

Oral History of Corrie MacLaggan, Managing Editor for the *Texas Tribune*

By Rebecca Najera, Kyle Johnson, Emily Olkkola, and Sydney Cooper

Corrie MacLaggan: ... video, right? That you're gonna do?

Emily: I'm sorry? One more?

Corrie: You're, you're doing audio not video?

Emily: Yeah, we're doing audio.

Corrie: Okay.

Rebecca: Um, and then-

Emily: [crosstalk 00:00:12]-

Emily: ... just to start off with the really basic questions, that you know, that we have to ask. What is your first and last name and how do you spell it?

Corrie: Okay, it's in my email, uh, it's-

Rebecca: Yeah, it's in your email, it's cool. (laughing) Um, we'll just do...

Corrie: Okay

Emily: Um, you go.

Rebecca: Yeah, um, so what are your pronouns that you use?

Corrie: She and hers.

Rebecca: Okay. And then, um, I know you're currently the managing editor of, um, The Tribune and stuff, but how many publications have you worked for throughout your journalism career?

Corrie: Yeah, so, um, I, uh, I worked at the El Paso Times, was my first job. Well, I guess in college I interned at National Geographic magazine and the Austin American-Statesman. And then, um, my first job was at the El Paso Times. And then I worked in Mexico City, um, I was like part-time at, at one news organization and freelancing for a bunch of others.

And then I came back to Austin, um, and started working for the Austin American-Statesman specifically for their Spanish language newspaper that they were starting called Ahora Si. And then I worked for that for a while, and then I switched over to the English side of the Statesman, which was, um, th- yeah, the Austin American-Statesman covering the capital. And then after that, I worked for Reuters and after that I came to the Texas Tribune.

Rebecca: Nice.

Emily: Nice. Um, so we looked up about your bio a little bit.

Corrie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emily: And, uh, so you graduated from the University of North Carolina, right?

Corrie: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Emily: Um, studying journalisms in Spanish, so when did you first realize you wanted to study journalism?

Corrie: Um, when I was in high school, so I was one of those people that, um, here I'm gonna sit down. Uh, one of those people that knew what I wanted to study from, from the time I was a teenager, just got into the school newspaper and absolutely loved it and found a really, um, sorry. I won't backlight myself. Uh, found a really amazing group of people that, that were doing meaningful work and it was just very exciting to be a part of that and, um, you know, they were talking about things that you don't, um, hear other high school students talking about. So maybe the rest of the high school was talking about the football game.

And I mean, don't get me wrong, I love sports and I was (laughs) happy um to watch our, our football games and our football team won the state championship fortunately while I was there, which is a big deal. But in the newspaper room, people were talking about things like religion and um, like, um, drinking and driving, and um, eating disorders, and abortion, and you know, like heavy topics. And they were wanting to do meaningful work around these topics, and um, so it just really captivated me. So when I went to school, when I figured out where... When I thought about where to go to college, I knew, um, I wanted to study journalism.

Emily: Um, and also, um, you know, it says that you, uh, studied Spanish as well.

Corrie: Yes.

Emily: And so I was wondering when did you wanted... When you realized you also wanted to pursue Spanish in your studies and like when you realized to like, I guess, combine journalism and Spanish?

Corrie: Yeah, so um, I always felt like, you know, I'm from Austin. I grew up in Austin and um, I decided I wanted to be a journalist. And um I figured that in order to be a journalist in Texas, uh, it is really important for me to understand, um, Mexico. Oh, okay, well that is actually more of like why I moved to Mexico after college. Going back even further about why, why I was interested in Spanish in the first place. Um, that was like, I started studying Spanish in seventh grade here in Austin. And so, um, I'm not a native speaker, but um I started learning in seventh grade and I just became really fascinated by the language and, and the cultures.

And um, when I went to college, I wanted to study journalism, but journalism can be like a professional type major, you know, like law or you, you know, you're learning like very specifically like how to do something. And I wanted my college education to also involve literature and history and culture, and those were all things I could get in a Spanish major. And um, and so I had some... And then I also was able to I- I studied abroad in Spain, um, which was just a, a lovely experience. And um, and so this, this Spanish major was a really lovely counterpart for me to the, to the journalism.

And then, um, I ended up figuring out... Well, I ended up working in Mexico where I wrote in English and then, ended up coming back to Texas, where I wrote in Spanish. Um, and then ultimately ended up deciding what I want to do with my Spanish and my journalism is be able to, um, write in my native language, which is English and use Spanish to interview people. Um, specifically people that, um, you know, I might not otherwise be able to talk to or accept their translator if I didn't know Spanish or otherwise m- people who otherwise might not have their voices heard in some of, some of our stories.

Emily: That's really cool.

Corrie: Thanks.

Rebecca: Um, so I know we kind of touched on like your career and your career overall starting with like the El Paso Times and so on.

Corrie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rebecca: Um, do you just want to kind of, I guess, go into a little bit more depth, like-

Corrie: Yeah, sure.

Rebecca: ... how on those transitions?

Corrie: Yeah, sure. So, um I thought I wanted to be a magazine journalist and that's why I interned at National Geographic magazine. And it was indeed an amazing experience, but um, when I interned at the Austin American-Statesman right after college in 2002, I unexpectedly fell in love with daily journalism. Um, and I just, I just loved it. And so took my first job at the El Paso Times, um, and it was really, really neat to work on the borders. Um, I got my first story on Dateline by walking over the bridge to Juárez, um, to interview people there. And I covered education, which was a very important topic in El Paso. Where are you all from, by the way?

Rebecca: Um, we, we go to UNT. The Univers- ooh, sorry.

Rebecca: The University of North Texas.

Corrie: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, and I'm from like Grapevine, which is like 45 minutes away.

Rebecca: I'm from East Texas. I've kind of bounced around the whole area.

Corrie: Okay. Okay, great. Well, um, you know, El Paso is just such a neat and, and unique community. Um, uh, just this very large open border community where you have two big cities right on the other side of the border. And um, not, not like some distance from the border, but they're just right there, both of them and just such a neat place to learn about and work. And um, um, yeah, like I said, covering the education, which was a- a very, just an essential topic in that community where, um, El Paso was losing a lot of it's smartest people. There was a brain drain.

People were, who grew up there, who were educated were leaving. And so education was seen as just a really important thing for the community, and so a neat thing to cover. And so um, I didn't stay there too long. I was over there a year, but I just, I really loved El Paso and I think I gained a really important perspective that affects me even today as I cover the capital because I ha- was able to physically feel when I lived in El Paso how far you feel from the state capital when you're there in El Paso, which is also Texas. And so when I work on stories for the Texas Tribune now, sometimes I think about our readers and, and people who are part of the state who are physically just really far from the capital and what that's like.

Um, and so after being there for about a year, um I decided to move to Mexico City. Um, I had taken a class in college called Mass Communication in Mexico and Cuba. And if we're honest, I took that class because there was a class trip over spring break to Mexico City and Havana. And I was like, oh cool, I get to go to Cuba. And this was in 2002, it was a little harder to go at that time. And um, and so I was really wanting to go to Havana and I- I loved Havana and, and but I- I unexpectedly loved Mexico City.

Um, I was not clued in at that time about how cool and amazing and wonderful Mexico City is. And I was like, whoa I wanna come back. I wanna live here. I wanna work as a journalist here and so I quit my job at the El Paso Times, which had health insurance and you know a salary and all of that. And um, so this was kind of against my personality to quit my job and just move um somewhere where I didn't have a job and I didn't know people. I knew one person. Um, and so I just, um, moved there.

Corrie:

And I got some advice from people before I left and people gave the advice if you want to be a grown correspondent, you can either be like in your 40s or 50s and get sent over by some news organization or you can be 22 or whatever and just go. (laughs) And so I was super young and didn't have anything lined up and I just went. And they were right, and it worked out, and um, I wasn't able to line up anything before I went, but once I got there and I was able to say to people, "I live here." It was really easy to convince people to throw me like one freelance assignment and then I would, I would like work so hard to make that the best thing they had ever read. (laughs) You know, I would just try my best so that they would hire me again and then it, it worked. So I mean, really within a few weeks I had several freelance jobs lined up.

I became the, um, uh, I became the Mexico City... Well, I became the, the Latin America correspondent, but based in Mexico City for something called the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which is a- a news service, like a wire service for the Jewish world. It's based in New York. If you pick up a Jewish community newspaper here in Austin or, or in Dallas or... There would be um stories from around the world that have to do with Jewish topics and they're from this news service. It's kind of like the Associated Press for the Jewish world, if you will.

We do really, really neat stories and so that was a great gig. They sent me to Guatemala, I got to go all over Mexico. I- I went to, um, Veracruz to interview members of the Jewish community there, whose ancestors who had um been forced to convert to Christianity. And then they had, these people had rediscovered their Jewish roots and were converting back to Judaism, but they were being rejected by the Jewish establishment in Mexico City. Some like really interesting cultural stories. Um, I got to write about the Jewish community in Mexico City, which was fascinating.

Um, so that was one job and then, um, I got on part time at, um, it was called The Herald. It was a joint venture at the time, between the Miami Herald and El Universal, which is the biggest paper in Mexico City. And at that time, um, it was the only national English language daily paper in Mexico. So there had previously been this paper like the- this, um, English paper that had folded and this newspaper had come along and basically y- you could buy it in a bunch of different cities around Mexico. W- if you bought a copy of the Miami Herald, y- th- there would be two of the front section and the sports section, just like you would get in Miami, but there would also be a Mexico section. So we were not foreign correspondents, we were actually working on Mexico news for a English

language Mexican... English language audience in Mexico. If that, does that make sense? (laughing)

Emily: Yes.

Rebecca: Yes.

Corrie: I don't know, until I thought, um, we were like this tiny English staff in this, um, in this Mexico, Mexican newspaper where, you know, every- everybody is Spanish language staff. And so I got to... I- I was part-time there as a, as a news editor. I started off, uh, freelancing for them, writing stories for them, and then I got on part-time as a news editor. So it was just really neat to work in that, in that big newspaper. Um, and I worked there part-time and the other days of the week, I would get to travel around Mexico and do freelance stories for other publications.

So I got to... I went to Oaxaca and I wrote a magazine story about food. And I, um, I covered... I wrote about business and politics and um, all kinds of things that Mexico City was just, um, I just loved it. You know, it's just vibrant and exciting and it's so much going on in the world of politics and art and music and culture and um, business and just everything. Um, and I probably would have stayed there longer.

Um, I ended up staying for a year and then, um, when I was home visiting my family in Austin, I met with the Statesman editors because I had interned there at the Statesman. And they said, "You know, we're starting up a Spanish language paper. How would you like to come back and, and work on that?" And I was like, whoa a visit just turned into a job interview and the whole thing happened really fast. And I think they called me when I was back in Mexico City and offered me a job and said, "Can you start in two weeks?" And I remembered I said, "Well, can I start in three? I mean, I live in Mexico City. I gotta wrap things up."

So I went back to Mexico City with this really neat opportunity to come back and um, be part of the original staff of this, um, weekly newspaper called, Aroha Si, which existed for many years. This was in 2004 when I came back to Austin and this, this newspaper, Aroha Si, unfortunately recently, um, stopped publishing. Um, but, you know, it existed for a while and it was, it was a community paper and it was really neat to be a part of it.

Um, so okay, so I was back in Austin, writing in Spanish, um, part of a small Spanish language staff at the, at the Austin American-Statesman. Most everyone I worked with was um a native speaker. I think, I think everybody else I worked with was a native speaker. I'm not a native speaker, but I had studied Spanish at, you know, at the college level a- as my major. And so I was able to tell everyone like where to put the accents and, and stuff like that. Um, although they were, they were much better with the, um, idiomatic expressions and so forth being

native speakers. So we complimented each other well as a great team of, of people.

Um, it really felt like part of the community where, um, readers would call us up and, and ask like, I mean this was back before everyone... Well, before a lot of people had such easy access to, um, to the Internet. And so, I'm not saying everybody has easy access now, but anyway it's more widespread now. But people would call us up and, and say things like, readers would say things like, "Hey, I want to go this movie and, and every time I call the theater all the movie times are in English. Can you just... Can you call the theater and let me know what time the movies are playing?" (laughs)

Emily: Aw.

Corrie: They can't understand. And so it was like... And we would write stories like how to, how to buy a home and, or how to enroll your children in school in Texas or in Austin. Um, so just really... W- we had news, but also just, um, like useful stories for people because we, our target audience was, um, recent immigrants. Um so, um, anyway I did that for a year and it was just a lovely experience. And then I- I switched over to the English side of the Statesman. They thought my English was good enough.

Um, and, and that was in right after the 2005 legislative session. And I had been covering the Texas capital in some way since 2005 basically. So I was the Health and Human Services Reporter for the Statesman. Um, I covered... And also po- and all of us on... I was on the State desk and all of us on the State desk covered politics and, and government and policies. So um, and legislative sessions and elections. So I- I, Health and Human Services, since I covered, um, child protective services, I covered the food stamp programs, the, the Medicaid program.

I, um, wrote about a lot of problems with... At the time there was, there were problems with, um, sig- enrollment with the food stamps program. Um, like for example people who were eligible were unable to enroll or they were getting knocked off the program. And so I wrote about, about that. Um, I- I was able to Spanish interview people, um, who wouldn't, wouldn't otherwise be in the paper. Um, or the Medicaid program as well.

I- I felt like I wrote... I was lucky to... I- I feel like I got to write a lot of stories about topics that were, really mattered, that really made a difference.. Um, and then I guess I wrote politics, which is super fun in Texas. So I covered the 2006 and 2010 gubernatorial races and they, they were extremely interesting and we had some really colorful candidates, um, including Democrat Farouk Shami, who was a hair care executive. Have you ever heard of the, um, the, the product called CHI?

Rebecca: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Corrie: Okay, so he like the guy behind the CHI. That's his company.

Emily: Oh, [crosstalk 00:18:49].

Corrie: Yeah, so you- you all know because, um, well see, I have completely straight hair, so I never used this product, but um, (laughs) but, apparently a lot of people do, a lot of people know about it. (laughs) So um, he ran for governor and he was just the most... The whole race was just, um, interesting and entertaining and um, you had Carole Keeton Strayhorn, which was her name at the time. Uh, [inaudible 00:19:20] the mayor of Austin and her campaign slogan was, "One tough Grandma." I mean, there was just, um, there was a, um, Kinky Friedman, comedian, you know, ran for, ran for governor. Um, his slogan was, "How hard could it be?"

Kyle: I want to have that slogan. (laughing)

Corrie: So anyway, covering the 2006 and 2010 governor's races were just, it was, it was fun, it was entertaining, it was exciting. I got to, um, the, the way the candidates often run for governor in Texas at that time, um, they were always flying around on, on private planes to go to the different media markets. So they'd wanna hit, you know, say Amarillo and Dallas and Austin and, um, Arlington media markets like all in one day. And so we would, we would have a wristband and um, be filing stories from... Being writing on the plane or filing from some random, um, convention center or conference or something.

It's very long days, but really interesting and exciting being on the campaign trail. And I think gubernatorial races in our state are probably different from other states where, um, where it's much smaller. (laughing) Um, and then of course, Governor Perry was, you know, just the, the incumbent long-time governor and um, he's very good with the public and with crowds and, and al- always really interesting to watch him. Um, so yeah, so I was at that.

And then, um, I went to Reuters in 2011. And I- I was half editor, half reporter. I was in charge of national news for Texas and the first states that bordered Texas. And so I would write the stories myself out of the Texas capital or out of the national news happened in the Austin area. Um, I would cover it myself and then, I ran a network of freelance writers in Dallas, Houston, Sante Fe, Oklahoma City, um, Little Rock, New Orleans, all these places, but um, they would write... I would assign and they, these writers would write the stories out of those places and I would edit their, their stories. So it was very exciting, very fast-paced.

I learned the writers have this way of responding to news very, very quickly, which is a great skill no matter what you do in journalism. And that was a, um, really interesting job. I covered, I covered myself, I covered stuff that happened

at the capital. Um, and then, and then I also covered like the, the big deadly explosion in West Texas, West, comma, Texas. And some other like big national news stories at that time. Um, and then I came to the Texas Tribune in I think it was 2013. Yeah, 2013 and um, and that was really exciting. I had known all the people that, that work here at the Texas Tribune from years of covering the capital and they were, um, they were doing something really neat, uh, and different at the Texas Tribune.

Corrie: So um, I've been there ever since and I- I started at the Texas Tribune as a reporter. I was the demographics reporter, which is a really neat, neat, um, I got to write about the changing face of Texas. All of the changes going on with our state and what does that mean for healthcare and what does that mean for education and what does that mean for just anything in our state? Um, and in writing about different communities in our state. And then I switched to be the news editor. So um, taking some of my wire service experience and making sure we were responding quickly to breaking news.

And then, um, I'm the managing editor now running the day to day operations, the newsroom, and then also I get to run our student fellowship program, which is great. Um, during the legislative session I hope we can show we were covering, had a plan in place to best cover the legislative session. And um, and I just love it here at the Texas Tribune, being part of the... We get to think a lot about the future of news and the future of local news and non-profit journalism and it's like really... It's just been really exciting to be a part of all of that. That was a long answer to your question. (laughs)

Rebecca: No, no thank you.

Emily: You're fine. (laughs) So like how did you handle the transition from being a writer to an editor?

Corrie: Yeah, um, I mean there's nothing more fun than being a reporter, so when people ask if i miss being a reporter, I mean, I absolutely miss, you know, whether it's running around the capital or um, covering different races like I was telling you about or sitting in someone's living room to listen to their stories about... Sitting in the living room with all different kinds of Texans, people from all different parts of the state. I mean, I've traveled for, you know, East Texas, West Texas, panhandle, the valley, big cities. I've gone to, you know, the Statesman sent me to cover the aftermath of Hurricane Rita.

Um, all, just all over the state and just the opportunity to over the years to just sit down with someone in their house and talk to them about their concerns or their interests. Rich people, poor people, people of all different backgrounds. Um, anyway, so there's nothing, there's nothing [inaudible 00:25:09] than being a reporter, but, um, I think the neat thing about being an editor is that I get to think about, you know, a reporter, you have your head down, focus on your beat.

And now that I'm an editor, I can put my head up a little and think about these bigger things like can think about what our whole newsroom's priorities are. I can think about the future of journalism where, you know, our place in that and, and kind of consider some of these bigger things. And I also have the chance to, um, you know, work with reporters and work... I- I had one editor tell me once like, "You know you're ready to be an editor when you get just as much of a thrill out of somebody else's success as you would from seeing your own name at the top a story or doing a story yourself." And I really am at that place where I just get really [inaudible 00:25:56]. One of our reporters does [inaudible 00:26:00] and that's okay-

Emily: One, one second. Could you repeat what you said? Your mic kind of cut out for just a moment. Maybe like one or two sentences?

Corrie: Oh, which part? (laughs)

Emily: Like when you were talking about how you get joy from watching other people's success instead?

Corrie: Oh yeah, um, I had an editor tell me that, "You, um, know that you're ready to move from being an- a reporter to an editor when you can, um, get just as much joy out of watching someone else succeed as you can with your own success." And- and I do feel like I've gotten to that point. And um, when I see one of the Texas Tribune reporters doing great work, that makes me completely happy even though my name isn't on that story at all, it's okay. (laughing)

Emily: So, um, just going back to Mexico City.

Corrie: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Emily: So in an article by NPR this year that was published on the 12th of September, as of then it said 12 journalists have been killed in Mexico.

Corrie: Yeah.

Emily: According to, uh, Mexico's National Human Rights Commission.

Corrie: Yeah.

Emily: Were there any safety precautions that you took while being a journalist in Mexico City?

Corrie: I mean, I think things have, things have changed a- a bit. Um, but, y- you know, I watch all of that with just complete sadness and, and you know, that is terrible. And um, Mexico is one of a number of places around the world where it can be dangerous to be a journalist. And these days that also includes, um, Nicaragua,

Venezuela, um, and in a number of other places around the world and um, where people, truly brave journalists are, are doing amazing work.

Corrie: Um, for me at that time, um, there are certain precautions that I think anybody, anybody should take in any big city and that anybody should take in Mexico City in particular. And I try not to do, um, I try not to, you know, as best not to put myself in harm's way, but you know, I was not covering cartels, I was not covering the drug industry. Where, you know, there were certain things that, um, I was not covering specifically.

Emily: That's what I understood from what you were telling us about it, but I wanted to ask just in case there was something specific that you did.

Corrie: Yeah, yeah.

Rebecca: Um, so is there a story that you've reported on that's like stuck with you? Like something like you'll never forget about however long your career has been and if so, like what is it? And like why, why does it stick with you?

Corrie: Yeah, I think, I think probably a couple of things. Um, you know, when I was... And I talked, I touched on this a little bit before, but you know, when I interviewed people who were eligible for the food stamp program and couldn't get enrolled or got knocked off the program, um, you know, I- I at that time, I wasn't a parent. I am now, but I- I just remember them telling me how hard it was for their family and how, um, difficult it was for them to find things for their children to eat.

And um, and I just, I... You know, that just really sticks with me, um, just the, the importance of, of what we were doing. And the, um, kind of like the desperation in like these Texans voices of, um, who just wanted to, who just wanted to help their families. And so, I mean, that kind of sticks with me. Um, there is a- a story I did for the Texas Tribune. I mean, it was, it was a feature story. Um, it wasn't some big, in-depth investigation, but it just, um, I guess it was kind of special to me, which is, um, so I- I am Jewish. And um, there... Around the country and in Texas, a lot of small towns are losing their Jewish community and their Jewish institutions like synagogue.

Um, and so I wrote about this one community, um, it's in Brenham, Texas and that's where Blue Bell is made. (laughing) And um, they used to have a- a thriving Jewish community that, that you, um, that a lot of Jew came, came to Texas in [inaudible 00:31:46] Galveston and established different communities along, um, where the railroad went. And including in, in Brenham, there's a thriving community. And there was this like beautiful, simple, old synagogue. And um, I first heard about this through the Austin American-Statesman and then I- I wrote again a story for the Texas Tribune and the New York Times when we had a partnership with the New York Times.

And um, basically the synagogue was a building without a community. Like all the, most of Jews had left and gone away. And the question was okay, what's gonna happen to this old, beautiful building with, with all this history and where people had worshiped for so many years. And um, basically, you know, some synagogues around the south or in other places have been turned into like community centers or I think in one case, a hardware store. (laughs) Um, and there is this one man who took care of the synagogue there in Brenham, but he was getting older and he just knew he wasn't going to be around forever. And so we knew the question is what was going to happen to the synagogue.

And so I wrote, I wrote about it in the Statesman at the time when it was really an open question, what is going to happen? And nobody knew what was going to happen. Well, what ended up happening and this is what I wrote about for the Texas Tribune and the New York Times is what ended up happening is that the building was picked up, the synagogue was moved to Austin. And it's here now in Austin at the, on the campus of the Jewish Community Center. And um, it was like this whole complicated thing as you can imagine to pick up and move a building.

Um, and I mean, it's just... Is that the right choice, was that the wrong choice, I don't know. You, you know, you can... People had, have a lot of opinions, but I just, um, I'm, I'm so interested in different communities of people in Texas. I'm specifically interested in, um, in Jewish communities in- in Texas because it's, um, uh, I think Texas is a very interesting place to be Jewish and uh, it's such a minority here and, and so I'm very interested in what happens to these communities and um, and to this special building in particular. Anyway that, that story does stick with me.

Emily: Um, so throughout all of your years as a journalist, as a Jewish woman journalist, have you had to deal with any anti-Semitism? I- I can't say the word or sexism within the industry?

Rebecca: Any discrimination in general.

Corrie: Yeah, anti-Semitism I don't think so. People don't usually know I'm Jewish because my last name is not a traditional Jewish last name. It's, uh, my, uh, it's a Scottish last name from my dad, who is not Jewish. Um, and I- I- I kept my name. Um, but even if they do know, um, I- I- I don't believe I experienced any problem there. I think, um, as a woman journalist, um, at the Texas capital, well sure. (laughs)

Um, so, um, one time there was like there was the debate about, um, let's see. I think as, I think as part of the abortion debate on the House floor, one of the, um, one of the lawmakers held up a, um, an ultrasound wand. Like the kind of ultrasound you get when you're first pregnant. And I'm trying to remember exactly... Sorry, I'm trying to remember exactly the... I think maybe there were some... The- the legislation that was being debated, I can look this up, it was

like, um, you know, should, uh, should women be required to get these ultrasounds before they're allowed to have an abortion? Something like that.

Um, I should probably look up what that exact thing was because it was, it was a very noteworthy debate, but, um, I can't remember exactly. But anyway, the point is one of these like ultrasounds were like held up on the House floor and a- a male lawmaker co- comes up to me and I think I was pregnant at the time. I was pregnant at the time. Um, I have to look up when that debate happened if I was pregnant or I had already had the... I think I was pregnant because I was definitely pregnant during the legislative issue. I'm sorry, I'm trying to remember.

Emily: Take your time.

Corrie: And I- I believe I was pregnant at the time when he came up to me. And he said, "Did you have one of those ultrasounds done to you? Did you have... Did that happen to you?" And I was like, "Um, like so you're asking me like, that's like a pretty invasive question actually." (laughs) Um, like if this particular instrument was inserted into a pretty private place in my body, you're asking me that question like while I'm doing my job on the House floor?

Um, so you know, things like that or um, you know, I had like male lawmakers would like, they would, they would just like kiss my hand or kiss my cheek when they saw me and you know, it's like they didn't do that to a male reporter. And um, and things are like fairly subtle things that I'm talking about, right? Like there are people who would seriously a lot more intense things than this, but I'm just trying to remember just like, just like the little things that, um, where there's kind of like old-fashioned culture at the capital I think.

And so the way people would sometimes ask like, "How old are... How old are you?" Ask me, "How old are you?" Or um, I never wanted to... The Statesman gave me a computer backpack and I never wanted to wear a backpack because, um, people would ask if I was a student journalist. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but um, I think I was just... Somebody, somebody once asked me if I was a Cub reporter. (laughing) Um, you know, and I was like a professional journalist in my 20s. I'm not sure that male journalists were asked those kinds of things, you know?

Emily: How did you cope with that... How was that? Just to like all of these may be very pa- passive, sexist remarks towards you and maybe some of them are even active ones.

Corrie: Um, I mean, I think I just understood that I understood the culture. Um, you know, I was basically just polite back because, you know, I'm trying to do my job and just trying to get the work done and I never made a big deal of any of it, but you know, you just tell your, tell your friends over drinks or whatever. (laughing) Um, but I think younger women now, women who are coming up now are, are

more... I'm 39 years old now, I think that women way younger than me are, um, coming in with better expectations. I mean, more... I mean, they rightfully expect to be treated a certain way. Um, and that's, and that's great. So maybe, maybe some of these things are not gonna fly for much longer. (laughs)

Rebecca: Um, so I guess on a little more lighthearted note. (laughing)

Emily: Yeah.

Rebecca: What's the best part about being a journalist for you?

Corrie: Yeah, well I loved, like I said it before, like I love being able to sit down with people and hear their stories. I always love to learn about something new. You're always, when I was a reporter just like, you can become an expert on a certain topic if you're a beat reporter, but even within that beat, like every day learning about something completely new and different.

Um, it's so exciting, you're, you... It's like your job to go and find out something, um, about something really interesting. And um, we get to talk to so many different kinds of people. I mean, there's a lot of jobs where you don't have that amazing opportunity just to talk to people who are really different from you, from all different walks of life. That's really amazing. I mean, you know, I believe that the work we do matters, so how lucky that I get to get up every day and do something that I believe is important.

You know, here at the Texas Tribune, we're trying to inform Texans about government and politics and policy and what their government is doing and how their government is spending taxpayer dollars. And it's like, this stuff matters. And, um, how cool that I'm not making widgets every day. No offense to widget makers, but like I feel like I get to do something every day that, that makes a difference.

Emily: Just you have had so many beats it sounds like throughout your journalist career. Do you think you've had like a favorite beat that you've covered?

Corrie: Um, I mean, Health and Human Services was the, the one that I, that I really felt connected to. Um, specifically the Human Services portion of that, which was all of the, um, Medicaid, the food stamps, Child Protective Services. Um, a lot of the ways that our state, um, um, addresses issues related to the neediest Texans. Um, yeah, but I've also just like I said, I've been covering capital. It's just like state government and politics for, or since 2005, in some way and that, so all of that stuff, the whole, the whole capital world is kind of where my heart is.

Rebecca: Um, I guess just to kind of wrap things up, what advice do you have? I guess this is more for like us. What advice do you have for people who are wanting to become a journalist?

Corrie: Um, even though the industry is changing, I always tell people that there's room in this industry for smart, creative, hardworking people, so don't be discouraged from even going into the industry. Um, you know, it's really important to get experience and clips, so you should definitely do internships and work at your college paper or news outlet, whatever kind of journalism you want to do and, and get that experience wherever you can. And um, stay in touch with places where you want to work because jobs aren't always posted or opportunities... You might not know about opportunities unless you're in touch with people. Um, and yeah, there's a lot of, there's a lot of great stories to tell out there, so... (laughs) It's a good, a good field.

Emily: Is there anything else you think you would like to add just about anything?

Corrie: Um, I don't think so. Um, I mean, I think a lot about like these about law and profit news and the funding of journalism and, and where things are going. And so it'll be interesting to see, um, what the news landscape looks like, um, in the future because it's already just changed so much since I became a journalist. Even I thought I was, um, I thought I was going into something called print journalism. (laughs) And there w- was basically no such thing from the moment I graduated. From the moment I graduated from my first job, I- I went on TV in addition to writing stories. Um, and so anyway, my point is that it's just, everything has just changed so much and, and keeps changing, which is great and fine and exciting and it'll be interesting to see how things keep changing.

Emily: Well, thank you so much for this interview. Uh, your story is just so inspiring just to hear you talk about everything and your passion.

Corrie: Thank you. It was nice talking to you all. Good luck with your project.

Emily: Thank you.

Rebecca: Thank you for being communicative and keeping up with us and everything. Um, I do have a quick question though. Did you get that, um, document that I sent. Um, I think it needed like a signature or something on it.

Corrie: Okay, let me look. Oh yes, attached a form where you need my signature. Yes, I have it. I'll get you that.

Rebecca: Cool. Thank you so much.

Emily: Thank you.

Corrie: No problem. Have a great day.

Rebecca: Yeah, you too.

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Emily: You too.

Corrie: Okay, bye.

Emily: Bye.