

**Heather Hays - Fox 4 News**

**Interview Proctored By Nicole Hooi-Rodriguez**

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(00:03) **Nicole:** Okay! Perfectly recording. Alright so why don't you go ahead and start by telling me a little bit about yourself?

(00:06) **Heather:** Sure! My name is Heather Hays. I have been in the Dallas Fort Worth television market for more than 18 years now. I have um two gorgeous little girls. They are 10 and 11 years old and a great husband and two dogs and a turtle.

(00:23) **Nicole:** A turtle?! Where did you get a turtle?

(00:26) **Heather:** The girls got a turtle. A small one about the size of a quarter. It is now about the size of a pancake. It is huge. It is like this big... Like an iHop pancake. It is huge, and the turtle's name is Duckie. And the dog's name is Bear... Teddy Bear. One of the dogs. The other one is Hakkah.

(00:44) **Nicole:** So how big can a turtle grow? (laughs)

(00:47) **Heather:** They say it can grow as big as his container. So now we have stopped getting big containers so we will see (laughs).

(00:57) **Nicole:** We had a little program where and they brought all these animals over and a huge snap turtle and I was like I think I am going to stay away from it!

(01:02) **Heather:** Oh my gosh!

(01:05) **Heather:** No this one is just... I think it is the one that a friend gave to them. I thought it would be just little and tiny but he got a little bit bigger... it is like this big (shows with hands). Yea... it is pretty funny.

(01:18) **Nicole:** Okay.. so tell me a little bit about growing up. Like did you always know that um... broadcast is something that you wanted to do, or did you want to do something different? I know that you got a bachelor of science in sports psychology?

(01:34) **Heather:** No.. so my bachelor of science is in behavioral sciences and I graduated from Chaminade University of Honolulu and masters is in television and film. And so, much like you I went to graduate school, changing thinking what I was going to do in undergraduate school, changed that but its kind of ironic that I went back to something that I thought about for a long time in high school. So when you are in school they give you a test, and it is just like all kinds of questions and you kind of don't know where it is going and they say that answer the first thing that comes to your mind. "Do you wanna work indoors or do you wanna work outdoors? Do you

like talking with people or do you like working with numbers?" So the test has such kind of questions. There were probably a 100 questions on this test. And we all filled it out and it came back with this whole profile of what I should do and writing... writing stories was the very first thing... and directing... these were the two things that were at the top of my list. So it is really funny to me that I kind of ended up back in graduate school to do what, I thought about would do in high school. But my very first interview.. The very first one I ever did was with Matt Dillon. If you know who Matt Dillon is. I was something about 15 years old when I interviewed him and he was in Houston area for a movie. Gosh, I guess I was 14... So the movie was called *Liar's Moon* that he filmed in. And that's where I am from in Houston. He filmed it just outside of Houston. Can't remember the names of the city, but like a little park area. And so I was an extra in the movie, and somehow I got the gumption to go and ask his manager if I could interview him for my school newspaper. And so the manager said yes! I know it was a while later, a few months later I interviewed Matt in Houston hotel restaurant. And it was fantastic! I mean, it's great!

(03:36) **Nicole:** So when he did, so that wasn't in that moment. That was later. So they actually did keep in contact?

(03:41) **Heather:** Yeah! Like, I can't even believe like thinking back now, as I am telling. I haven't thought about this in ages. But thinking about how this all kind of came about... Yeah... I mean if you think about it, this was the '70s so this is before cell phones. This is before all that sort of things... Before email, before social media (laughs). And certainly before Matt Dillon was the star he is now and I still have that picture that he signed to me all those years ago.

(04:03) **Nicole:** So it was a foreword writing report?

(04:07) **Heather:** Yeah! So I did like an interview for my.... Gosh! I guess my junior high school.

(04:13) **Nicole:** Do you still have the interview?

(04:15) **Heather:** I don't have the interview. I have the picture of Matt and I am standing there and he is Mr. Cool. And I am this geeky, teenage girl. Now, I am sure it might be in a box somewhere. Who knows that from the paper, but I am sure it is long gone by now. But yeah, that was my very first interview all these years ago.

(04:34) **Nicole:** I remember, I feel like I read this. Correct me if I am wrong, but in it, you talked about having a journal and keeping a journal? Is that something like a personal journal or more of like a journal for your ideas and stories?

(04:47) **Heather:** So well, two thoughts, because I don't really have like a 'journal' journal. I have kept for... Oh my gosh... I don't have boxes in the attic, probably for 20 years. Gosh... longer than that. 25 years. Holy cats! Time flies. But I keep datebooks. And so in the datebook, I will write "Oh, great interview tonight. Super fun," you know, talking about us. And so I will make notes like that. So that I can look back on this date and say 'What did I do in November of

2018.” And I keep those datebooks. So they are in a box, and somebody was asking me something from a few years ago. And I am like, ‘I have got that datebook still in my desk. So I opened it up and talked about that. So I keep those kinds of journals. Not every-night-writing-journals. But one thing that I did keep that was truly so inspirational for me was when I was in Hawaii after I finished graduate school in Boston, Boston University, and then came back to Hawaii, when I was looking for a job. I was a... Gosh... I did all kinds of jobs. So I was looking for a job in television, I was a substitute teacher, which was horrible for me. That one was a high school boys gym class, and I am 25 years old trying to wrangle these boys. And it was just not easy at all. But what I started doing, and again, this is before computers, as in before I had one. But you know, the early 90s, I guess, is I kept my notebook in my journal of every place I applied for a job. So we used to have something called media line, it was an 800 phone number. And so you call 1800, and whatever the number was, and it was like “Do you want to be a writer? Press one. Do you want to be a news anchor? press number two. Do you want to be a producer? press number three.” So you’d go through the phone tree and pick what you would want? Well, you know, no telling, I would remember if I applied for this job, and whatever city or state I was applying for, sorry to keep my notes and I would write everything down. So I actually applied for 121 jobs. I think it was my magic number before I got my real job. I mean, I had had internships and all sorts of wonderful opportunities at different places, but not like a paying job. So my first job was in Yakima, Washington and it was the 121st job that I applied for. So even now, I have that notebook. In fact, I saw it just a couple of days ago, going through a closet, because I think it is so important to understand that, you know, if you send out a resume and a tape and I mean, these are tapes. They are not online links like you have now. I stepped to send out the big tape and the resume put in the mail from Hawaii and mailed it out. And I would keep notes that I mailed it on x date to x person, and this is the market size and this is the job I was applying for. So just to keep records. So for me, it is just really important. If I do go talk to students or go talk to groups to show you... its a journey and for me, that was probably eight months. I guess I am looking for a job and I very distinctly remember sending out the tape to Yakima and I was like “Please let this be the one!” and it was wonderful and made \$15,000 a year so it was fantastic and it was great!

(08:09) **Heather:** I talk a lot.

(08:10) **Nicole:** Oh no, no. If you let me I could talk the paint off the walls. So tell me about your internships that you did, and the first job that you had. What was it like?

(08:18) **Heather:** Yeah. So the internships were great. One of my best ones was at Continental Cablevision, which is on the Northeast. I was in grad school at the time and was looking for on-camera opportunities. And so I found this cable station and just went and knocked on their door and said “Hi! I see that you have got a great station here. And you don’t really have an on-air person who does anything. I would like to be that person.” And so they said “Well, come on! We are not going to pay you though.” I am like “I don’t need it, I am looking for the experience.” So I had the greatest time. We did several documentaries. One of them was called *When the race is over*. It was about greyhounds and what happens to greyhound dogs who are in the sport of racing and how there was at that time.... Again, this was years ago, a lot of animal abuse and

different things would happen, which is very frightening. We did that. We did the Patriots Day Parade. That was, I think, my first live TV experience there. And it was where Continent Cablevision was located is... so there's Boston, and this is kind of like where Harvard University is and in that area, it's kind of there on the fringe. I would take two buses to get there to do my internship. So did that. I did school board debates with some of the election. So it really gave me the opportunity to do everything; from the greyhound racing to the parade to the school board debates on live television. And it was fantastic. Another internship that I had, I was actually Miss Hawaii, USA years ago when I lived in Hawaii and the ABC news anchor in Honolulu. I was her intern for a while. And she was great. Pamela Young. I remember working with her. So, also at Boston University, we had a show called Boston Uncovered, which, I think is probably still around. National, sort of, a college student network of shows. So I did an internship there. So I think there are lots of opportunities for young people to find. I think for a couple of reasons. Number one, it gives you the experience. So you have got to find these internships so that when you are ready to get into the working world, you can say, 'I have done this,' but the number two, what if its something that you are not necessarily all that interested in? It gives you an opportunity to see that as well.

(10:43) **Nicole:** So you are Miss Honolulu, right?

(10:45) **Heather:** Miss Hawaii. Yeah.

(10:47) **Nicole:** We are planning to go to Honolulu.

(10:47) **Heather:** That is fantastic! Yay!!

(10:50) **Nicole:** But that is like in a couple of weeks. So how did the experience of Miss Hawaii prepare you or how do you think that added to your career?

(11:04) **Heather:** So I was Miss Hawaii in the Miss USA pageant. And that was in 1992. And I did, during my reign, believed it was more than 300 appearances across the state of Hawaii. Everything from doing volunteer work, there was a wonderful place called the Peanut Butter Ministry, which would help to feed homeless people, to working with the Make A Wish Foundation to just going out to schools and talking. And I think it really builds your confidence and being able to just approach somebody especially now. Of course, it wasn't a problem then. But now, when so many people are on their phones, and you are interacting with people on social media, not necessarily walking up and shaking somebody's hand and saying, "Hello, my name is so and so" and looking them in the eye, which is huge. So that gave me the confidence and the opportunities over and over every single day to do those sorts of things. When I was in college at Chaminade... it is kind of a funny story. And this is just kind of how life changes. I wanted to be in behavioural sciences. Sports psychology was actually what I was thinking. So it was a very small Catholic school. And we would have anywhere from 10 to 15 people in our classes... very small. So I would look at the syllabus on day one, and it would say, "You'd have to give this oral presentation," and I would drop the class and because it was such a small school, Dr. Man, Brian Man was the same professor for all these classes. So he called me into

his office one day and he said “You have dropped my classes semester after semester. Do you have a problem with me? Is there something going on?” And I said, “I am just into my modelling career.” I said whatever I could to not have to tell the real reason. Well, he wasn’t buying it. And so I finally fessed up and said, “I cannot speak in front of people. I can’t do it.” I said I will get sick. And he is like, “Okay, here’s your choice, you can either do these presentations in class, or you can fail because I am not going to drop you from any of my classes anymore. So you need to figure out what you are going to do.” I remember the first time standing up in front of the class, there were about eight or nine people in it and I thought I was going to die. I mean it was sweaty, my stomach hurt. And it was just awful. But I got through it, and I did it. And then I ended up graduating from Chaminade with a 4.0 as the commencement speaker. So I spoke in front of the entire university and went on to have a career in doing this, which is crazy to me. But I just also think that it just really shows how a teacher or somebody in your life can make a huge difference. And then we have these turning points, and I guess if he hadn't said “Do this,” or “Take another road,” and I met his challenge. Thank goodness! So, I think things like that like Dr. Man helping me to see that okay, I can do these things because I always had this drive and I wanted to. I just was too nervous to do them. So then that helped me then do Miss Hawaii which then being on the national stage at Miss USA was fantastic again. A live TV program where it was just so exciting. And then that really cemented I think, the idea that, okay I am going to go back to school and learn about broadcast and film. So it was great.

(14:35) **Nicole:** It was either this past weekend or two weeks ago, I was stressing out because I just been shadowing somebody on the Mean Green Network all season. And their sideline reporter had to cover something else and so they were like “Hey do you want to come?” and I said yes, but not really thinking like, what I was getting myself into because I was like, just say yes, and then just kind of learnt a lot. So I just used to say yes and then think about it later. So I did the same thing here. And I was stressed out and nervous. And we didn’t go over it much before the game and they just kind of throw it down to you when you have to do it.

(15:09) **Heather:** See, that’s fantastic! You have to challenge yourself. You absolutely have to, if you don’t, how exciting is life going to be?

(15:22) **Nicole:** But I was glad that I made it through. Although it wasn’t perfect, at least I made it through. And that is why I told them that whatever critiques they wanted to send me afterwards, they can.

(15:24) **Heather:** that is really good!

(15:39) **Nicole:** So how do you prepare to come to work? What does a day in your life look like?

(15:47) **Heather:** So I get in at two o’clock in the afternoon.

(15:50) **Nicole:** I thought you were about to tell me two o’clock in the morning! [Laughs]

(15:53) **Heather:** No no, it is not that much preparation. I know that's when my mom had is on and I get my girls to school. I get up about six every morning. So nights like tonight will be very hard because I probably won't get home till, you know, 12:30 [a.m.] or so, depending upon what time the news is over. And then getting up to get the kids to school, these are hard, turn-around nights. But everybody's got their, you know, the things that they are juggling. And that is mine, getting my children off to school. But getting them off to school is the mommy morning routine, doing the laundry, doing the house cleaning and all that sort of stuff. And then I really start tuning in and checking out what's going on. I have the news on in the background and of course thanks to social media that you can find out about breaking news and different things that are happening. So I really come to work at two with the idea of already what's going on in the world and in here in our community as well, but we have a two o'clock meeting. Our editorial meeting will then debrief us on what our day side reporters are working on and what we're looking at for our early newscast as far as stories. And then our evening reporters or night reporters will pitch their ideas and if any of the anchors have their ideas as well, they will pitch those. And then that takes 45 minutes to an hour and then it's catching up on email. I anchor the five o'clock to six o'clock and the nine o'clock news so by the time that meeting is over and I kind of go through emails and checking in and looking at my computer and answering notes and start to look at scripts, it's time to get ready to go on TV and then the night flies by and we do promos about 6.30 and so about seven take a little break and then start getting ready for the Nine o'clock News so it is a fast day!

(17:31) **Nicole:** And I am sure it goes by fast.

(17:32) **Heather:** Yeah. It flies quickly.

(17:34) **Nicole:** Do your girls watch you on the news and how do you think that... this might be a question for them, but then I guess they must have told you that! How do you think you being on the television has influenced them? I am sure they must be super excited to see their mom on television!

## PART II

(0:02) **Nicole:** Alright, sorry. Well, you know, well it's about to give me another heart attack.

(0:03) **Heather:** No, no, that's ok [laughs].

(0:07) **Heather:** I have pictures of my daughters when they were younger, they would kiss the TV when mom was on it. Now they, in fact, I talked to them before I came in here with you, I'm like, "Mom's gonna be home late, you've got to go to bed," because they like to try to wait up for me when I get home from work, which is getting late, like 10:30 [p.m.]? It's late for 10- 11-year-old girls. But they are very aware of what's going on in the community. I filter. Obviously some of the stories that could be disturbing for them. So it's all age-appropriate what I share. But I also think it's very important that we kind of understand that the world is not always a safe place. And

it's important to see something, say something; it's important to know where all the exits are. When you go into a room, it's important to know that bad things happen to good people. And so you have to be aware of those things. That's just self-preservation, I think. And so one of my daughter's, every morning: "Okay, mom, what stories did you tell on the news last night? Tell me one good one and one bad one." And she is just really fascinated by it all. The other one who's about a year younger says, "Some of these stories are just awful. And it makes me so sad!" I said I know. But you know, there were stories like today where you learn about a family that, their lives were saved in a house fire because they closed a bedroom door and everybody got in that room. And then people came and rescued them. So I mean, there are things that you can learn and understand. Yes, it's very sad that they lost their home, but their lives were saved. Well, now we can continue to help them by donating. And so they're just different ways that you can get involved. So I think, I never liked to hear somebody say, "We don't watch local news." Because local news is important. It's what's happening to our neighbours and in our own community. And it's things that maybe you don't feel like you have control over what's happening in other parts of the world, or in other parts of the country. But you can certainly have an impact one way or the other here in your own community. And I think, so, we all need to remember that, that - it's going to sound strange - it's bigger than the big picture. What's bigger is kind of right here at home, you know, and we can make a difference right here in this big picture. We can maybe solve some of those problems by starting here at home.

(2:23) **Nicole:** So I don't know where truthfully can't recall where I heard this, probably like at church, but I remember them always referring to people as like world changers, world changers, world changers, but it makes people believe sometimes that we have to go to other countries to change something when we really can change something in our own community. Like in our world around us.

(2:45) **Heather:** Right. That's very true.

(2:47) **Nicole:** You briefly mentioned social media. So how do you think social media has had an impact on us? And where were you in your career when it initially came out. Because even some of it truthfully, is a little bit new to me. I don't necessarily know how I feel about it yet [laughs]. But what did you think about it in the beginning, having to learn that and then how it impacts the news on a day to day basis?

(3:12) **Heather:** Obviously, it's a much different way of communicating and connecting with viewers than how it was that I originally got into the news business. I have a couple of different opinions on it. I am not a big social media person. I don't post tons. I should probably post more. But I like to do more sharing than original material. Because there are so many times where I think somebody's tried to post something, and it's maybe taken a different way. I never want to not have my point well understood. And sometimes that's difficult to do in such short amount of - especially if you use Twitter, and so few characters or Facebook. People I often think will see what they want to see. And I mean, just like if somebody posts a story - Oh my gosh, there was something I saw today that I can't even remember what it was. But people were looking at something that wasn't even the story. I'm going to make this up like if you're looking at a kid who

got a brand new bicycle because his was stolen. And let's say that he was sitting on the bicycle with no helmet on everybody be talking about the helmet, it's like, "Okay, well, that's not the story that we're talking about, he needs to wear the helmet, or she needs to wear the helmet." Obviously, that wasn't the example I saw. But it was something like that, that people just kind of pick things apart and look for arguments. And, and I don't like that part of it. I think that social media can be a fantastic place for information. As long as the information is accurate. People who share posts without sourcing them, or who do it to spread anger or hate or more divisive topics is frustrating. I don't like that at all. Because then, you know, if you read comments, people do the back and forth and I'm just thinking, "Oh, my gosh, I've got far too much happening in my life right now to be able to do this or to weigh in," and so I don't weigh in on a lot of things. I don't give my opinion on things that is not my place. My place always as a journalist has been to present the facts and from the newsmakers to give information to our community. It's not for me to go into a back and forth with somebody on what their beliefs are. It's just for me to present it and say, "Here you go, this is what's happening."

(5:30) **Nicole:** That I, I learned very early on, I always get lost in the comments sometimes. I need to get off. I do notice that a lot of people will sometimes share things, but only based on the headline. And then the headline at times can be like a bait and switch almost, it'll take you in. And so when people will comment, I'll be like, did you actually read this entire article? Did you go through these? So they won't have read it.

(5:57) **Heather:** Right.

(6:02) **Nicole:** Okay. So tell me about being a woman in this career and what that's been like for you and maybe any challenges you've had to overcome and challenges, maybe that you still feel like you have to overcome if any?

(6:14) **Heather:** Well, I think, you know, the "Me Too" movement has been fantastic in empowering, hopefully, a lot of women to have confidence in their workplace to know that there are places to turn if they have been victims in their workplace of any sort of negative behavior or abuse or attitudes or those sorts of things or power struggles. But I think what it also did, too, is identify that there is a huge problem. I knock on wood. I've been so fortunate that I've worked in some very healthy workplaces. Not like they've all been the best. But there's always been a resource to go to if there was an issue with anybody. I have always had, for example, my first job in Yakima, my first news director was a wonderful mentor. And she still is. Shelly Swanky. And she's in Portland now, but she's a great touchstone. I think, I think being a woman especially, we have challenges that maybe only being another woman you can identify with. I am still at home responsible for the majority of the housework and for caring for the kids and managing my children's schedule, which is a full-time job in itself, and then managing my very little personal life and then my full time job. So sometimes I come to work and I'm stressed out because I'm thinking about the kids. And maybe that's something that my male co-workers can't necessarily understand because sometimes that's just how families are separated. And it's certainly how mine has been separated. So I think having a mentor, a female mentor in the workplace is huge. And I think looking for those role models who you can turn to, if you need



help, who you can see, “You know what, she did it, she managed to have a family and do this, or this woman decided not to have a family or didn't have a family for whatever reason, but she's doing it,” because whatever you've got on your plate, everybody's super busy. And everybody is juggling something, whether it's children, or pets, or volunteer work. Whatever, whatever it might be. So I think it's just for me, it was always just finding somebody as a touchstone. So in Yakima, it was Shelly and has been Shelly.

And she's the one who encouraged me who said, “You know what, you can, you can move forward, you can leave Yakima, and you can move to Green Bay, and you're going to do great there.” And then when I got the opportunity to come to Dallas, Fort Worth, she's like, “You know, you can do that.” So I think it's finding somebody in your life you can hopefully have a connection with, and then they can help support you. So I don't know if that kind of microscopically answered your question, but I just think it's about finding support because it's very difficult for - whatever your career is - for you to do it on your own. People always say we can have it all. Well, sure. But that means that maybe one day part of your life will suffer while the others are doing great, and then the next part won't do so well. So I mean we're all going to, some days, it feels like everything is balancing perfectly and other days, not so much.

(9:30) **Nicole:** Was there anyone else? Because that was from the very beginning.

(9:33) **Heather:** Yeah, yeah, no, Shelly has just kind of been that person. In Green Bay, I had a wonderful colleague, Valerie Lego, who is in - where is Valerie now, Minnesota? - who was great. That was at times- it was a new station. It was a new NBC startup, NBC station. We had a really great core group of people who worked there. But Valerie and I were just like, “We're going to do this together.” We were there in Green Bay about two months before, before our first newscast, and it was just something that you kind of, you know, I partnered up with her. And I think we just found our path that way. And that was a really wonderful experience. We did the Green Bay Packers, went on to win the Super Bowl in '96. And so we took our show on the road for about three weeks down to New Orleans together. And Valerie was my producer, and I did all the newscasts from there. And then the next year the Packers went on to San Diego, because the '97, lost that Super Bowl, but it was just great experiences. So I think it's maybe trying to stay grounded and centered. And maybe that's with your partner or a best friend or somebody in your career. I think it always helps to have somebody in your chosen career, or at least a professional in kind of something that you like to do, or who maybe can identify with the struggles. It's interesting now looking at younger people who you know, your age, who are going to be coming into it, you're gonna have a lot more to deal with, you know, with social media, then, because you are expected more to post. When I say “I'm not posting a lot,” I mean, I'm 52, it's not, I'm not expected to be out there, like I'm 22 or 32, so that's okay. So you're going to have a lot more to deal with, especially as you move forward with all the different choices that you're going to make in your life.

(11:25) **Nicole:** I know, I keep thinking about like, I was thinking about Twitter, and even Rebecca had mentioned this, I think, a couple weeks ago about she was like, you know, I wonder if, you know, some people think that that like, takes away, because she's like, if you're

like social media, "If I'm trying to think about reporting, and then I have to think about recording. And then I have to also think about, you know, live tweeting something that's like going on, I wonder how often," she was like, "how often we miss something,"

(11:53) **Heather:** Oh that's really interesting.

(11:54) **Nicole:** You know, she's like, by there being so much going on. But we had also talked about technology. And so that's what I wanted to ask you about was technology. I, I did a tour with a women's media Foundation, I think, their chapter here in Dallas. And so when we were going on a tour, they kept talking about how a lot of technology is replacing jobs. So such as, like the teleprompters, and now like, there's not like as many like camera operators or something like that. So where do you see or where have you seen over years technology growing? And then where do you think it'll go, as far as impacting, maybe, jobs?

(12:27) **Heather:** Oh, my gosh, that's a wonderful question. And I don't know that I have an answer. I mean, I can tell you, you know, what I've experienced, which is we used to have a teleprompter operator here. We don't have that anymore. We do it ourselves. We have our foot pedal. Although interestingly enough, when I was in Yakima, we didn't have a teleprompter operator, I did it there as well. But I'll tell you how we did it. So we had, we had to print out four copies of our scripts, and we would separate out a copy. So the director got this copy and I would get this one. And who knows with the other ones went, but - and I get a roll of scotch tape - and I would just stand there before my newscast and I would take this, this is my first script. And this is the second script. And this is my third. And I would, so I had a long trail. See, how did we do it? Did we do it from the bottom? Nope. We did it from the top first. So, then I'd go back and roll it up, go to the front. We had a machine at the teleprompter. And I would slip it in the machine, and it had a bar that went over it like this, [shows with hands] like all the way across and I'd read it, look in the teleprompter. Let's say somebody was found guilty and it said 'not guilty'. I have to go before the newscast and cross out 'not' over here. I mean, I do it with pencil or somebody would scratch-write-in things that would show up on the screen in front of me. So it would feed in like this. And I would hope that I got all the tape right and flat because if I didn't, instead of feeding it like this to then let me read, I would look at the teleprompter and I would see it start to crumple and do this. And I had the thing here. And I would like to start I back it up. And I tried to read and then I tried to go forward. And so you would hope that backing it up would then straighten it out. And if not that it would crumple. And I was done. And I would have an extra copy in front of me that I was keeping up with. But, I didn't have a teleprompter operator then, so I feel like well, I've just gone back to where I was. So it's fine. We no longer have camera operators. They're all robotic.

(14:21) But you know what, it's still a people business. And you need people to tell stories. There has been the talk of I think the CW does this, you know, they'll have one central station in a market, one central TV station. And then they'll broadcast it, what, much like the Nationals I guess, to different markets with some reporters focusing on just that markets news so that they can focus on what's happening in that community, which will make it seem like it's a local newscast, even though the main people at the station are in whatever other markets they're

broadcasting to. You know, I don't know, I think there's always a place for local news. I think it's always important to know what's happening in your community. I don't know where technology is going. I'd like to think that you know, it's just making us better and making us more able to cover the stories better. I don't know. I'm so thankful that I'm in a place with really amazing reporters and directors and producers and writers who piece it all together for us because we do.. my gosh.. I kind of lost track, nine hours of local news a day? I mean whatever it is, we do we do a lot, 4-10 a.m. is six and then half an hour and then 3.00 p.m. - that's nine and a half. And then yeah, so like 10 and a half hours of programming right from here. It's incredible the work we do. And the people I work with, I'm so fortunate to have worked with many of them for so long. And then to get new people in here as well who have great ideas and are really great at social media. So it's, you know, I guess it's everybody learning from each other and as far as where things are going to go, I don't know, I'm just happy to have been a part of it so far.

(16:02) **Nicole:** I was watching this video online and on it, I don't even think it was recent it was from when you were here at Fox 4 but I think Steve, your cohost.

(16:11) **Heather:** Yes.

(16:12) **Nicole:** So I think it was him like trying to do a behind the scenes thing?

(16:16) **Heather:** Oh yeah, he did that for a while. I mean, it's interesting, but you definitely - as you said Rebecca mentioned to you - do you lose something along the way? Because you're trying to do this and trying to do this. Well our main objective is to deliver to the viewers, you know, through the TV at home, at work, wherever they might be. So it's really hard to then go into commercial break, and "Okay I'm switching from this to then I'm talking to this," so yeah he doesn't do that any more. It lasted a short time.

(16:42) **Nicole:** No I liked it I like that and the one thing that I do like about social media I mean there's a good and the bad with it too but especially with video is that people even in like the DFW area consider I like really all of you guys kind of like almost like local celebrities.

(16.58) **Heather:** Yeah.

(16.58) **Nicole:** So it's cool to see behind the scenes stuff because it humanizes

(17:02) **Heather:** Absolutely that's so important.

(17.04) **Nicole:** I was like, not everybody is perfect. I'm like, and we all laugh. We all have fun. We all have a good time. And so I really like that.

(17.11) **Heather:** Oh, well, I'll tell them you said that.

(17.12) **Nicole:** I was like, it looks like they really have a very good time.

(17:17) **Heather:** Well, I'm lucky I work here, I mean he and I have been together, gosh, going on probably one of the longest anchor teams in the country still on the air working together at 18 years. So, well. Few more years and we'll hopefully break a record.

(17:32) **Nicole:** And it's around Christmas time. So I also saw this video. I know that you still work or partner with Toys for Tots. Correct? So you've been doing that for like, probably now when I saw that. I think it was 2015?

(17:42) **Heather:** Yeah. Oh gosh. No. We've been doing Toys for Tots, I think for 15 years. Yeah. So, wow, probably since 2003, 2004? Something like that.

(17:53) **Nicole:** I think it was just the video.

(17:55) **Heather:** Yeah.

(17:56) **Nicole:** So I saw a video of you and you talked about, I think it was Miss Beasley?

(18:00) **Heather:** Oh, that's right! It's funny, yes. I can't even imagine what I said. Yes! Mrs. Beasley was - who I still have in one of my drawers - one of my favorite dolls. The doll that my brother, and I don't know if I talked about this in the video, he did an operation on her. He took out her voice box. So she still has a big stitch right across. So I turned 50 a couple of years ago. And for my 50th birthday, my mother save me another Mrs. Beasley Doll. I know she thought it was really great, but I still like my original Mrs. Beasley with the crazy hair and the, you know, dirty face and the missing arm and the stitch where my brother took out her voice box.

(18:37) **Nicole:** You've had it forever had the same thing. I have a little bear that my grandpa gave me. Probably when I was like four or five and I've gotten a lot of bears since. But I still know where the little bear is at.

(18:46) **Heather:** What's his name?

(18:47) **Nicole:** Mr. Bear. I was super creative as a kindergartner. It was like, "What do you want to name him?" - "Bear" - real creative, Nicole. [laughs]

(18:56) **Nicole:** But I wanted to ask what has Toys for Tots meant to you, what is probably one of your most memorable moments while working with them.

(19:06) **Heather:** I think it's seeing some of the same people come back out year after year after year. And there's one little boy who, I'm so sorry, I can't remember his name. But I'm sure I'll see him again. This year. He's probably about 12 now. But for probably the past five or six years, he and his family have come out. And every year he's grown and grown and grown. And this young man, it's his birthday presents and donates his birthday presents to Toys for Tots. Because it's so important to him. So I think it's it's hearing the stories from people who you might not think donating one toy will make a difference. It makes a huge difference to the child who receives

that toy. And it's I think it goes back to what we were talking about earlier about how if you hear there's a need in your community through local news that a family needs something or toy drive needs more toys, then you can make a difference. And you can very easily, through social media, you can donate or drive down to one of the locations. For example, Toys for Tots, where we're going to be but Toys for Tots is something my family's taken to heart. So in fact, this year, we're having our ninth annual toy drive. So over the years, my daughters have donated thanks to family and friends. Probably 15, 1600 toys, Toys for Tots and other local charities. Because it's I just believe learning that lesson very early about giving back is incredibly important. I mean, I grew up in a household where my mom did that and, and taught us how important it was to give back and so involved in Toys for Tots here at work, March for Babies is also I'm so blessed to have two daughters born healthy, but not every parent is that lucky. And so March for Babies, you know, spreads awareness and raises funds so that those families can be helped, and hopefully make sure that every baby is born healthy. And we work with [Susan G.] Komen here. But gosh, I mean, looking back, there's just been, you know, so many outstanding organizations I've been lucky enough to volunteer with. Because there are people who are way more dedicated than me, and I'm so glad that I can do what I can. But I'm just so thankful that there are other people who put so much time and effort into it.

(22:16) **Nicole:** Let me see here. You've been here. 18 years. Correct. So total career?

(22:20) **Heather:** Okay. So 18 years here, four in Green Bay, two in Yakima. So I guess Gosh, what year did I get to Yakima, 94? So I got to Yakima, so 24 years. Gosh, that many? Twenty-four years? Doesn't seem very. Yeah. So I started really late. So I got think I was telling you my undergraduate and then took a year off and did Miss Hawaii and then the graduate degree. So I was probably Yeah, I was probably 26/27 when I got my first job in Yakima, so it's amazing. We have people who are much younger than that, who are working here. But I I took a little longer path

(23:12) **Nicole:** that'll be me too

(23:13) **Heather:** took me five years to get out of college. Fine, then take a year off to do this, oh graduate school. So [laughs]

(23:17) **Nicole:** So what? So do you plan on doing this until you retire? I'm assuming

(23:24) **Heather:** Yes. God willing, if they'll keep me I think we're so lucky. Not a knock on wood. Steve and I have at nine o'clock, the most watched newscast in all of North Texas. And it beats 9 p.m. programming, not just newscasts, but you know, regular programming. So we're so lucky that so many people here in North Texas turned to us. And I think a lot of that comes from the fact that we've been together so long. And you know, you made the comment about celebrities, local celebrities, but I like to think of it as you know what, we're more like family or friends because people will see us on the street and go, "Hey, Steve. Hey, Heather." And so I mean, that's what I'm hoping for. So that we become, you know, a place of trust and a place of comfort. And because I'll tell you, when there were the police, the Dallas police ambush that

happened, you know, right outside our studio doors, I mean, that was right here. And it happened about one minute before we were live on TV for nine o'clock newscast. And we had our helicopter up, and because there was a protest that night and the march and so we were ready to go, our reporters and photographers were in place and Sky 4 for was overhead. And there's a shot where you can see all of a sudden, it's like dropping, you know, oil and water and kind of does that, you know, where the people start to disperse. And they're running and panic, running from whatever it was whatever, they heard - gunshots. And one of our photographers is running toward where it happened. And you see all these people, you know, running away from our photographer, and we were on the air for seven hours straight, no commercials, no nothing.

And then we'd start getting the reports in of one officer dead. Two officers wounded, three officers dead, four officers wounded. I mean, it was just... it was awful. And when that started just again, one minute before newscast we rolled are open and we said: "Good evening, we have breaking news, we want to get to this immediately." And we'd go to our reporters on the scene. And you know, they're ducking down behind cars, because police are saying get down, get down. We don't know where the shooter is. And we stayed with that scene from the moment the shots were fired until four in the morning after chief David Brown had taken out the shooter. And it was making sure that the streets of Dallas were safe once again. So you know, four in the morning is when we kind of you know, you don't shed a tear - people at home are, I'm sure emotional and scared. And lots of things are going on in their minds. And for us, we're just trying to get that information accurately and deliver it to our viewers. And that's when you do have to be mindful of social media and what people are posting and doing live interviews. Because you know, obviously police are very, very busy as their brothers and sisters and blue are being killed. And somebody's shooting. And people are running and people are injured. So they don't have time to give us the information because they're trying to take care of the city. So when people can turn to us, at just such an awful time like that we want to be we want them to know that they can trust us that we're here that we're not only delivering your news, we're part of your community, we are your neighbors, you see us at Walmart, you see us in the carpool line, or, you know, commuting to work, whatever it is, because those awful events when they happen, God forbid they happen again, but we want to be able to deliver the accurate, trustworthy information.

And so we want people in the community to know to know that whether it's a bad weather situation, there's information that you only get from local news that you're not going to get from anywhere else. Storm's coming in tomorrow. People need to know that people need to plan for those sorts of things. So whether it's breaking news, like a shooting or whether that you can more plan to know that it's coming, we want people to know that you can turn to us. So I think there's always going to be a place for local news. And I hope people continue to see that as well.

(27:43) **Nicole:** I will. I know I remember that night. I remember staying up all night long waiting and wanting to know what happened. I remember walking through the door and I remember the TV on but I don't think that she recognized like what was going on. And I'm like, are you watching this? Like, do you see like, what's happened like this is it was just crazy. Because you

hear stuff like that. That sometimes all over the country or somewhere. It's not. It's not in your backyard. And so I was very taken aback by this. And I am like, I can't believe that.

(28:12) **Heather:** Yeah, it's pretty awful.

(29:33) **Nicole:** I can't believe that. It's downtown. Me and my now husband, we've just moved downtown like two weeks ago. But just thinking about that.

(29:13) **Nicole:** But I wanted to know, because I know that you said so that you'll mean obviously that you always continue to be in his career in the reason I asked that. Because I know that a lot of people who do end up retiring end up wanting to teach.

(29:44) **Nicole:** And so I was just wanting to know if that would be even something that you'd consider be interested in. Or maybe even like, reading a book like for academics that students would know.

(29:52) **Heather:** Oh, I would love to teach like, I would, I'd love to teach right now [laughs]. I'd love to teach like in the morning then come to work, if I can, you know, put one more thing on my plate. Yeah, I think that would be great. Because I love being inspired by people who want to learn. And I mean, I think learning is so important, no matter what age you are, and sharing information and coming up with different ideas and new ways to do things. And I can certainly share how I've done things and how it was when I, you know, have been in the business, but it's also great to hear other ideas that people have. So yeah, I would love that. And, um, yeah, I love writing. I always wanted to be a children's book author. I have several books on my computer now, that one day, maybe they're ready to go. So I'd love to do that. And I think they're pretty good. My daughters, like them. One of them is called, oh, my gosh, I haven't even thought of this for so long. It's gonna make me cry. It's about a mom who goes to work. And the daughter asks, you know, will, Mommy will you always be here. And it goes through like the seasons of, you know, like fall, spring, winter, and the seasons about Mommy - gosh I'm going to cry - Mommy will always be here. But it's "Mommies and Bears Will Always Be There" is the name of the book. And so the little girl gets a bear in the beginning of the book and the bear kind of follows her through the seasons. Because, yeah, my daughters, when they were little would be like, "Mommy, are you coming home? Mommy?" What do you - because, you know, being a working mom, this is tough sometimes. So I would like to do that. I would like to have the flexibility, to have somebody who wants to purchase my books and and do that. But those are the kind of books that I'm interested in. I wrote a murder mystery. But here's how long ago I wrote it, like, it had the VCR in it. So that is how long ago that was. And that is still sitting on my computer. And it is bloody and murder and gore. And like, I read it now. And I was like, "Who wrote this book?!" but, but it's so good. But yeah, the killer has a VCR. And he's like - I put in the play / rewind button. VCR? Really? I don't even think anybody has VCRs anymore.

(32:02) **Nicole:** I've been trying to find mine for the path will the one that my parents had for a while because all of our Disney videos, they're all in a VCR. And they just all those tapes. And so but nope, they got rid of it a long time ago.

(32:16) **Heather:** That's really funny. You'll have to send them off to one of those companies that does that.

(32:20) **Nicole:** And so hopefully they'll be able to make it for us. But no, you need to get those. Have you ever like tried to who would you like a send it to any of them to publish?

(32:24) **Heather:** Halfway? I mean, no, I don't want my dreams dashed. I'll do it in another 10 years when I'm old, really old. And can sit around and write.

(32:37) **Nicole:** Put it under like an alias.

(32:38) **Heather:** That's right.

(32:41) **Nicole:** Okay. I don't want to keep you too much longer. And it's about to be 8. So just lastly, what advice would you just give aspiring journalists and reporters?

(32:55) **Heather:** Oh, my gosh, there is so much I think number one is just that pay attention. Pay attention to the world around you. Everybody has a story. When you look around at the grocer or that you know, somebody at school or one of your classmates. I mean, everybody's got a story to tell. So if you're interested in human interest stories, which sometimes, not all stations take the time to invest in a reporter to do those kind of stories. But like CBS Sunday morning - love that show. Or Nightline, where they can do longer form stories really show how to draw people in and to share the story. So I think, pay attention. Just look at the world around you would be the first thing and the second thing would be to watch the news. Stay informed. Pay attention to current events. All of these things do matter. Politics do matter, what happens in neighbourhood, schools, all of those things matter. So pay attention, and practice your writing skills. You know, read a newspaper article and then try to write it in 20 seconds or less. Which is probably, the average time a story gets on TV, things are so quick. So you want to make sure that your writing skills are up to date. And probably you know, when you go for your first job, you'll be asked to give a writing sample or take a writing test. They'll do that here's a story now put this into 20 seconds to read on TV. And I would say do as much as you can in your community to find out what matters to other folks. Do volunteer work, get involved more with your church, just be part of it. Don't just sit back and I think a lot of people again, social media, you know, they'll sit back and I'll make comments or they'll judge things when they're not even involved at all. So I just think being part of the community, and taking classes and learning and I think getting to know people finding out the steps, you know Freedom of Information Act where's City Hall, where's the police station, I mean all these you know how does government work I mean I'll just all these things that you just need to know that people should know but when you're a reporter and helping to share information with viewers you should be a good trustworthy source to know what you're talking about know how things work so you can then share those with your viewers



(35:16) **Nicole:** Thank you so much for letting me come in and invade your space! [laughs]

(35:20) **Heather:** I'm very sorry that I talked so long

(35:23) **Nicole:** No, you didn't talk so long I'm just trying to make sure that I don't like hold you up from your newscast.

(35:26) **Heather:** Thank you.