

Interview with Dotty Griffith

Ashleigh Cue:

What got you into journalism?

Dotty Griffith:

What got me into journalism? I just knew that's what I wanted to do. I started University of Texas wanting to go journalism and I did, had a great career. I always knew that's what I was going to do. I guess partly because it gives you an excuse to talk to anybody and everybody about anything. [Laughs] And, you know it's just a great way to learn about people and life, you become an observer of many different things as you go through. And, it's an access to power and an access to people who are interesting and have things to say. It's just a great way to yack your way through life.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you always enjoy writing and stuff like that as well?

Dotty Griffith:

Yea, although I will say I'm probably like every writer, it feels a whole lot better when you're done. It's kind of like running. Especially now, I enjoy the act of writing a lot more than I used to. But yeah, I guess I've always been a writer.

Nathan Battaglia:

I'd like for us to get something about you in high school and childhood, where did you grow up and what were your interests.

Dotty Griffith:

Well I grew up in Terrell, Texas which is about 30 miles east, and we didn't have a school paper. So, I guess maybe that's one reason I was really anxious to go into journalism. Because it would be my first opportunity to practice it. My interests growing up were horses and pretty much a small town girl growing up, you know, I was a cheerleader... I started college in 1968 which was an amazing time so much change and so much turmoil. I think the fact that journalists were chronicling all the change and turmoil that was going on at the time, the first draft of history as they say, that really appealed to me to understand, because I knew where Berkeley was and I knew about the student protest because of Time magazine and Newsweek. You know, the in depth coverage which was beyond what you got in a newspaper was very illuminating to me. That was my window into what was happening in the real world, as opposed to small town east Texas. There wasn't a lot happening. [laughs]

Aaron Starnes:

When were you able to marry food and your passion for writing. When were you able to see that as a viable career option?

Dotty Griffith:

When I first started at the morning news,

Aaron Starnes:

Where?

Dotty Griffith:

The Dallas Morning News

Aaron Starnes:

That was your first..

Dotty Griffith:

That was my first and only job.

Aaron Starnes:

Right out of college?

Dotty Griffith:

Yea.

Ashleigh Cue:

How'd you get the job?

Dotty Griffith:

It wasn't that unusual at the time. Often it is very difficult to do now, but a lot of us went straight to newspapers from the jschool. For some reason our era of journalism graduates from UT has really stayed together and we just had a really neat reunion in the last month or so. Many of us went straight to newspapers and stayed in newspapering for most of our careers. It was a time when journalists were really appreciated and it was just a great opportunity. I had worked on the Daily Texan and I had gotten to know, uh, I was covering politics a lot at the time and I had no idea of food, but I had gotten to know a lot of the bureau chiefs in Austin and really had tried to make myself known to newspaper people so I could get a job when I got out. I came to Dallas and covered a variety of beats for a number of years. Pretty much back then it was city desk it wasn't Metro. Pretty much covered everything, cops and schools and urban affairs, which we called it at the time, just the whole round of urban, city desk beats, enjoyed it did a lot of general assignment work which meant you kind of just got to do whatever you were told to do, or better yet got to come up with your own assignment and got to do that. But, at some point I had been covering a lot of politics and was traveling a lot but I was married and my husband and I wanted to start a family so we were thinking it would be fun to be a little closer to home. I was one of those goofy people I always took big pots of chili or something to the news room, especially on the weekend, and so they were making a change in the food department and said, "Would you like to be the food editor?" At first I was kind of insulted, It was like "Huh? I'm a hard news reporter." But then I realized, you know, that I did love food. People were starting to write about food in different ways and one of the things they asked me to do was bring it more into line with true reporting, both from the consumer side and to make it not just pictures of food supplied by food companies and the recipes that went with it. That appealed to me a lot and I was really smart to catch that wave when I did because that was when food coverage really started to become legitimate and real and people started paying attention to chefs. It was about that time that liquor by the drink was legalized in Texas, which made a huge difference in the level of restaurants that opened. Until the law changed people would

walk into restaurants with brown bags with bourbon or scotch or whatever and order “set-ups” to mix their drinks with. That’s what you did. You couldn’t buy alcohol in a restaurant.

Aaron Starnes:

What came in the “set-up,” was it just a glass of ice?

Dotty Griffith:

Just a glass of ice and what you ordered to go with it, whether it was coke or soda. In fact, I just did a thing with a bunch of chefs and they were talking about how during those days people would actually bring in Dr. Pepper and mix it with stuff. But yea, 7up, ginger ale, whatever. So, once you could order wine, or a real cocktail in a restaurant, it elevated, it suddenly made Dallas more aware of fine dining. Then you had the Mansion open and all of these places that were really iconic to fine dining in Texas. I was very lucky to have been at the beginning of that change, it gave me lots of opportunities as far as writing and coverage. At one point the Morning News actually had two food sections a week; hard to believe now, free standing food sections a week.

Ashleigh Cue:

How long were you doing the city desk reporting before you were food editor.

Dotty Griffith:

I did that for about six years and then switched over to be food editor, and I was the food editor for 16 years, took a little break as a features editor for a couple years and then was the restaurant critic for the last 10 years of my career at the Morning News. So, really I’ve been writing about food most of my professional life.

Nathan Battaglia:

You said... you were attracted to talking to powerful people. Did that carry over into the food reporting? Did you have to leave that behind?

Dotty Griffith:

No, you know, as chefs became celebrities, it was very much still a part of it. To be able to get to know the people who were leading in the food world and to know the cook book authors and to know the cooking teachers who were really starting to educate America beyond just what you grew up eating, your regional stuff. So I still had access to celebrity and influencers and people who were at the top of the game that I was covering which, at that time, was food.

Nathan Battaglia:

Why was that important to you? Was it like a rush you got? Did you want to have a sense of making a difference in the world?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, yea, you know, I think there’s a competitive drive behind journalist so it was great to get the first, best interview with a big-deal person, or discover somebody... yea, it’s a rush.

Ashleigh Cue:

What’s your most memorable restaurant that you critiqued.

Dotty Griffith:

Oh gosh, writing about the Mansion on Turtle creek in the early days when Dean Fearings was first a super-star was great, writing about Ruth Street Café and Stephen Pyles when he first hit the scene, that was really heady stuff because Craig Claiborne from the New York Times would breeze into Dallas and, quote, discover those guys for New York. We'd already been writing about them because we knew they were great. That was really a heady time when Dallas was getting discovered as a legitimate food town and, the Craig Claibornes would call the local writers and say, "who's hot, who's not?" and you got to help build them that way, you got to help them be discovered outside of Dallas. There was a really good network which still works, I'm sure, in many food coverage areas.

Nathan Battaglia:

In the early days, or ever, did you run into and sexism or misogyny that got in the way or put you off?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, of course when I started at the Dallas Morning News there were the women's pages, which is now the features section, and there were only, I started on city desk, and there were only, other than the women who wrote for the women's pages, there were only I think, 3 or 4 women reporters at the Morning News. There were no women editors other than the woman who was the editor of the women's page. So, yea, we were kind of unique and they didn't sometimes know what to do with us. We were very outspoken, we really wanted the assignments. Sometimes, they would go, "well that's not really the place a girl should go."... Back in the day... usually a reporter, male or female, would go on an assignment and they really expected, because they were all male photographers at the time, so, the male photographers were supposed to look after us. [laughter] Which, at the time, I kind of resented, but it sure was great to have someone drive you around, because they would always drive. And back in the day before you could find out where you were going on your cell phone, you have a Mapsco and try to plot your route before you went if you were going into unknown territory. It was great to have a photographer drive you around.

Nathan Battaglia:

So, when you became the food editor, you were the first female editor outside of the women's section?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, the food section was in the women's section, so, that had been one of my hesitations about accepting that offer because I didn't want to go back into of the "Rose Petal Ghetto," one of the things we called the women's section, but just the lure of writing about food was very attractive to me because I loved food and cooking... I guess the moral of the story is, Sometimes you can take a chance to do something just because you know you're going to love doing it. And, you know, my instinct was totally right. It was a great coverage area to help grow and expand, and grow into. It was the right place at the right time, and eventually the women's section became the features section and eventually there were men reporters there as well as even men editors, and suddenly there were a lot more women reporters on the other sides, even in sports and business, and certainly in entertainment, and on the metro side. And, eventually there were women editors.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was there a push, before that happened, while it was still the women's section... were the women of the newspaper saying you need to change things, we can do just as much, or was there a push to get women more involved in other parts of the paper?

Dotty Griffith:

Not particularly from inside, in fact, this had been done away with by the time I became the food editor, but for years every woman in the woman's section was allowed an hour off a week to go get her hair done. [Laughing] which is just the most patronizing awful thing ever. [Laughs] We all said, eh, that's a perk we don't want.

Ashleigh Cue:

When did the women's section become the news section.

Dotty Griffith:

Gosh, when did it become, probably late '70s, early '80s, somewhere around in that time when I made the shift. The Morning News like many papers was starting to want more solid coverage, more feature coverage, not just women's stories, society stories about teas. And they wanted food coverage to be more than just recipes. It was probably about the time I made the move over, I couldn't tell you the exact year but it had to be somewhere in there and I think they started calling it the "Today" section instead of women's pages.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you have any, when you were the food editor, did you have any male food critics?

Dotty Griffith:

There were a few male food editors, not in this market; the first male food editor in this market was Michael Bower who was at the Dallas Times Herald. And he was there at the same time. He came shortly after I was food editor. He's still writing about food in San Francisco at the San Francisco chronicle. So there were a few. Whenever there would be a food editor's conference it would still be mostly women and probably still it today. But there are more and more men writing about food than ever before and ever did for a long time.

Mehri Yavari:

Tell us about your passion for food before going into journalism.

Dotty Griffith:

You know, I don't know exactly where it came from... My grandmother was kind of an old fashioned country cook and she made bread and, you know, had a garden and grew her own food and canned it and froze it, and I just loved going and spending summers with her, just watching her do that. I didn't so much participate in it but I was just really fascinated by it. You know, I was one of those goofy little kids that made mud pies and stuff. So, I just always wanted to be in food. And my mother was an adventurous cook, not a trained cook, she never took lessons, but she cooked unusual things for the time period. And she let me piddle around the kitchen and I loved to do that and I just became more and more fascinated with food and preparation and especially when it started to go beyond steaks and baked potatoes. I got really interested in food, really in Austin when I was in school, not so

much as something I ever thought I'd be writing about, but, just, there was so much starting to be interest in regional cuisines and what was the difference between Mexican food in Texas versus New Mexico or wherever, and that's when there were a lot of regional cuisine movements starting to bubble up. Chefs in New England wanted to really cook with ingredients that really reflected that area... you know, a lot of blueberries and stuff, 'cause that's what grows there. Where as in Texas, the whole Southwestern cuisine movement was starting to bubble at the time, the notion of applying classical French techniques to indigenous ingredients that reflected traditional styles, so hence you had the Dean Fearings and the Stephen Pyles really ratcheting up what was Southwestern cuisine at the time; finding ways to use chili peppers for example, in a classic cream soup so you had a pablano cream soup, all those kind of things. I really started getting interested in that in Austin... Austin was always very Texas food centric, you know Austin always thought there was an Austin-style Mexican food, which I would argue with them about today. There was just a lot of talk about that and interest in it at the time, when we weren't protesting the war or something. [Laughter]

Aaron Starnes:

You've still got to eat.

Dotty Griffith:

[laughing] That's right. Well, you know, when people say, "now what made you decide to move from covering politics to food editor?" Well more eat than vote for sure. [laughter]

Nathan Battaglia:

You protested the war?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh yea, yea, I mean it was a great time. UT had some pretty respectable anti-war marches.

Nathan Battaglia:

That's great.

Ashleigh Cue:

Were you in any anti-war marches?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, I wasn't supposed to be because I was a journalist covering it, but there was a pretty giant march and we all got tear-gassed. I had to come into the journalism school. We hid in there to get away from it and we had to write in between coughing. I remember the editor, Lory Rodriguez, had a dog that always hung around, and it got a big dose of tear-gas and it came in and puked in the newsroom. [Laughter] Good times, what can I say? We were sitting there banging out stuff on our typewriters. We really had typewriters then, I know.

Nathan Battaglia:

Mechanical or Electric?

Dotty Griffith:

[whispering] Mechanical.

Nathan Battaglia:

Wow. [Laughter]

Ashleigh Cue:

Was that when you were in school?

Dotty Griffith:

That was when I was in school.

Ashleigh Cue:

So you worked in the school newspaper?

Dotty Griffith:

Yea, the Daily Texas at the University of Texas.

Nathan Battaglia:

Were you an editor or a reporter?

Dotty Griffith:

Both, at various times.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was there a big story you broke that you're really proud of still?

Dotty Griffith:

I can't remember breaking anything huge, I just, you know, I earned a pretty good reputation as a political reporter covering the capitol. In fact... I did a lot of coverage school administration politics. That was the Frank Irwin era at UT when the board of regents and the student newspaper was constantly at war about something. In fact... when we had our Daily Texan reunion a couple months ago, they had two newspapers laid out and I had a page one byline on one. I was going "Yes! This is pretty cool." I didn't even remember writing the story but it was like, "I must have written it. There it is."

Nathan Battaglia:

So you're not afraid of anybody, you talked to the state legislature, in college?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah.

Nathan Battaglia:

Wow.

Dotty Griffith:

You know, there was a press room. It was great fun. It really gave me a chance to meet a lot of the other reporters and find out how to do that job.

Nathan Battaglia:

I don't want to go off on a tangent; I know there was that shooting at UT...

Dotty Griffith:

That was before I was there. But yea, what year was...? I think it was '66 so it wasn't...

Nathan Battaglia:

Right before you got there.

Dotty Griffith:

Right before. The Charles...

Nathan Battaglia:

That's what I couldn't remember off the top of my head.

Dotty Griffith:

I can't think of the guy's name right now, but yea, it happened not too long before I started.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was that something still in the memory of the school when you were there?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh yea.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was it talked about?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh yea. I mean in Austin people still, I mean there are still a few people around who still remember it. It was just such an awful thing at the time. You know, that was before people stood on highway overpasses and shot at cars. It was just an extraordinary act of violence. Now we think of it sort of as terrorism except that guy didn't have any political purposes as far as we can understand. He didn't... he just would kill people.

Nathan Battaglia:

Then the Kennedy assassination...

Aaron Starnes:

That was sixty...

Dotty Griffith:

That was before, that was '63, and I was actually still in junior high.

Nathan Battaglia:

Okay, so that shows my knowledge of dates and history.

[Laughter]

Dotty Griffith:

I'm not quite as old as you think.

[Laughter]

Ashleigh Cue:

So did you enjoy writing about politics?

Dotty Griffith:

Yea! Oh yea. I even got dabble back into that after I left the News. In '06, I was the buy-out class of '06, a couple years later I went to work for the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas and I was the communications director for five years. Which was great fun to kind of get back into a little bit of a political mode, even though I wasn't being a reporter, I was still communicating a lot. What amazed me at the time was how easy it was to manipulate our coverage because news people would just reprint, not so much reprint, but especially broadcast would just read your release. And, you know, if you had a press conference they'd send a cameraman who had three questions written on a notecard that somebody, I guess his news director, had given him and there wasn't even a real reporter there. I mean, you know, I was just flabbergasted, 'cause I could just sit there and regurgitate my talking points without challenge. It was great but there wasn't anybody there to get in my face, to challenge what I was saying.

Nathan Battaglia:

This was recently?

Dotty Griffith:

Yea... Especially local broadcast coverage has become so anemic they don't throw the resources at it they used to. You have a press conference, they send somebody, they'll send a cameraman with three stupid questions written on a notecard. That cameraman has no idea of the issue that you're talking about, no reporter has backgrounded him or herself and it's just... It isn't the way it used to be.

Nathan Battaglia:

Yea... you'd be hard pressed to to find someone who knows who their state senator is.

Dotty Griffith:

Mmmhmm.

Nathan Battaglia:

Also, recently, we'll get back on track, but it seems like politics and food are overlapping now, with the income gap and who can afford what foods and healthy foods and this thing with Monsanto, Do you think anything about that?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, yea, to me that's part of the way food has expanded into such a legitimate area of coverage. Whether you're writing about neighborhoods that are blighted and are food deserts, or you're talking about sustainability and the ecology and the way food fits into that. Or you're talking about genetically modified food, there are so many issues that make food not just about eating it's about science, it's about responsibility to the environment. It's about fair trade. It's about paying people decent wages. There are just so many areas that food has expanded into. It's a really respectable area of coverage.

Ashleigh Cue:

What's your biggest challenge that you had as a food critic?

Dotty Griffith:

I think for me... as food editor the biggest challenge was trying to learn what I was writing about and to a certain extent, especially as a general assignments reporter, pretty much you're an expert for a day on whatever it is you're covering. But when you hunker down and you get on a beat, whether it's police or food, then you suddenly need to bury into it and learn really what you're doing. So I was just a sponge. I constantly read and learned, I taught myself how to cook recipes and I went to a lot of cooking classes because I really wanted to know if something I was eating had been cooked properly and the only way I, you know, could do that was to find out how to do it myself. I even made puff pastries a few times and learned why somebody else's was a way lot better than mine. But I could tell you how to do it wrong. I just I really immersed myself in learning about food. The first five or six years that I did it, I was constantly cooking, reading, eating...

Mehri Yavari:

That was the reason that you wrote some books about cooking?

Dotty Griffith:

Well my first cookbook... you know one of the responsibilities as a food editor is to decide which books are worth reviewing and so I saw a million of cookbooks come across my desk. And got to know a lot of people...publicists, publishers and one day one of the publicists called and said we're really interested in having somebody write a book about chili, do you know anyone that can do that? Well, of course, I can do that! You know, I have never wrote a book in my life, but I said yeah I can do that and I did. So, yeah, I guess, you know, taking a chance on something you know you love to do usually turns out pretty good. So yeah, that was my first cookbook, Wild About Chili.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you enjoy writing all these cookbooks and stuff like that?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, I really did. Sometimes I go "how in the world did I do that?" Cause I had two young children, some of that time I was single, so I was a single mom with two kids and some how managed during that time to turn out three or four cookbooks. I would get up at four in the morning and test chili recipes and then write about it late at night after the kids had gone to bed. My kids would make jokes about "eww its bad chili morning." So I was just always testing recipes and doing things like that, but I loved to do it, so I found the time and energy to get it done.

Mehri Yavari:

Which book is your favorite and why?

Dotty Griffith:

Well I guess my current favorite... I still do love my first book, "Wild about Chili." It was a great book and very fun to write. That's when a lot of chili contests and chili cookoffs were

very much a Texas regional kind of thing. People really got into it, so it was fun to write about that. I did a second edition of my Texas holiday cookbook which came out last year and I loved that book. Its recipes and Texas traditions, and stories for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Years and I guess that's really one of my favorite books, because it's about the holidays and, you know, got a lot of friend's recipes in it, got a lot of my recipes in it, added a chef's chapter in the last go around, so I love that book.

Mehri Yavari:

Tell us about your first experience in journalism. Exactly the first day, the first thing you wrote and what was that.

Dotty Griffith:

Gosh well, at the Morning News...I mean at Daily Texan, I can't remember my first assignment, but at the Morning news, pretty much anybody that came in had to start out writing obits and you just sit there on the desk and take the information about obits and turn 'em out. I remember one day when this guy, who was constantly calling in obituary information from Sparkman Hillcrest, or one of those big funeral homes. He brought in...a lot of times, instead of calling in stuff, they would bring you in hand written notes from the family about the person, and he came in and brought in this dingy polaroid of this guy sitting in a boat with a beer. I am going, "I really don't think we'll be able to use that photograph." He hands me this stuff, and then I realized this guy had a shovel and pail pin on his suit. I just thought that was hysterical. So yeah, that was my first...You know, I had to do obits for about 6 weeks and then they sent me out to what was the news suburban bureaus, the mid-cities bureau, which was in Irving and I was there for 9 months. After a year, year and a half, I got to come back to the mothership and work on the city desk.

Nathan Battaglia:

When you first started writing about food who was in your mind that you were writing for? Was it moms or everyone in general or was there a class divide in your mind of people you were out there getting the information for?

Dotty Griffith:

I think the most obvious audience was women, but I knew a lot of men that cooked. So, I tried to expand my coverage beyond typical feeding the family kind of stuff, into grilling and outdoor cooking and wild game. Because I grew up in a family where wild game was, well you ate a lot of it, because my dad was a hunter, my mom hunted, we all hunted. Then especially as coverage became less about just recipes per say, you started writing about chiefs, a lot of that was men. As the subject expanded and became not just one gender and not just one area of coverage, yeah I really started to see my audience as much broader and multifaceted and very much not just a women audience.

Nathan Battaglia:

Culturally food means a great deal to people, especially immigrant communities. What kind of food people eat is a big deal to their identity and how much was that a part of your coverage?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, like I said, so much, the whole notion of understanding regional cuisines and why Thanksgiving in New England is different than our Thanksgiving, cornbread versus white bread dressing, probably being the most obvious. Then suddenly people became a lot more interested in ethnic cuisines, they weren't they didn't want to just know what middle class white people ate. We were interested in learning about soul food, we were interested in learning about Tex-Mex. Once you get into Tex-Mex, then you start to want to know more about South American cuisines. French chiefs were big, so suddenly you were wanting to know more about classic french techniques and to know the difference between oat cuisine and then regular french cuisine. It all started to snowball and to make make you want to understand all those differences and to seek them out and to be the first one to write about that difference. It was great fun to find pockets of ethnicity in the city and write about, "Oh, here is a bunch of vietnamese grocery stores and people that live here and here is what they eat." So, It was always great fun to write about tamale making during Christmas because a lot of people, especially in the hispanic community, have these big tamale, two days of, that take the whole family to make a whole bunch of tamales. It was great fun to write about things like that.

Nathan Battaglia:

Did you feel like recognizing their cuisine in Dallas recognized their cultural contribution?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, yeah. One way, one of the really great ways to understand a people is to understand how they eat. Even people who may not be that interested in understanding somebody's culture might be interested in their cuisine and its kind of a entry level way to talk about a different culture or a different ethnic group within the city. That coverage was very popular.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did the people enjoy talking to you about their cultural foods?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, yeah. People love to tell you about their food and traditions. Food is such a universal language. More people eat than vote. Its the one thing that, even if there are language barriers, it is the one thing we have in common, we really like to eat what they like to eat. An we like our own comfort foods. It helps define us and so people always love to tell you about their traditional dishes or their family favorites. People love to talk to you about that.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you ever get any negative comments about the critiques you did from restaurants?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. The current restaurant critic in Dallas is having a much tougher time than I ever did. Yeah, occasionally I would have people call and tell me their hated me or that I could never come into their restaurant again or I was completely wrong. Hell, I even got sued once. Bill Romano sued me because he didn't like a restaurant review that I had done.

Nathan Battaglia:

How did that turn out?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, it just went away. You know, you can sue about anything but you can't prove up a case about an opinion. A lot of his allegations in the lawsuits was untrue. So, it just came a draw. His attorney made some money, the Morning News's attorneys made some money and after that is was over. There was never any settlement, there never any, it certainly never went to trial.

Aaron Starnes:

The Morning News, they went to bat for you?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

Ashleigh Cue:

He wanted to have an injunction made where no Dallas Morning News reporters could come into his restaurant, did he ever get that?

Dotty Griffith:

No.

Nathan Battaglia:

When you went in, did they know you were there for the Dallas Morning News? Or where you just a patron?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, I certainly never made a reservation under my own name, but I worked in this market and was encouraged to be a high profile food writer, food editor, for sixteen years before I was ever a food critic. So, I did wear a wig and some disguises a few times, but I would always think "God, they are looking at me going 'Dotty looks really bad in a red wig, its just not her coloring.'" So, I quit doing it. I can usually get in on a first visit and maybe not be recognized, but after you have been doing restaurant reviews, the waiters all learn who you are and they all move around so much. Now Leslie Brinner said "here I", put her picture in the paper, "here's what I look like, were not going to pretend I am anonymous anymore." You don't announce yourself and say "I am coming." And you certainly don't take free food, which is the myth about restaurant critics. Although it is somewhat different now, some people are bloggers and insist on getting freebies, which was not ethically...it did not happen back in the day. If you wanted to be considered legitimate, you just didn't take stuff. Now they take anything and demand it.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you have anyone who recognized you?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, yeah. I could always tell, if I didn't recognize them, I could when I was recognized because the service got better or people would just be looking. But, if the food is crappy, the food is crappy. Now they can fudge of service for you, but you can look around and see if other people are having a longer wait because you're being mobbed and so well taken care of. So, there's ways to get around it.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you pay for all the meals that you ate?

Dotty Griffith:

The Morning News paid for them, I didn't. Everybody goes, "What's your favorite restaurant?" I don't have nearly as many as I used to, because I have to pay my own tab now.

Nathan Battaglia:

Did it ruin you? Can you go to someone's house and eat the food they make?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, yeah. I mean because, well first of all, just to be invited into someone's home is always a compliment. Its fun and for so long when I was the restaurant critic, people didn't want to have me eat at their home, because they thought I was going to be hypercritical. I mean what idiot would do that? Why would you insult a friend? Besides most people put out pretty nice meals. So I always thought, gosh, that was a time when I didn't get invited to peoples' house. Now they are not worried about me. They don't care what I think.

Mehri Yavari:

Because you knew a lot of things about cooking, wasn't it difficult to, you know because, you know what is the goodest?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, I mean if you go to someone's house and its not very good, I certainly would never say anything. But, yeah, I could....worse than just knowing what it wasn't good, I usually knew what had gone wrong. But, you just don't say that, you don't tell somebody that their food isn't good. Why would I ever embarrass anybody like that? I mean its like, but also..I guess there was Julia Childs that always said "Never apologize." And I mean, I always done that with my own food. Sometimes it didn't turn out the way I wanted it, but don't apologize. If it is so bad that you are ashamed to serve it, order a pizza. If its passable just don't apologize, because then they'll think its worse than it is. Smile and be proud of it.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you have a certain type of food that you liked to report on or to eat?

Dotty Griffith:

I had always been really fascinated with ethnic regional cuisine and why people eat and cook the way they do. Its always a combination of what grows there, what is available, the climate, where the people who settled there originally came from or.... all those influences are very much a part of cooking. And that's why Texas, East Texas is so much like the south. South Texas has a lot of Mexican influence. West Texas and the plains, thats so mid-western and cowboy. So, that has always fascinated me. Those kind of things about why people, why food is the way it is.

Nathan Battaglia:

I'd like for you to talk a little bit about, the way people eat now has changed a lot with fast food coming up in Dallas and the car culture and things like obesity. I'd like, maybe talk a little about is that regional separation still there? Are those cultures still as strong?

Dotty Griffith:

Probably not. I think there has been a lot of flattening of differences as we get into more mass produced food and chains, whether it's fast food chains or fast casual. Yeah, there is a lot fewer differences, but when you get down you find home cooked.. especially ethnic cooks, you can still find a lot of the differences. A lot has flattened out. Even barbecue, one of my book is about barbecue, and it used to be a lot more regional differences in barbecue. For instance, in Texas you could almost never find pulled pork. The standard Texas barbecue was brisket, pork ribs and sausage. Now a lot of the places have pulled pork, just as a lot of places in the south that have never had brisket before, now have brisket. So even that has merged a little bit, but there still are regional differences in barbecue, especially in the sauce and the seasoning and the kinds of woods that you use and all that reflects the people that cook it and the region that it is being cooked in.

Nathan Battaglia:

What is maybe a loss? What's the biggest loss to our culture with this flattening out?

Dotty Griffith:

The biggest, well biggest gain is the immense weight gain that people go through if you really live on a diet of fast food. And, unfortunately, its so cheap that, especially, economically distressed areas, thats what a lot of folks live on, that is the best choice to fill them up. But its horrible for you. I mean, homecooking is.... I don't care, I would be totally convinced that a piece of chicken fried at home is going to have fewer calories than a fast food piece of chicken. Then there's the whole notion of just being together, cooking together, eating together, which is so important. Now its become almost maybe a weekend thing or a party thing, but people are still doing some of it. But I think the loss of sociability around food and community, around food is probably the biggest loss, as well as, the health implications around too much junk food.

Nathan Battaglia:

How does this tie into women's history? Because I know in the early days of the twentieth century women would stay home and cook and while it is important for women to get out in the workplace, it is a great loss if they are not the full time cook for the family any more. So how does that culture survive that situation?

Dotty Griffith:

Hopefully, it would be such that, in where they are two parents working outside the home, there are two parents that would work inside the home and help do some of that. Get the kids more involved, as they get older. Its, yeah, there is not going to be a big family dinner every night, but there might be on the weekends. And there's, probably, even if you are taking in dinner, the family can still eat it together a lot, or maybe just fix one thing and the others heat and eat. But, there are just a lot of ways to blend it, but it is, it can no longer be just the women's domain. Because if somebody is working outside the house it is really hard to chief cook and bottle washer, you need some help. You can't do it all.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you see a shift in food while you were working in the newspaper?

Dotty Griffith:

Its funny, its gone through several iterations. When people first started paying attention to food and wanting to know more about it, there was the, it had to be cooked, everything had to be from scratch to make it really authentic. And everyone did want to learn about all the steps that went into making something, so I wasn't the only person obsessed with learning how to do everything. So we went through that and then there was a period where, especially as chiefs and eating out became a bigger deal, people wanted the food that they made at home to be chief quality and to look like a chief had made it. Which is, of course, totally unrealistic, because how many of us have a dozen sue chiefs helping us out in the kitchen at home. Its not very realistic. And then as some of the chiefs even got to the point where they wanted their food to be more authentic, to be more comfort food, to be simpler. So, I think its sort of coming full circle, but once again people are being happy to cook at home. I hear it with, a lot about somewhat of a renaissance with people, especially as people are caring more about local and sustainable, whether they have chicken or a garden. Well if you are going to go through the trouble to grow food, you are sure going to cook it and eat it at home. So, I think a lot of that is, now authenticity is probably, where did it come from, was it local? Was it made as it should be? That is real important again.

Nathan Battaglia:

Did you see it as a social responsibility to document these changes and talk about what children eat at school or the class divide.....

Dotty Griffith:

Well certainly there has been, that was one immense area of coverage that during my food editor days, suddenly people were paying attention to what kids ate in school and there was the make your own baby food movement. There was the organic baby food movement. All that kind of stuff. And especially the notion of giving your kids better food was also a part of the whole breastfeeding thing. Don't give them formula, give them mommy's milk and when they do get old enough to eat make sure its really pure food, not just jars of crap, whatever it was. And then there was a lot of attention paid to the school lunches. Michelle Obama didn't admit that people have been, there have been waves of it. Especially as the schools subsidies, so much of the stuff that went into school lunches was government subsidized cheese and milk and eggs that really skewed the menus and thats, kind of, that's gone away. So, yeah there has always been that kind of social responsibility or at least thats always one of the things that attracted me to covering food. Not just style points but substance points.

Nathan Battaglia:

Have you seen the ingredients available change, is the chicken today the same as the chicken in the 60s or 70s. I know with Monsanto or GMOs and all this like new industrial agriculture, I sometimes wonder when I am eating steak if in the 70s would this be a steak, would they recognize it.

Dotty Griffith:

Well, I think, especially as people got more conscious about whether something was grass fed or corn fed, is it free range. Some of it you wouldn't recognize. I mean meat wasn't nearly as lush as some of it is now, especially the prime grade that you get in restaurants. It was, steak was pretty much a steak, whether it was at home or in a restaurant. Now the quality of beef that you can get in the high end steak house is miles above what you used to get. At the same time people complain that what you get in the grocery store isn't nearly as good as what you used to be able to get. Well, part of that is because there is less fat in it, which everybody seems to like, except that it doesn't taste as good if there is less fat in it. So, there's so much more variety now and so much more choice. Even with something like eggs, I mean now you can get organic, you can get cage free, you can get standard, you can get just regular eggs, you can get eggs with higher omega-3s because of what the chickens ate. There is just so much more choice. Back in the day, the choice in eggs was large or extra large. Grade A.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you ever write about prices of food and stuff like that in grocery stores?

Dotty Griffith:

There was the time, especially in the 80s, during the, there was this big spike in inflation and prices were going way up. And yeah, we did a little bit of price comparison reporting. But our advertising department, its one of the only times that we were ever meddled with and it wasn't...it wasn't direct, I just, we just weren't going to do those stories anymore. Price comparison was not, not looked upon fondly by the advertising departments in any newspaper. And that was when we were still free standing food sections that was mostly supported by supermarkets. Now you could probably do price comparison and no one would mind, because the only supermarket advertising in newspapers is inserts anyway.

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you do a lot of markets and food markets? Natural farmers markets?

Dotty Griffith:

I started, I put into the food section the farmers market report, I guess probably in the 80s. I was probably one of the first ones to do it, but I always loved the farmers market. And of course not there is farmers markets all over the area and that column, which still does exist, covers a much broader area. But yeah, I started covering farmers markets, I put that column in in the 80s I am sure.

Aaron Starnes:

Can you discuss what the difference, what the key differences were when you were a critic and when you were a food editor?

Dotty Griffith:

As a critic my main job was to go to restaurants and evaluate the meals that I had. I did some feature-y writing in my column, but it was pretty much go eat and write about it. As the food editor, I did probably everything but critique restaurants because that wasn't my job. Sometimes it would be writing about a technique, sometime it would be writing about a chef and what he was doing or a real person and what he or she was doing. A trend, a lot of trend stories for food editors to write. And certainly around the holidays, you get into holiday

coverage and recipes. Being a food editor is a much broader coverage area than being a restaurant critic.

Aaron Starnes:

And that was the last ten years that you were at the Dallas Morning News?

Dotty Griffith:

Uh huh.

Aaron Starnes:

And beyond that you retired you were retired? What was the reason?

Dotty Griffith:

They really starting to shrink staff and I was eligible to get a nice buy outside enough to get layoff and then I freelanced about a year and I went to work for American celebrity union at Austin and then we went to Houston and then about a year ago, I moved back to Dallas and I worked for the Greater Dallas Restaurant Association as executive director for close to a year decided that it was time to just concentrate on my cookbooks and have fun writing about what I wanted to write about it.

Aaron Starnes:

So, the Greater Dallas Restaurant Association, what was you were doing?

Dotty Griffith:

I was the executive director

Aaron Starnes:

What were your responsibilities?

Dotty Griffith:

The Greater Dallas Restaurant Association is part of the Texas restaurant association which obviously is the trade association of the restaurants industry and I did so local lobbying. I did some lobbying at state level, helped raise money for scholarship funds, help on advance with the local organizations. Texas Restaurant Association and the Greater Dallas Restaurant Association are very heavily involved in student programs that teach culinary at high school level. So we spent a lot of time working with schools on their programs helping raising money. Texas restaurant association has two regional competitions and the state wide competition every year and the winner of that gone to the national competition. This is part of prostar. So this is that kind of stuff I did. pretty much typical association. Management and activities.

Nathan Battaglia:

What did you want from that job?

Dotty Griffith:

Because I knew so many restaurant tour and chiefs. The restaurant association has always had a very high membership of maybe a small mom and pops. And then some of the big

chains but one of the reasons there were attractive to me was to try some of the more prominent chiefs more involved and I was able to do that

Nathan Battaglia:

Did your storytelling skills played roles with them?

Dotty Griffith:

It is just a head access to them because I knew them, so I can call them and say come on let's get involved.

Ashleigh Cue:

As the food critic, did you have written any restaurant critic that is really good or really bad?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. The really good ones were easy. The really bad ones , especially if it was a high profile chief that everybody knew it was awful, then you would write about it but it just did not happen. Some of the places was really awful. You know there were visited them as secondary review. And I just did not write about them and it was a long standing policy, it was not just a policy. It was what we did. It was not a hand book. You just did not write about awful places because what was the point. You know? If they were just startup, they won't not last very long anyway, I gave our valuable space to help put someone out of business faster. So there were time that stuff was awful.

Aaron Starnes:

Was it any amount of guilt attached to write a bad review?

Dotty Griffith:

We did try to be mindful of the fact that some body, the owners or whoever, you know probably poured their heart and so the chunk of money into it. We Did not soft paddle it, but you should try make sure you have been fair and honest. You know? Just the same as you do not want somebody to say awful things about your writing, your career, you try to be honest and at the same time not to be brutal and be mindful that somebody if you say a waitress or bartender is awful you cost them a job perhaps so you need to make sure it was factual and honest but not mean, is that sound possible? But I guess because I live in Dallas for so long, I was mindful of and trying to be respectful, but honest and just not tearing the things because you could. I did not want anybody to see me as mean; honest and fair, but not mean.

Mehri Yavari:

How your job influenced your personal life as a woman in different stages of your career?

Dotty Griffith:

I was the food editor for most the time when my kids were little and that was pretty much a normal nine to five kind of job. There was some traveling involved with it which was great, but not tons. As restaurant critics when my kids were in high school , when I was doing a lot of that and have to work until midnight that much anyway when I go out , or I pick them up, sometimes they were with me in reviews, sometimes they were busy doing home works, so yeah the biggest problem with being a restaurant critic is that you are out nearly every night

and what other people do for fun, you do for work (laughing). And so it makes eating out not quite especial, it is not especial, it was work. It was what I did. So I was really happy to stay home maybe on weekends or even in one night a week being able to stay home and not going out.

Aaron Starnes:

Did you take note as you ate, I was always wondering how was it? Like a mental?

Dotty Griffith:

A lot of it was mental. Sometimes I go to the bathroom, sometimes I sit, write something in my lab. it is so much easier now with phones, because you take picture of what you eat and I used to not even remember what it look like. Sometimes I just deal with Menu and check what I've eaten, maybe put a note there, shoot that in my purse, then when I got home really try to make notes, so I could remember. Yeah there would not a lot of talking on the phone or taking notes at the table because it is pretty obvious why you are there. I try hold together some symbols that I am just a normal person eating here. They knew that I knew that they knew that I knew!

Ashleigh Cue:

How was it being a journalist when it was a transition being a typewriter to computers and all those new gadgets?

Dotty Griffith:

The worse was the interim between computers and just typewriters. We use the electric typewriters and we had to use a tripled paper. You fit it in there and the main copy, pink copy and yellow copy and one of those went through some kind of Scanner, but the editing on that was miserable because you had to go through edit and then still retype and hopes that scanner could read it. It was, trust me, it was not anything like copy paste, so from that standpoint, God! Cutting and pasting with the computer was great. it was hard for us to learn because you know we were old people. We did not grow up with iPods and all that kind of stuff. It was torture us to kind of learn. In the system when we first start to using them, we were so clunky; I mean it was not anything like working with Words. It was very newspaper's specific and you had to put in a lot of coding yourself. It was just tedious, tedious, and tedious. Nothing compare to what it is now, it's just so much easier, so there was some hard transition, both technologically and then just for the learning curve.,

Ashleigh Cue:

When was that they started to getting these computers in?

Dotty Griffith

Oh selectric typewriters were in the early 70s and then computers came at 80s and really took upon the 90s.

Nathan Battaglia:

What was any skills that journalist lost due to the computers like handwriting or stenography?

Dotty Griffith:

I had my own sort of shorthand that even I could not read if it sat for too long. You guys are taking notes. You do not always use the computer for everything. Note taking is still note taking whether you are doing it on a computer or doing by your hand.

Nathan Battaglia:

I miss a lot of quotes

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. The quotes are the hardest parts and from that standpoints it is great to have something that you can report.

Nathan Battaglia:

What like the skills that you seen journalists do lots of them like switch career or anything, one that you work on them like as Texas history portal, a lot of journalism students maybe interested in. skills that can be translated to other professions.

Dotty Griffith:

Certainly PR and communications are the real obvious ones. Journalists tend to love journalism but as the market shrinks it is harder to be a journalist. I like to know what you guys want to do ? Do you think you want to work in newspapers, magazines, or you think you are going to blog?! What do you think you are going to do with it?

Aaron Starnes:

I do not see necessarily that the market is shrinking, but its moving to online and I think now If you want to be a hard news person, there is that option within papers and all stuff like that but I think that the niche journalist like you food folks I think that going to take off because if you are interested, you could find that outlet and audience online. If you are intelligent, I think you can make a go it. Starting a website, selling an ad based and it's eventually big and successful enough. You can actually sell a blog like just you can sell a car.

Nathan Battaglia:

I do not really know if I could be a beat reporter, because you have to get in-depth and it is going to be something like school board meeting

Dotty Griffith:

God I hated school board meetings. it was just the worse.

Nathan Battaglia:

What kind of drive took you through that to be a beat reporter. Were you looking forward to, you know, someday you want to be a big food editor?

Dotty Griffith:

Generally that kind of stuff is what you get out of your system early and your career and this is also part of a learning process that you need to figure it out, but beat reporting is really about getting to know the people on the beat that can tell you what you want to know and not just the officials, and not just the school superintendent or the guy who is supposed to be disposal from the school . you need to find some teachers and some lower administrators that are talk to you and let you know what's going on. So, from that

standpoint covering the beat is, does not matter what the beat is, it's going through the mechanics of getting to know people and getting to know enough about the subject. Cops was very hard for woman, when I was doing it. There were no women on the force. There were not any minorities on the force. Cops in Dallas said pretty ugly things about women and minorities and they said it to your face . they did not want to talk to you. So covering cops was very hard to do as a woman.

Nathan Battaglia:

Texas has the reputation for having a racist and sexist in the past. Do you see any shift in that? Things are getting better?

Dotty Griffith:

Sure it's better now. Dallas has black police chief, but back in the day, cops were virtually all white, all men, only women around the police station were secretaries and not officers. It was really hard to get people talk to you. They tended to either wanted hit on you or ignore you. You know? I was really young. So, beside a female, I was just seeing as somebody young. Some of the racial things they were saying were awful. One of their standard jokes the cops were saying was TND, which was "typical n***** deal," and they would say things like that back in the day. And what they considered news, you know, if it happened in the black community, it probably did not matter much to them. It changed so much now thank goodness! But that was kind of stuff that you are up against.

Ashleigh Cue:

As a female was it hard to be taken seriously by all these male cops?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, at the time cops and firemen were the two hardest areas to be taken seriously as a reporter.

Nathan Battaglia:

Did that disarm you or empower you because you said cops had a hit on you. Did it get disheartening?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, you just ignored it and moved on. I was just tried to ignore it. I was not going to let it piss me off although I probably pissed off about it but I was just making jokes and laugh and tried to get doing part of the job.

Mehri Yavari:

Was the atmosphere the same when you were writing about politics?

Dotty Griffith:

There were some of that with politics but not nearly as much as with male bastions of police and firemen. With politicians, there were starting to be women elected. A few more women elected and the time that I was getting into it, there were women movements. It was causing politicians to have to take women more seriously. It took much longer for some of them to filter down to police department and fire department and the Sheriff's department! Good God! Dallas county just was the worst for the longest time. The cops were really easy to

deal with in compared with the old sheriff department back when it was “the Bubba system.” I really never hardly ever covered Dallas County.

Ashleigh Cue:

What was your worst experience with the cop back then?

Dotty Griffith:

They just wouldn't talk to you. You ask them and you something on the blotter and go talk about them and they say “TND”; you know, nothing. It was just really hard to get them visit with you about it . Unless it is already started to bubble up and then they going have to talk about it.

Nathan Battaglia:

Were you at the paper when that kid got shot in the back of the cop car? What was that like at *The Dallas Morning News*?

Dotty Griffith:

We were totally all over it. It was a very stressful time in the city that's one of the few times in Dallas the atmosphere was really very electric, and I felt like it could blow and the thing that there was a lot going on at the African American community at the time, not so much in the Mexican American community. So from that standpoint, it was really like, “oh my gosh, what to expect?” Because the Mexican American community always have been so quiet here. They just did what they did. It was first time that the whole notion of Police brutality against the Mexican American community came up, and it was very tense. We wrote I remember going and interviewing his grandmother at her house and talking to family and talking to the neighborhood. It was really tense!

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you were quince with other Female reporters in Dallas morning news?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. Carol Barta was there. lida naski, Maroin Shorts, Helen Parmley, and Linda Jones. That was us and Rena Peterson came in to the entertainment department somewhere along in there and Cheryl Hall somewhere along became one of the business writers. That was pretty much us, that were not any women editors except in the women department.

Nathan Battaglia:

So would you hang out after work?

Dotty Griffith:

Much. We used to go to launch. None of us goes to launch any more, it is just works straight through. We take off and go to launch.

Ashleigh Cue:

Were you already close?

Dotty Griffith:

I think so. We were really pretty tight.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was it any man that it was harder without their support?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. One editor who was really great to work for, was Bob Compton. He was the assistant city editor. he is still alive and well in the Dallas area. Bob was really great. He probably, as much as any of them, was sympathetic to the women reporters. And Bob Miller who is still at the paper hard to believe. He was the city editor during that time, his wife was very active in women's causes. He would have made sure bob miller, if some of the women reporter complaining about Bob. He went make Surly mad 01:24:40

Nathan Battaglia:

Any stories of the male editor who says, 'I do not see any story here' and women had to say, 'no there is a story here'?

Dotty Griffith:

I saw that kind of judgment more on social economic and racial bases than gender bases. a lot of us, not just women but some of men were even trying to expand the coverage beyond the white middle class Dallas mindset that was pretty much entrenched when we all started and so we would try to expand the coverage to minority area, minority people and sometimes that was a hard sell . I did not see this much about women as I did about ethnic minorities and poor people that only white people wanted to write about poor people was in relation about poverty. And so you get them to write about it through the housing association maybe food stance or something but it certainly was usually the stereotyped way of looking at people of lower social economic means.

Nathan Battaglia:

For Lower social economic means, as a food critics, did you also cover maybe less upscale areas and cover some of in this community.

Dotty Griffith:

Yes and especially you know when gasoline prices rose so much in the late 70s or early 80s, we would write a lot about not only food prices all we got really shut down on food comparison stories which is ways to get three meals out of a roast and something like that or economical dishes and of course we went through to the vegetarian era and low cholesterol era which is sort of like gluten free. Everybody was trying to eat lower cholesterol foods and get above of that. Yeah there have been all these various health Trans food we covered. and As well as the economics of food when something get very high priced and you start writing about ways to either substitute something less expensive or ways to stretch that particular expensive ingredient .

Nathan Battaglia:

What was the story that you got the electric rush night before, thinking this is gonna be on frontpage or whatever you cannot wait to stick to a man and whoever gonna be?

Dotty Griffith:

I remember one time I have written a story about MREs(meals ready to eat) when the military institute that was a front page story because I gone and gotten a bunch of them from somehow and they were pretty dreadful but better than what the world war two generation cay rash out of cans and certainly lighter and easier to transport which was one of the main things about it plus you could ? It was waterproof and you could had some water you could put it in your helmet hit the water up and heat up your MRE if you really hungry.

Ashleigh Cue:

What was the most weirdest food trends that happened while you were a food critic or editor?

Dotty Griffith:

I guess one that we used to laugh at the most was vegetarian thanksgiving (laughing) Good God! I hated write a vegetarian thanksgiving story. who want to eat that. It was one of those that you need to have every few years. Vegetarian alternatives for thanksgiving. You know, I always have been sympathetic to vegetarians but I guess never wanted to be one.

Nathan Battaglia:

You hunted in East Texas as a girl?

Dotty Griffith:

Less as a girl, though. I still hunt now, more than I did when I was a girl.

Nathan Battaglia:

What's a big trophy you took?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, I had a 12-point buck a couple of years ago.

Nathan Battaglia:

How did it taste?

Dotty Griffith:

Great.

Nathan Battaglia:

Where do you hunt?

Dotty Griffith:

Now I hunt mostly with a friend out in Newcastle, Texas, which is North-West of Fort Worth, out near Possum Kingdom Lake. A woman friend who owns the ranch, she never had a buddy to hunt with. So now we're hunting buddies. Going out in a couple weeks. Looking forward to my long weekend.

Aaron Starnes:

Do you dress them out and everything?

Dotty Griffith:

I can. I don't anymore. We now have a hitch that we can put on the front of the thing and pull it up in the back. Then once we get it up in the back, we take it into town and let the processor do it. I've done it before, but I ain't doing it any more.

Nathan Battaglia:

Do you save it in the freezer and eat for a month or two or whatever?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, in fact I've still got some from last year! I was going to do venison-palooza this weekend at Veritas Wine Bar. A friend of mine reps Hasty Bake Grills, and so I was gonna take a bunch of venison and just give away a little taste and sell some cook books. So that was gonna be Saturday, but it's gonna rain, so we've had to find another day. But I'm gonna do Venison-palooza to clean out my freezer before I go hunting again and fill it back up.

Nathan Battaglia:

Is hunting like getting a story? Like is finding the animal like finding the story...

Dotty Griffith:

No, it's totally different. I mean, it's fun to be out, and watching the animals is as much fun as killing them. But it, when you do decide to shoot something there is a rush. It's called "buck fever." I mean you do. You're heart starts to race, and you know you have to calm your breathing so you don't miss. There's the little ritual – the big breath and let go before you shoot or else you'll flinch and miss.

Nathan Battaglia:

So did you go just to get the food, because I know factory meat is nothing like wild meat. Or is it, also just the enjoyment of it?

Dotty Griffith:

It's the enjoyment of being outdoors. It's the fact that hunting is very much a Texas tradition, at least in my family. So you go with people that you like, love, so it's a three or four-day excursion with people that you really like. You're away from town. Most hunting things, you know, you've got a TV. You used to didn't have that. But it's just, it's being away, and you're outdoors all day and with people you like. And it's just a great way to get away from your life. And if you kill a trophy or kill something that's good to eat, it's a bonus. But yeah, it's not about filling the freezer, really.

Ashleigh Cue:

Do you enjoy cooking with the food that you hunt?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh yeah. I love to cook with game. I love to prove to people that they like it.

Nathan Battaglia:

What's your favorite meal that you love to cook for people, or yourself?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh I love to do two different. One is chicken-fried venison steak because it's just the best. And then the backstrap is the equivalent of a beef tenderloin. It's not nearly as big as the beef tenderloin, but it's really tender and juicy, and you can cook it really rare just like a steak. So those are the two favorite things that I cook. And then I always have a bunch of the meat ground up into chili grind so I can make chili or posole.

Nathan Battaglia:

So like a food, uh, say, this just came into my head, but like in any of your time as a journalist, or with food, how does food safety play into it? Was there ever like a food or a restaurant that you were like, "no, I don't know about parasites, or something, like how safe their food is?"

Dotty Griffith:

Well, sometimes you could see like a really dirty kitchen. And there was a time when I felt myself getting what was probably a minor case of food poisoning once or twice a year when I was eating out maybe five or six times a week. And I never could really pin it on any, you know I wasn't totally sure, but I'd just feel crappy for a couple of days or have some symptoms. And I just, you know, I talk to some other food critics, and it's just one of the hazards of the job. When you eat out that much, you're going to get some stuff that probably hadn't been handled all that well. You know, just, hazard of the job.

Ashleigh Cue:

But you've never gotten food poisoning or anything like that?

Dotty Griffith:

Not bad food poisoning that I absolutely knew where I got it and what I ate that gave it to me, working. I've only had really bad food poisoning once, and it was from a pizza that, a delivery pizza while I was in college. I was sick for days. It was gross.

Ashleigh Cue:

Are you currently working on like a cookbook?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. I'm working with a chef in Houston. Her name is Sylvia Cazares, and she's known as "The Enchilada Queen." She has Sylvia's Enchilada Kitchens, and so we're working on a cookbook. And I just finished another proposal for a cookbook with a friend of mine who, we got to know each other at The Daily Texan and she, her first job was at The Dallas Morning News. And she went to the Austin American Statesman. And after that, we never worked at the same place, but she became a food editor shortly after I did. And so she went to various places as a food writer and editor, and our career paths just always took us in the same direction. So we want to co-author a book on slaw, I know which sounds really boring, but I want to call it "The Slaw Sisters Cookbook," which I think is kind of funny. We'll write about slaw and all the stuff that goes with slaw. I mean Elaine is hysterical. One of her anecdotes in the book was about, she used to have this, when she was in Louisville she had a giant party every year, a Kentucky Derby party. And one year she had so many people coming, she was making such a giant batch of slaw, that she made it in her bathtub. And so it is my goal for this book for us to be on the tube making, mixing slaw with our feet in a bathtub just like Lucy. You know, the great Lucy scene, where she was mashing the grapes, she and

Ethel. So I want us to be on the tube, mixing slaw with our bare feet in a bathtub. Then my life will be complete, and I can totally retire. How's that for going from really serious stuff to something totally absurd? But when I make it on the tube, you can say "I remember when she said she was going to do that."

Ashleigh Cue:

You were part of the, now I'm probably going to pronounce this wrong, the, Les Dams de...

Dotty Griffith:

Les Dames d'Escoffier yes.

Ashleigh Cue:

When did you become a member of that organization?

Dotty Griffith:

I was a founding member of the Dallas chapter in, I think '84, and still am an active member. I'm actually the treasurer. Les Dames d'Escoffier has grown, I mean I don't know how many chapters there are all over the United States and internationally. But it started in New York, and I guess the Dallas chapter was like the third or fourth, fourth or fifth you know, city chapter. And it's an organization that started because there was an Escoffier organization for men, and of course women weren't allowed, so we had to start our own organization for women professionals in food and hospitality industry. It includes journalists like myself who wrote about food, chefs, cooking teachers, food producers, winemakers, women doing anything in food. As the career opportunities for women have expanded, so has the categories of membership, or at least the different areas related to food and hospitality that are members of the group.

Ashleigh Cue:

What all does the organization do?

Dotty Griffith:

Our main function is to raise scholarship money for women in food studies, whether it's chef or management or writing. We may even have a scholarship that we pay for at North Texas, that we fund at North Texas. I think we do, but I'm not on scholarship committee this year, so. But we have scholarships at El Centro, at University of Texas, I'm pretty sure North Texas, Texas A&M, Commerce. And then we have just general scholarships that a student can apply for, and they can use that scholarship wherever they're going to school as long as they're staying, something related to food or hospitality. So scholarships are our main reason to exist, to encourage women in food and hospitality studies.

Ashleigh Cue:

And what got you into helping found, or create, this organization?

Dotty Griffith:

The woman who was the driving force behind it, her name is Dolores Snyder, and she was a cooking teacher. She knew some of the women in New York who had founded the organization, and so she wanted to do one here. And she was somebody that I'd written about and was a friend of just in the course of my day-to-day business, and frankly I was

attracted to the organization because I was the food editor for the biggest newspaper in town. And so they wanted, and they knew I'd probably say yes, which I did. You know, I was always willing to try something new. And I'm trying to remember who some of the others were. I think Kathy McDaniel, who founded the Grape Restaurant, Dolores Snyder, probably Paula Lambert of the Mozzarella Company, and I can't remember who else. But yeah, so we were really trying to do here what had been done in New York, and scholarships are sort of the mission for all of the organizations, for the money that we raise.

Aaron Starnes:

So just to put that chronologically, where does that fall in your career?

Dotty Griffith:

Uh, mid-80s. So, you know, I'd been food editor for a while, and I was going to be food editor for a while after that. Kind of mid-way through, I guess.

Mehri Yavari:

Now that you are retired from Dallas Morning News, if you were to come back and begin the process, is there any regret that you have that you would do it, or that you would bring the change?

Dotty Griffith:

No, I mean was, you know, I don't think I have that many career regrets. I was glad I could be the writing-about-food wave when I did. At the time I was worried that it was a stereotype kind of job, but I helped evolve it not to be that, to be really legitimate journalism. Certainly the times were a-changing anyway, so I got in at a good time so I never felt less for doing that job. I never felt like I wasn't a real journalist for doing that job. I always felt like I was doing legitimate work and advancing that area of journalism. I just felt like I was sort of a groundbreaker, somebody leading the way in uncovering new ways to write about an old subject that had been limited and broadening it a great deal.

Nathan Battaglia:

What were some of those ways like some of the ground you broke?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, suddenly we didn't just write recipes for the day. And you know, we, when I first started, all, most photographs in food sections were handout art from food companies, and the food in those photographs was whatever it was they were making and selling, and all the recipes were related to that. I was the first food editor to start doing, you know, our own photography. The Morning News actually put a kitchen into the photo studio so that we started styling our own food and shooting our own food photographs at the newspaper as opposed to using handout art. We started using a lot of illustrations at various times, which were done by staff illustrators as opposed to handout art. We started having a second food section at one point. Two free-standing food sections was an amazing thing because now there isn't even one free-standing food section. It's just the cover of the feature section on Wednesday. So I really was there during the heyday of food coverage.

Aaron Starnes:

Was it your responsibility to actually cook what was going to be photographed?

Dotty Griffith:

Sometimes I cooked it. Sometimes we would hire food stylists, but I was usually down there in the photo studio helping set it up and kind of playing with it that way. I remember one day I nearly put out my eye with champagne. It wasn't properly chilled, but we needed it for a photograph, and I was leaning over and started twisting and it just flew up. I mean, it scared the crap out of me. I never made that mistake again! Any time now I open a champagne it's like at arm's length. But I mean yeah, there was one time I was doing a television thing, and I cut my thumb in between, but the segment wasn't over. I just kind of sat there and finished, and I was talking to somebody. When it was over, the chef that I was talking to said "what happened" because I mean I was bleeding, and he said "there's blood all over the floor," and I said "yeah I cut my, cut my thumb."

Nathan Battaglia:

Oh, he didn't even know.

Dotty Griffith:

Didn't even know. So I just wrapped it up and put ice on it. So yeah, you can get injured. Oh, and one time I dropped a big can of something on my foot, on my toe and lost a toenail. So yeah, there's been injuries. There've been injuries related to this, other than 20 extra pounds here and there.

Ashleigh Cue:

Now, did you do any broadcast segments or anything like that?

Dotty Griffith:

I used to do a fair amount of television on one of the cable channels, and on channel 8 back when we did a lot of cross stuff in the industry. And then for, I think like three years, I had a radio show on KRLD – "In the Kitchen with Dotty." It aired from 10 to 11, five days a week. So I'd go in in the Morning News, start my day there, run over to the radio station, and it was a call-in talk show about food, do that for an hour and then go back to the newspaper.

Nathan Battaglia:

Was it mostly women who called in?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, no! It was a lot of guys. I remember, this one guy called in one time, and was, "I'm trying to learn to cook." "Okay, great," and he said, "I am trying to figure out how to double this recipe." He said, "I can pretty much figure out if it calls for one cup and I want to double it, it's two cups. But what do I do if my oven won't go up to 700 degrees?" Those were golden. It was like "God I can't get enough of those." Well, you know, "It only has to go to 350. You don't double the temperature."

Ashleigh Cue:

Did you have a lot of people call in that were, just,

Dotty Griffith:

That were idiots? Yeah, and some of it was pretty intelligent, and some of it was just mundane. You know, just “oh.” And there were a couple recipes that I’d given out over the air that people loved. And you know, you’d get the same request day after day after day, and finally the call screeners had to just not let those folks through. It’s like “No, I’m not going to give that recipe today. I don’t want to say it. Pretty sure nobody wants to hear except this one idiot that’s asking for it.”

Ashleigh Cue:

Nowadays you probably wouldn’t have that problem, with people just automatically posting it on the internet.

Dotty Griffith:

That’s right, you know it’s, it’s just so different. Although, there are still food radio shows on. PBS has the, can’t remember, but PBS has one that’s still alive.

Ashleigh Cue:

Now you’ve been interviewed for your cookbook. How many interviews have you gone on?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh I have no idea. I mean because I’ve written eight books, so I’ve been on various book tours and stuff like that. It’s still really weird for me to be the person being interviewed rather than being the interviewer. I can’t say, you know, hopefully I’m telling you things that are somewhat interesting, but it just always feels weird to me. I should be the one asking the questions.

Nathan Battaglia:

What should we ask you that we haven’t?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh, gosh. I can’t think of anything. Y’all have been very efficient. Did your homework. Got your questions down.

Ashleigh Cue, Aaron Starnes, Mehri Yveri and Nathan Battaglia:

Thank you.

Nathan Battaglia:

What do you miss and not miss about the newsroom? I guess you don’t miss cutting your thumb...

Dotty Griffith:

Don’t miss that. I do miss the newsroom because The Morning News now, and it’s even smaller today, but when I first started, all the departments were on one floor. So it really was just a big newsroom. The sports guys were down there. News was here. Business was over there, entertainment, and then the women’s department was kind of a little shut off from everybody else. Didn’t want to get too many women cooties in the mix. But I mean, so, yeah, you always kind of just milled around. You knew what the sports guys were doing, they knew what, it was just really fun. And you always felt like you knew everything that was going on. And back then there were still wire machines that would three bells, five bells

would go off when something big was happening, so you could go and everybody would stand around and watch it come off the tape to see whether we just declared war somewhere or Elvis had just died, you know. I think Elvis was a five-bells, yeah. So, you know, it was great, you know, there was no internet. TV had news once or twice a day. There was no 24-seven cable coverage, so really you were in a spot where you were a primary source of information, and it filtered through you. That was a great feeling. Talk about a rush. I do miss covering breaking news every now and then. Just like “oh, my God, we gotta go do this!” It was, when I first quit covering politics, the first few elections were really, I missed it. I really missed it. And I mean I’m still a news junkie.

Nathan Battaglia:

Did you have strong political feelings?

Dotty Griffith:

Oh yeah. But I really did a pretty good job of, you know, hopefully I did a good job of being fair and balanced – not like FOX.

Ashleigh Cue:

Do you contribute to any newspapers currently?

Dotty Griffith:

I write a lot for “Modern Luxury Dallas” and “Katy Trail Weekly” is a little weekly here in the neighborhood. And I know the editor, like him a lot, so I do it as much to have things to link to on my website as anything. I’m not adverse to writing for anybody that wants me to, but one of the things I’ve discovered is that some newspapers or magazines, their food editors don’t want my byline in their publications ‘cause they see me as competition. So some avenues have closed, but that’s okay.

Nathan Battaglia:

Who were some of your role models when you first came into journalism? Who were some of the people you looked up to, or was there anybody that you said “oh, I’d like to be like them”?

Dotty Griffith:

Well certainly on the political side, Molly Ivins was always, you know, somebody that I totally admired. I very much looked up to, in our newsroom, Marilyn Schwartz and Caroline Barta. I’m trying to think nationally, food. There were just so many of the other food editors who were going through what I was going through. Which was, they were trying to turn food journalism into legitimate journalism, and we were among the early organizers of what’s now called The Association of Food Journalists. And we were all trying very hard not to just be the handmaidens of the food companies and to turn it into real journalism. So Sue Huffman with “Ladies’ Home Journal,” Joy-Ann Bohooley of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Anne Criswell with the Houston Chronicle, those were some of the women that, you know, Barbara Osman was in Saint Louis. She now teaches somewhere. So there were a whole bunch of us at the time that were in this movement of trying to make food coverage into legitimate journalism. That’s one of the things that Kim Voss covers in her book.

Ashleigh Cue:

What kind of classes would you want to teach?

Dotty Griffith:

I would love to teach a food journalism course. Maybe it would be a combination. Maybe a practical course on how to do it today, 'cause now you've gotta blog, you've gotta photograph, you've gotta do everything yourself. Or make it more of an academic class about food writing and the way food writing has evolved from a way early root to more modern stuff. To me it seems like people don't want to learn about the history of food writing, they want to learn how to be one.

Ashleigh Cue:

Do you think that food journalists have to have a background in how to actually cook, themselves?

Dotty Griffith:

I think it helps. But I don't think you have to be a trained chef, or, God forbid, a home economist. People used to ask me if I was a home economist: "Is that how you got to be a food editor? Are you a home economist?" "No! I'm a journalist. Journalists can write about anything we need to write about. In my case, it's food." But yeah, as I said, I really taught myself a lot about the processes and the techniques so I really understand it. And if you are really passionate about food, you're going to want to know how those things work anyway. Like I said, I don't think you need to be a chef, but it is really good to have some idea about how it works and how it's supposed to work and what it's supposed to be like, so you'll know if it's, not.

Nathan Battaglia:

Do you have to have passion to be a journalist? Is passion enough?

Dotty Griffith:

I think if you, I don't care what you're doing. But if you're not passionate about it, then you're not going to enjoy it. Maybe if you love shoes, maybe you'd be passionate about selling shoes. But if you don't love either, well if you're gonna write about food then you better pretty much love food, and you better love writing in general and communicating and talking to people, and being the conduit for taking that information to others who are passionate about it. But as far as a journalist, if you're not curious and interested and like to talk to people and get a rush out of getting the interview and seeing your byline on the page or online, then you're going to go on, and you're going to do something else. And probably going to do something and make a heck of a lot more money, but you won't have as much fun as you do if you're really passionate about what you're doing.

Nathan Battaglia:

Yeah, I looked online the other day, and they had a job for "rock star journalist" out in mid, central Texas, and the high-end they were going to pay you was 25k a year...

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, that's inviting, isn't it?

Nathan Battaglia:

Yeah, like a punch in the face, so

Dotty Griffith:

And that's for the "rock star"!?

Nathan Battaglia:

Yeah, for the "rock star journalist," and uh, was it that bad in the 70s or the 80s?

Dotty Griffith:

It was awful! It was awful when I first started. I think I made about \$125 a week. But that was a long time ago. And what happened, the reason the newspaper industry shrunk so much and the reason they gave so many of us buyouts was because we were making pretty decent money in the 90s, and in the 2000s. And then, you know, the world went to crap and the newspapers went to crap. And I'm sure they hired my first successor for about half of what they paid me. And that's why newspaper salaries are so low. And freelance fees are so low. You can't make any money. It's real hard to make any money freelancing.

Nathan Battaglia:

Is it just a flood of competition or do you think the prices are artificially low? You know, it's almost a monopsony where the only people in Dallas that are going to buy a freelance piece are like what, D Magazine, Dallas Observer, or Dallas Morning News, so they know they can lowball you?

Dotty Griffith:

It's part of that. And it's part of it, there are so many people who want to do it, and they're willing to do it just to have something to put on their blog or their website, kind of like why I'm doing Katy Trail Weekly. I like the editor and it's something to link to on my website.

Aaron Starnes:

You could almost look at it sort of like inflation. There's such a volume of content in words now. It's available through so many sources, like weekly papers, on the internet, that the value of each word almost goes down unless you bring inherent value with your name or your byline that's good, people can go to that. And that puts you in demand I guess...

Dotty Griffith:

Somewhat, but there are not very many bylines that are not disposable these days.

Nathan Battaglia:

Yeah, well I was looking at some magazines and saying, hey I'd like to write for your magazine, but you'd have to pay me something. Even 50 bucks or something isn't nothing. So, do you think it's worth it, for the amount of hours that you put in, you know people put years into that, so do you see a lot of younger journalists, or students, or even older journalists just kind of running in circles?

Dotty Griffith:

Well at some point you do have to get a body of work to show people. Just what you write as a student isn't going to convince anybody. So yeah, at some point, you will have to work for nothing, or pretty close to it, to get a body of work. But, I mean, how many of us can

afford to work for free for very long? So you just have to decide what your tolerance is and what your circumstances are. You may end up having to do some kind of job that you don't see as doing for the rest of your life, and hope you can get some clips together. It's kind of like being a server at a restaurant while you're looking for acting roles. You might have to be a server at a restaurant while you learn enough about it or get enough clips together that somebody will pay you to write about it. But yeah, it's like, when I first started writing cookbooks, you wanted to write a cookbook because it helped establish you as an authority on something. Now, if you want to sell a cookbook idea to a publisher, you've got to have a selling platform. Whether it's a website or a restaurant, but you know, you can't sell a book on whether it's a good idea or it might sell some more cookbooks. They want all the added value, and it used to be you'd try to become an author because that gave you added value. Now it's the opposite.

Nathan Battaglia:

What's the advice for the young food writer to get a byline?

Dotty Griffith:

Well a lot of folks, was it Julia and Julia, you know, start a blog that can catch on. If you can start a blog that can catch on then you can show that "what I write, people read." A blog is a good way to get going, but once again, there's no money in it at first. You've got to put in the hard time. And frankly, the best is knowing an editor that will hire you and give you a chance to get some clips for some samples of your work.

Nathan Battaglia:

And is that unfair to people whose parents don't have enough money, or maybe they aren't wealthy enough to support themselves while they do that?

Dotty Griffith:

Sure, life's full of that. It's so much easier to be a writer, an actor, almost any of the creative pursuits, if you've got somebody to underwrite you during the early years. I don't care what you're doing. Even as an attorney. Unless you get a really fat job right out of law school, you know, there's going to be some lean years. And unless you've got a sugar daddy, or an underwriter, or a trust fund, it's, life's always easier with a trust fund. What can I say? I don't have one, but I've always heard that. You know, a trust fund makes life a lot easier.

Ashleigh Cue:

What did you like more, being a food critic or a food editor?

Dotty Griffith:

I think food editor was the best gig 'cause it was, you know, you got to do so many different things. It wasn't like "go eat in a restaurant and then write about it." That's pretty one dimensional after a while.

Nathan Battaglia:

What might you have done if you didn't end up as a journalist?

Dotty Griffith:

Well, I thought really hard about going to law school. I probably would have gone to law school.

Mehri Yavari:

That's why both your children have graduated from law school?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, they're both good writers, but I said "you don't want to go into that briar patch." So they're both attorneys.

Mehri Yavari:

So you don't recommend them to come to journalism?

Dotty Griffith:

No. No, I mean I admire you guys for trying to be in it. I wish you luck finding a way to make it happen for you.

Ashleigh Cue:

Well there are so many things you can do with it. I was looking at jobs, and journalism was one of the common degrees they wanted you to have.

Dotty Griffith:

Which is great, yeah. And you know, your skillsets are so much broader than ours were. You used to go into print journalism or RTVF, radio television film. Now, you learn it all because you have to be able to do it all. That wasn't the way it was taught, that wasn't the way it was when I first started out. You were either a photographer, or writer, or editor.

Ashleigh Cue:

Now journalists are the communicators...

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, and you have the tools, the visual tools and everything. So it's a lot better in that way. But there's so much more technology to make it happen.

Nathan Battaglia:

One thing I'd like you to talk about briefly is like, well when I was doing my story, I'd call around, and you'd get a lot of PR people or people who are very conscious of their image, and every word they say is very practiced and they're really conscious of the internet and stuff. Was it ever easier, like back in the day, did companies not have this PR barrier to access?

Dotty Griffith:

PR people used to be helpful in the sense that they would get you to the people you wanted to talk to. And now, they are mainly barriers. They are the talking heads, they have their talking points. And they get paid to say nothing, or to teach whoever is the head of the company how to say nothing. Yeah, people don't want to just talk anymore. Now, like I said, there is so much news and so much distortion that people are very careful about what they

say and who they say it to and how they say it. And every once in a while you'll see the bizarre instance of the hot mic when they didn't know it was hot or...

Aaron Starnes:

It's almost a liability...

Dotty Griffith:

It is! It is extreme liability to be open and forthcoming. You know when I was at the ACLU, I mean, God, I was constantly trying to keep people, you know, the people I worked with and for, from putting their foot in it. Or the woman who's the executive director, she still is, she and I worked together at The Dallas Morning News. She is a journalist, so she's very savvy, so she doesn't require a lot of training. But God, some of the attorneys you know, oh.

Nathan Battaglia:

Scientists get me too, the guy, I mean, just putting their foot in their mouth.

Dotty Griffith:

Well or just getting them to speak in ways that you can understand and therefore maybe try to communicate what they are telling you, depending on the level of the science they are talking about. You know, "let's talk, uh, real person talk." And business wonks are worse. All their business phrases just drive me nuts. They speak totally in jargon that they think is hip and cool and makes them special.

Ashleigh Cue:

Do you think news today is far more sensationalized than it was when you were in news?

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah, I think because, the whole demand for instant news because be first often matters more than be right. And the fact that you're gonna get hammered with the same story all day on cable. Yeah, I think there's a lot of that. And...now do y'all watch "The Newsroom."

Nathan Battaglia:

Yeah, I watched the first few episodes, but I don't have HBO.

Dotty Griffith:

I mean, that's still a tug on many responsible news operations, is how to get it right, as well as quickly.

Nathan Battaglia:

A lot of people just read the headlines.

Dotty Griffith:

Uh huh.

Nathan Battaglia:

Just scroll through Google News just reading the headlines, and that's the news they read.

Dotty Griffith:

Yeah. Yeah.

Ashleigh Cue:

Capture their attention fast,

Dotty Griffith:

Mm hmm. Yeah, make the Yahoo daily digest or whatever, it's...

Nathan Battaglia:

I think we're almost ready to take a break at least and see what we've got. Maybe, you guys think? Looks like we're going pretty much on a roll,

Ashleigh Cue:

Do you have any other advice?

Dotty Griffith:

Not that I can think of. I hope I don't get an idea after, but I'll call you. You can turn on your recorder again. But y'all this has been fun. Thanks for calling me and making me think about some of that stuff!