

[Harding]

Sharing the stories

By KYLIE AKINS



There's just something about the Bison's nonnegotiable deadlines that attracts cataclysmal mishaps. In the two and a half years I have worked with the campus newspaper, I have seen some absolutely unpredictable things happen within the 24 hours before we print. Computers crash, news breaks two hours before deadline, and people disappear off the face of the planet. During our 10-day news cycle, anything and everything can go wrong.

After many nights of drinking unhealthy amounts of caffeine and pulling my hair out, you might wonder why I accepted a position on the Bison staff for my fourth and final semester before graduation in May. It's simply this: Beyond the strict deadlines and stressful assignments is the reward of working closely with passionate people.

Every story begins with an idea written in dry erase marker on the budget meeting board, and that idea is connected with people who have something to contribute to the story. Within the first few articles I wrote for the Bison, I learned what separated the apathetic sources from the inspirational ones; the sources who breathed life into a story were those who had their hearts in their work.

While I was a class writer for the Bison my sophomore year, I grew to appreciate stories with a cause. I covered fundraisers often, admiring the selfless passion that student leaders spoke with about African communities, Honduran children or international missionaries for whom they sought to raise support and awareness. Musicians fascinated me for the strong ideas they possessed and the medium through which they could both spread ideas and donate a skill to a cause. Alumni who attended Harding during its founding years eagerly told me stories of their youth and why they chose to remain involved in the lives of people my age. My peers willingly shared with me the core convictions that moved them to action. For me, journalism is less about the news and more about the chance to step into the shoes of dedicated people like these and share with others the beliefs and hopes that inspired the headlines in this week's paper.

After hours of listening to people who allowed me and my voice recorder into their offices, homes and lives, I feel grateful to each person for sharing a piece of his or her life with me. To be given the opportunity to tell the stories of people whose lives are made up of larger-than-life achievements and acts of selflessness has been a blessing from God. I watch people living out their faith in a diverse range of activities and ages, and they continually shape my perspective of life for the better.

Whether I'm given the opportunity to speak with a MacArthur Genius Grant winner, a Searcy resident committed to fighting illiteracy, the 2008 American Idol winner or a student selling bracelets for an orphanage in Africa, I get pre-interview jitters every time because I know these people will give me some piece of themselves that is treasured and important. I fall in love with the stories, and then I give them away every Friday delivery. After the stress of deadlines fades, the blessing I receive from interacting with genuinely passionate people is what endures.