio and audio type projects. I worked at a radio station in Pampa, and since then, I've just been trying to find myself and find out what I'm good at and what I want to do with myself.

Myka Bailey:

Good. You're going to love it.

Brooke Nemeth:

Lately I've realized that I enjoy speaking and I enjoy talking to people and interviewing people, and I feel like it'll just be a fun experience to be able to talk about things that I want and talk to people that I want and just have a good time.

Myka Bailey:

Do you think there's something that excites you the most about it?

Hunter Sparling:

I'm most excited to learn about guests, where they came from, what they're doing now, and how much college can affect your life in a more positive way, and maybe even get some pointers and some advice from them as well to help me in my college adventure.

Brooke Nemeth:

I think I'm excited that it'll get me more involved in-campus activities. That'll help a lot with that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, I can tell you from my experience, this podcast has helped me really get rooted in the digital media department, and it's a great kind of experience to have just as someone who does this kind of stuff for a living, I guess.

Brooke Nemeth:

Oh, yeah. I'm excited to meet some more people in my major.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, I'm sure you both have questions for us. We've been hosting the podcast for a while, so we've got some advice to give. So go ahead and ask away.

Hunter Sparling:

So what drove you both to take this podcast?

Myka Bailey:

What motivated me the most is I'm always wanting to get involved. And so if I am given or presented with an opportunity, I normally try to take charge and do that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I think what motivated me is I've been taking the initiative more to just get involved and dig in and do more. I didn't do a lot of that my first semester or my second semester for the most part, but by the time my second year rolled around, I wanted to be involved with as much as I could, so I dug my roots into the radio and that happened to get me to the podcast, and now I'm doing this. So yeah.

Brooke Nemeth:

And do you all have any advice for us for the future of the podcast?

Thomas Rodriguez:

When your guests are telling you stories about their lives or they're responding to your question, you always want to be thinking of, "What can I follow this up with?" They say an interesting point, here you go, "Ooh, I could comment on that," or, "I could have a follow-up question here." And I'm always thinking of those whenever we're interviewing the people that we're talking to, because it helps both get the full story out as well as extra details, and it helps you figure out what you want to transition to next.

Myka Bailey:

That's very good. That's very good. I would just say as well on top of that is that remember that it's a conversation and it's supposed to be fun. So sometimes when I first started, I would get nervous, I want to do good, I want to do good. Well, I believe you're a social person. Just have fun with it. Get to know that person. And that's the whole point of the podcast is just to create an engaging conversation.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Another thing I'd like to add too is even doing this podcast, even if you're still nervous or worried or anything like that, it's also a podcast so they can edit out those parts that you feel that you're not confident in, so you don't have to worry about it. You can just let it flow. And our wonderful producer, that's what we'd call you, we'll call him our producer. Our wonderful producer, Dane Glenn, will edit out all the bad parts and make sure you sound like you know what you're talking about.

Brooke Nemeth:

That's what we all need sometimes.

Hunter Sparling:

If you could interview anybody that you wanted to that didn't have to be a West Texas A&M graduate or professor or staff or faculty, who would you interview?

Thomas Rodriguez:

If I were to interview anybody, this is an oddball pick that I'm sure none of you know about or a lot of people would know about. There is this comic writer who wrote a lot of comics that I read when I was a kid, because comics are really what inspired me to want to make stories and that kind of stuff, and that's how I've gotten into my radio show and all that. But there's this comic book writer named Ian Flynn who has made some of the best media I've ever read in my life, and he's really good at what he does, and he's



really good at knowing how to do what he needs to do. So if I could interview him, I would absolutely do that because I think he's super cool.

Myka Bailey:

I think I'm going to go pretty generic and say George Strait, just because we got to be honest, he's getting old. I don't know how much longer he is got. So if I could steal him for some inspirational speaking or whatever he has to say to me, that'd be really fun.

Brooke Nemeth:

What's been the most difficult part of the year when it came to the podcast?

Myka Bailey:

I think my most difficult part is sometimes you're worried if maybe your guest is maybe talking too long and you don't know how to be like, "Okay, so next question," because you don't want to be rude. But also at the same time, the podcast is only supposed to be about 30 minutes, so I think that would be my most difficult thing.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah. On occasion, you do need to rein them in because if they just keep going or if they start repeating themselves, it's like, well, we need to do something to keep this on track, keep it flowing, because whenever it flows, that's when it sounds the best. It's better when you can bounce back and forth and you need to know when to interject, I would say. And sometimes we've had difficulty with that, but for the most part, it's not too bad, it not very difficult. Recording a podcast is pretty simple. That's why there are so many of them. Ours is really good because we know what we're doing.

Hunter Sparling:

What was your most memorable moment while hosting this podcast?

Myka Bailey:

I think the most memorable moment for me is there was this couple that was in here, and they were talking about how they opened their doors in their home to people who have family from far away or maybe don't have family at all. And I just related to that so much because my grandparents are from Canada and I don't have grandparents here. So when they opened their home up to me, it was like, "Okay, I had people like that in my life. So I appreciated hearing that there's other people out there like that."

Thomas Rodriguez:

I think there've been a lot of stories been told on the podcast, and they're all really fun to hear because all these people who come on our podcast usually are, I don't want to say older, but they are. They are quite a bit older than the rest of us. So it's interesting to hear their life experiences and all that.

But I do remember a story Dr. Harry Houston was telling us. He had an exam. They have a practical exam where they have to Examine a crime scene, and they were using what used to be just the dirt field where the fob is now. And the exam, they had to call the exam early because they were 10 patches of rattlesnake dens that they had to get everyone out of there because the different groups were like, "Professor, there's snakes over here." And he was like, "Oh, it's fine. Just do this part over here." So he had to take them all back in. And in the story, he told it way better than I did. But it was a really interesting story and I still remember that I think about that story sometimes because I just was like, that was really interesting.

This transcript was exported on Jun 13, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

But that's what you get out of this podcast is you get to hear everyone's experiences with things. And some of those experiences, stick with you because they're entertaining or they mean something to them or all that kind of stuff.

Myka Bailey:

Yeah, that's been the best part for sure. All of the different stories you get to hear, because last week, Debbie, she got talk about the Vietnam War all the way back then.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I remember you were getting a little emotional sometimes with some of these. You're like tearing up everything.

Myka Bailey:

I'm an emotional person. I don't know what to say.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I'm just sitting there like, "Uh-huh. And then what happened?" And you're over here like-

Myka Bailey:

Crying.

Thomas Rodriguez:

... "I'm so sad." Well, thank you, Brooke, and thank you, Hunter, for joining us today. This is our last time signing off the podcast. Do we want to do anything fancy for it?

Myka Bailey:

I don't know.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, as we've said at the end of every episode, all of the podcasts you could find at wtamu.edu/podcast, the I Am WT podcast will return for season three in the fall semester. We hope you guys enjoyed our time on here, and we're looking forward to the new episodes that lie ahead.

Myka Bailey:

Yes, well, Myka and Thomas signing out.

Thomas Rodriguez:

As always, go Buffs.