

Thomas Rodriguez:

Welcome back to season two of the I Am WT Podcast. I am Thomas Rodriguez and I'm joined by...

Micah Bailey:

Micah Bailey, and we have two guests with us today. It's Amy and Rick Andersen. If y'all guys want to introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about yourself as well.

Amy Andersen:

Sure. I'm Amy Andersen. I am currently the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs here at WT. This is my 26th year here. I started out as a faculty member in the Department of Education, so happy to be here.

Rick Andersen:

My name is Rick Andersen. I was the university photographer here for almost 30 years. I retired in 2020. I've been brought back. I'm a part-time photographer now for the provost office. I mainly shoot headshots of the faculty.

Micah Bailey:

That's really cool. Photography is tough. You have to know all the right angles. You have to know all the right exposure. And then ISO, am I saying that right?

Rick Andersen:

ISO, yes.

Micah Bailey:

Oh my goodness. Wow. It's like I know something.

Rick Andersen:

Absolutely. You would've done well in my class. I did teach a class also.

Micah Bailey:

Oh, really? Cool. So what started that love for photography?

Rick Andersen:

Love for photography. When I was young, I had all kinds of little cameras and take photographs, and a lot of people when they'd look at the photograph would tell me that I have a good eye. As I learned more about photography, I figured out a good eye is just a knack for composition. When I was in junior high, my father was an amateur photographer. And he built a dark room in the front of our garage. A lot of people probably don't know what a dark room is anymore, but it's where you develop photographs before they were digital. You don't put your flash card in there. No, it's actually use paper and such. Anyway, so getting off track. I watched a photograph come up in the decked hall with the red light on in the dark room, and I was like, "I've got to figure out how this works." And so my father taught me and then decided while I was in high school that this is what I want to do for a living.

Micah Bailey:

That's cool. The only reason I know what a dark room is, is I feel like it's in every horror film and they're like, and putting on the little, that's John Cena, what am I?

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, you just did a John Cena theme, I was like...

Micah Bailey:

Not John Cena. It's like dark music and they're clipping it up.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I know what dark rooms are, just they're in cartoons all the time as they're developing photos and it's always a gag that someone opens the door and ruins the photo and everything.

Rick Andersen:

And that does happen.

Thomas Rodriguez:

As a digital media and communications major for two and a half years now, I can confidently say I have no idea how you guys take pictures. I just record stuff and hope it looks good. And most of the time it does.

Rick Andersen:

Well, with the advent of digital photography, actually, I was forced to go digital because I loved the way that I did things before, but once I learned that I can do all the same work on a computer out in a room with a bunch of other people, and it didn't matter if somebody walked into the room while I was working on it, and I can do a lot more digital than I ever could analog.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, they have all the tools. I know when I was trying to learn Photoshop, it is a massive undertaking to try and work on that kind of stuff, at least as far as I'm concerned. I like working with audio instead. I think that's much easier and simpler and I can just listen to it and hope it doesn't sound bad.

Rick Andersen:

Well, I am the photographer, but Amy, she travels a lot and does a lot of photography while she's traveling and we've got some nice pieces up that she shot. Where all have you been?

Amy Andersen:

I've been lots of different places taking students on trips. Went to Auschwitz in Poland. I've been to Africa with a trip. I've been to Bolivia and then China. That was not with students, but yeah, and I have photos from all those places, and of course London. I was on a Fulbright Scholar trip to Greece and Bulgaria. That was really cool. Gone for six weeks, it was awesome. Got some great photos.

Micah Bailey:

This is part of your job that you did to travel?

Amy Andersen:

Mm-hmm. The Fulbright was an award that I got. Basically you write a grant and you got this award, and so I was gone for six weeks doing that, learning about educational systems in Greece and Bulgaria, but the other ones were when we were taking students on trips. Yes, study abroad kind of trips. So yeah, that's why I was there.

Thomas Rodriguez:

So were your study abroad trips with WT then?

Amy Andersen:

Yes.

Thomas Rodriguez:

That's really cool. I've always wanted to study abroad, but also it sounds very expensive and I don't know if I have the wallet for that kind of a function.

Amy Andersen:

You do one of those faculty led ones, you're only gone for 10 days, so you're not gone the whole semester and living in London, because that does get expensive and there is obviously an associated cost, but that cuts down quite a bit if it's just for 10 days instead of a semester.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You two are both photographers, right?

Amy Andersen:

I am an amateur, yes.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Okay. I don't know if that's a weird question. Do you guys have a favorite photo that you've taken before or something?

Amy Andersen:

I do. I have one that I took in Greece where I stood at the bottom of one of the ancient ruins and it was a tower and I shot from the bottom all the way up to the really super blue sky and it's hanging in my office. And we have one at the house too, but that's my favorite. I'll let Rick answer about his favorite.

Rick Andersen:

I have several favorites. It's kind of like choosing between your children. I like a bunch of different styles of photography. One of the ones that I've liked quite a bit, it's actually a Phil Chapel in the snow, and you'll see a few of those around campus. There have been people who have requested copies of that, donated them to auctions, and so people have bought them. But it's one that I really like.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You guys have, I don't know, it's cool to hear about because I mean, I don't know what the photography gig is actually like, because I've never considered doing anything like that and I've never really heard from anybody with experience in that. But you guys have years of experience under your belt with taking photos and all that kind of stuff. I'm just here hoping to be in charge of the radio station and all that.

Micah Bailey:

So Amy, you're in education, right?

Amy Andersen:

Correct.

Micah Bailey:

Okay. So I guess what made you want to do education?

Amy Andersen:

So when I was a kid, I loved to read. It was my favorite thing to do. I'm reading under the covers at night when I'm supposed to be asleep and my mom is like, "Put that book down and go outside." "Okay," and then I wouldn't do it. So that's what got me started and I really loved it. And my older brother did not, he didn't have a lot of trouble reading, but a little bit. And so it wasn't his favorite thing. And I'm like, "What can I do to help other people love this as much as I do? Because it opens up so many worlds that you'd never would've visited before and you learn all kinds of things." So that's what started it, and that was in elementary school. And so I became a teacher. I was a second grade teacher for six years, and then I was a K5 reading specialist for three years after that. So nine years in the public school classroom before I came to WT. So yeah, that's how it all started, me reading under the covers with my flashlight, getting in trouble for it.

Micah Bailey:

I have to ask because I also enjoy reading. What genre is your favorite?

Amy Andersen:

That's a good question.

Rick Andersen:

Is it like picking between your children?

Amy Andersen:

It's like choosing between your children? No, I like fantasy a lot, but I also like mystery of any kind. But then I like almost everything. My least favorite is nonfiction.

Micah Bailey:

Oh, interesting.

Amy Andersen:

Because I read textbooks and stuff for work, so I want to have fun. Reading is fun for me now, so I want it to be an escape. So I want to read about somebody else, so I don't, yeah-

Rick Andersen:

Anytime there's a new Stephen King out, she buys it.

Amy Andersen:

That is true. I do have a huge Stephen King collection.

Micah Bailey:

My mom loves Stephen King.

Amy Andersen:

I know. It's awesome.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I'm not too much of a reader anymore. I used to be when I was younger, and then they were like, "All right, now you have to read these books and you have to write reports over the summer over them." And I'm like, "Over the summer? No, I don't want to do that."

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, that's a killer right there. That'll kill your love for anything, having to do that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I relate to liking fantasy stuff. I mean, I'm a huge D&D nerd, because I actually have a show with the radio station and I do my Dungeons and DJs show every week. And I love fantasy settings and storytelling with those. I think it's super fun.

Amy Andersen:

It is, I agree. I used to play it when I was much younger, but yeah, it was fun.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You probably had a different experience.

Amy Andersen:

Probably. We had actual dice we were rolling around.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We still roll with dice. We are not that far ahead.

Amy Andersen:

You've got the 12 sided dice and all the little-

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yes, we've got all of them. It's just-

Amy Andersen:

Experience points and all of that.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Played different, a little different, not that much different.

Amy Andersen:

That's fine. I would expect it to progress.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, it's just bigger now. The book is much longer.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Another thing that I don't read. So you two have both been here for a while at WT. How has WT changed since you guys have been here?

Amy Andersen:

I would say lots of things have changed. The physical look of the campus has changed quite a bit. When I first got here, and same for Rick, the street in between Old Main and the JBK, the student center, was an actual street, a through street, had a stop sign and sometimes people didn't stop as quickly as you would like. You really had to watch when you got to that corner. So physically it's changed a lot. The JBK has an extension now. It's bigger. There are new buildings on campus, the football stadium being on campus, so many changes like that. And we've reorganized colleges. We have a college of engineering now that wasn't there when I started. So all kinds of things. How about you, Rick?

Rick Andersen:

I think you've pretty much covered it. I was here as a student. I'm a double WT grad. I've got my bachelor's degree here and my master's degree here. Lots of years apart. And I encourage anyone who wants to work on their master's, if you can, go ahead and do it right after, it's a lot easier than when you get older and you can't remember things. But actually when we came into this room, this room is what about 8 by 10 foot-ish?

Thomas Rodriguez:

It's not super big, but yeah.

Rick Andersen:

I was essentially a journalism major and I had to take a radio TV class. And one part of the class was we had to do a newscast and I did several of them, but the room that we did the newscast in was literally a

closet. Seriously, it was probably about a fourth of the size of this room. It had the board, it had the microphone, and that was about it. We had carts back then. We had to-do carts.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I can't imagine the NEWS 1 studio being a closet. I mean it's this massive room with tons of equipment, state-of-the-art cameras, all that kind of stuff. And to picture it being done in a box is hard to think of.

Rick Andersen:

Well, this was the old fine arts building that's no longer there. It was before this building was ever built. And it was for the radio station. So the radio station, they had turntables, that was in a fairly good size room, a room larger than this one. But then they would throw it back to us, whoever was doing the news in the back room, and then they'd go take a break.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, now our radio station's all digital, so I just push a button. And then the music plays and all that kind of stuff. We still use turntables sometimes. We use them for special events to celebrate the history of radio and that kind of stuff. Vinylthon is a big thing that we do at the radio station, but with throwing it back between news and all that kind of stuff, I mean we have a little bit of that with sports broadcasting and stuff like that, but it doesn't sound as in depth as when you guys were doing it.

Rick Andersen:

Well, I also, I worked for the Prairie and the Prairie was actually a printed piece at that point. And actually I did work for the yearbook, the La Mirage, like a two or three year period where between when I graduated with my undergrad and when I actually started here, actually I guess a two-year period and the La Mirage, they did away with it during that time. I counted it one time, actually after I started working here, I believe at one time there were nine dark rooms on campus for different things. And I worked in at least three or four of them. And actually I taught in one of them. I taught the last chemical class for the university.

Micah Bailey:

So you've done photography for a while?

Rick Andersen:

Yes. Like I said, I started when I was in high school.

Thomas Rodriguez:

You've watched this industry evolve past being, well, I mean, I guess you can still do it as the, I guess, analog way of making photos versus digital, but you've watched this industry evolve into what it is now.

Rick Andersen:

Oh, absolutely. When I was in college, everyone thought of Kodak as the big yellow giant. Nothing can ever hurt Kodak. And Kodak was actually the company who developed the first digital camera. It was about the size of a shoebox. I don't remember how much it weighed, but they developed it and they were like, "Oh, this will never catch on." So they didn't go after it. They're out of business now.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We don't have Kodak cameras.

Rick Andersen:

They didn't change with the market and didn't pay attention. Again, they probably thought that film was going to be here forever and this is never going to change.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We'll prove them wrong with our fancy, \$100 cameras and our tech room and everything like that.

Rick Andersen:

There you go.

Micah Bailey:

We're going to take a quick little break and we will come right back. We're going to learn some more about the Andersen's current involvement at WT and the impact that it had on them.

Speaker 5:

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

Thomas Rodriguez:

Welcome back to the I Am WT Podcast. We talked earlier about your involvement with WT. Why do you guys choose to give back to the university?

Rick Andersen:

Well, honestly, the university has given so much to us. It has given us our life. This is where we've worked. So why not support what has supported you? Also being at the university, we see the students and we see what the product of what the help does. Does that make sense? Okay. I check with her all the time. We want others to have an opportunity as we did. And the way to do that is through scholarship.

Amy Andersen:

So also my particular scholarship is for education majors because that's my field, but at the end of their experience as an education major, they have to do student teaching or clinical teaching. And so it's really hard for them to work during that semester because that's an all day, five days a week job. It's like they have a job. It's an internship, basically, a full-time internship. So we want to help students out any way we can because we know that that's coming for that particular group of students. I experienced that when I was in school and any little bit helps.

Micah Bailey:

Yeah. And I know that right now they currently don't pay them, but I've heard, it could be a rumor, that Texas is trying to change that and try to get them paid because that is huge. I mean, they're literally

working and then they can't work outside of that unless they want to get a night job, which would be horrible.

Amy Andersen:

Right. And I did work. I worked part-time while I was doing mine, but I worked nights and weekends and I was exhausted all the time because spending the entire day, five days a week with second-graders is exhausting. You should try it sometimes.

Rick Andersen:

Rewarding.

Thomas Rodriguez:

No thanks.

Amy Andersen:

Very rewarding, but also exhausting. So yeah, it's hard to work. And if we can help out with that, and I don't know if that rumor is true or not. I think it would be great if they could get to that. I don't know where that money's going to come from. So unless it's lottery tickets. They told us when they put that state lottery out there, this money is for education. Still waiting on that. We'll see.

Micah Bailey:

I didn't even know that.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, it happened a long time ago.

Rick Andersen:

That's how they got it passed. That's part of their advertising was the money will go to education.

Micah Bailey:

They make a lot of false promises all the time, I feel like.

Rick Andersen:

No.

Amy Andersen:

I think it actually did, some of that money went to education, but then they pulled other funds that were going to education, so they just replaced one fund with another, and that's how they got away with that, so to speak.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Money towards education I think is pretty important. I mean, both of my parents are teachers, so I grew up with them, "Yeah, we're kind of broke right now, but don't worry about it." And I'm like, "Okay."

Amy Andersen:

It's going to be okay, but yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Yeah, I mean, they've been in the business for, well, business, they've been teaching for, I think my dad is approaching over 20 years. I don't know the exact number, I'm a bad son.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah. No, it's all right.

Thomas Rodriguez:

But both of them have been teaching for a while and they teach middle school and all that kind of stuff. So I know that funding is super important.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, it is, and teachers are underpaid, yeah.

Micah Bailey:

It's funny that teachers don't get paid as... Well, they get paid absolutely nothing and they do so much. You think about it, if they're a good teacher, they're not just there for the education. You also kind of build those people up that are in your classroom. And I actually have a friend who is doing education because she sees the more that society keeps... I don't know, the more the world progresses in a way that the more sad stories we see with little kids and she wants to help little kids in the classroom just to know that they're loved if they're not inside of their homes.

Amy Andersen:

Right, and that's an important part. And people don't always understand that it's not just from 7:30 to 3:30 that you're doing this. And it's not just grading on the weekends either. It's does so-and-so have enough to eat. I had a student who lived in his car for a while at eight years old. So there are lots of stories like that. So yeah, you have to be more than just their teacher from seven to three or whatever the hours are. So yeah, you're right.

Micah Bailey:

That's got to be hard. You really have to have a heart of gold for that I feel like.

Amy Andersen:

You do. I agree.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, it says in my notes, you guys have a heart of gold. I mean, you guys have established your own two scholarships. What inspired you guys to make these scholarships in the first place?

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, just giving back to the university and to the departments that we were most familiar with and that we came out of, in Rick's case, or that taught in, in my case. So you see the struggles of some of the students and it makes you want to go, "Okay, now that I am able to give back, that's what I want to do."

Rick Andersen:

Well, another part of the scholarship that I established, we established, but we have ours, we have mine. So that I established was also so that, okay, I've got this thing. I want to live forever. But obviously you can't. When this building was being built, we had to go out and find photographs of fine arts building because they were tearing it down, old photographs of when it was being built, and everyone wondered who took the photographs and there was no way to know.

So I had already started putting my name in the metadata, and that's one way that I want to live forever because my name will be, anytime anyone pulls those up, they'll pull up my name. But through the scholarship, it carries my name on. My grandfather immigrated from Denmark. His name was Ludwig Frederick Andressen. At Ellis Island, they changed it to Louis Frederick Andersen. My father was Louis Frederick Andersen Jr. And I'm the third. So this way the name continues on as long as the university's here.

Thomas Rodriguez:

That's awesome. I wish I could make that big of an impact to have a scholarship named after me. But I'm young. I got time. I'll do something cool later.

Rick Andersen:

Well, we had talked about this not, well, I guess we'd been married for a while, for 10 years probably, and I don't know if I told her at the time, but I started a different account and I just had some of our money every month pulled out and put into that account until we got enough to establish the scholarship. It took 10 years and it was probably when one of us got a raise and whatever the raise was, I just put that over there as if we didn't get it. So it wasn't money missed.

Micah Bailey:

That's nice.

Thomas Rodriguez:

So you two obviously understand the importance of scholarships and volunteer work and that kind of stuff. Why do you think it's important for others to do the same?

Amy Andersen:

I think if you spend a lot of time at a university, like at WT for example, we want students to continue to feel like they're part of the WT family. We make a big deal about we're all in the WT family together, so wouldn't you help out your great-grandchildren or whatever you want to call them, cousins, the weird cousins from way back, whatever, Rick's raising his hand at that one. So let's just spread the good news, right? Let's help in any way. If you're able, to help in any way that you can and not everybody's able, and that's okay. But the more people that do, even if you just a little bit or you're volunteering, like you mentioned volunteer work, that's important too, sometimes, if you don't have the means to do what we've done, you can do other things. So I think it's important that, especially the way the world is right

now, we need to be kind to each other as much as we possibly can, and I think that's a great way to do it.

Micah Bailey:

Yeah, we kind of have a selfish mindset right now.

Rick Andersen:

Well, as she mentioned, the way the world is, the way that you can change the world is to be educated. If we want a better world, then we need a better educated populace, and this is one way to do it.

Micah Bailey:

Yeah, that's very true. The more you know, the more you can help because if you don't know what's going on, if you're not aware of exactly the situation that's at hand, then you're not going to know the solution to it.

Rick Andersen:

Well, you hear so many things and the general public just takes it for granted that people are telling them the truth. It's not always the truth. The way to let people know it's not the truth is for them to be educated and find out for themselves.

Micah Bailey:

That also comes with, people are just lazy nowadays, so they just want it handed to them.

Rick Andersen:

I don't think it's just nowadays, people have been apathetic. My first year in college, I went to a different university a couple hours south of here, and in their student newspaper, it was a daily newspaper, one of the headlines was something about student apathy and I really didn't take the time to read it. I don't know what it was.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Wow. You only read that stuff in books. Oh, this apathy magazine. I'll read that later.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, I'll read it later. Right next to procrastination magazine. I'll read that later too.

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, speaking of students, I'm sure you both have advice that you would give our generation of students. What would that be?

Amy Andersen:

So I think continue to pursue your dream, whatever it is. When we're talking to elementary age students, we're like, "You can be whatever you want to be." Maybe, maybe not, but pursue your dream. And even if that particular dream doesn't happen, something else will. I have a colleague who went to school, he was going to be a teacher, and he got to student teaching and went, "Yeah, this is not for

me." But along the way, he was going to be a chemical engineer at one point, but he changed his major completely after he had a really good class in a different subject area, so he changed majors. So I think that, be open to new ideas, pursue your dreams, and work as hard as you can at it, and don't be afraid to ask for help. That's really important. Students especially are a little intimidated, I think, sometimes, and they don't feel like they can ask anybody for help or ask for...

Thomas Rodriguez:

Well, some of them are. I don't know about the comm department. I mean, McFarland is very loud, but he's a great guy. He's good to go to advice for.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah, and you've gotten to know him and he's not, it's all bark and no bite, hopefully.

Thomas Rodriguez:

We haven't seen his bite. Hopefully we never will.

Amy Andersen:

Hopefully so.

Rick Andersen:

I guess the advice I would give is kind of what I've always done. It's do what you love. Now I don't do photography 24 hours a day. I've got other interests. I've got other things that I enjoy doing, but photography is what I chose as a profession, and I don't regret it one bit. I probably should have gone into something else where I was making a lot more money, because I'm not going to make that much money as a photographer. There are some who can do it. There are some that will, but I guess what I'm saying is find your love and don't let it be the love of money. Again, I could have done something else, made a lot more money and hated going to work every morning. As it was, I enjoy going to work. I enjoy doing what I do.

Micah Bailey:

That's not a way to live life, not doing something you don't enjoy.

Amy Andersen:

Yeah.

Thomas Rodriguez:

I would totally not enjoy doing radio stuff if I was just doing it because I wanted money because I love doing my show every week and getting to tell stories and all that kind of stuff, and that's why I do what I do because I don't think I would enjoy it as much if the primary focus was making money. That's the secondary goal. That's fine. All right. We've covered a broad variety of topics today, but now we have to ask both of you the big question. What does WT mean to you?

Amy Andersen:

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What does WT mean to me? I would say WT means opportunity. It's an opportunity for students. It's an opportunity for alumni to stay connected. It's an opportunity for donors to give back. Just all of those different things. To me, it's opportunity in all kinds of ways.

Rick Andersen:

That's a tough question. For me, it's family. We touched on that earlier and it's kind of what she just said. It's almost like I've lived here for the last 30 years. I've got to know people. I knew McFarland when he got here, and actually I knew Randy Ray before he got here, but it's just, it's almost family.

Micah Bailey:

Yeah. Thank you so much for listening and thank you again to our guests. To find more, go to www.WTamu/podcasts. This is I Am WT and always, Go Buffs.