

The nion to invade Truman

INTERVIEW BY STEPHANIE HALL
Features Editor

Stephanie Hall: What section do you guys write for at The Onion?

Jack Kukoda: We both are staff writers for The Onion News, which is the video component of The Onion.

Dan Mirk: The Onion has really grown throughout the years. Jack and I are relatively new here — there have been people working here for 20 years. It started off as a really small college paper in Wisconsin, and then it grew on the Internet and expanded to the radio, and now the videos are the next thing The Onion is

doing.

SH: Are you guys looking forward to visiting Missouri?

Kukoda: I've never been in Missouri.

Mirk: Me neither, but yeah we're really looking forward to it.

Kukoda: And we're most desperate to return to our youth. Yeah, we don't know what college students do anymore, and we assume it's like in an '80s movie where it'll just be like wild parties, pillow fights and mud wrestling — that's what I'm assuming it'll be like when we get there.

SH: I'm not sure it'll be that crazy — it's a pretty small town.

Mirk: We're both from really small towns, so I'm sure Kirksville is going to seem like a big, awesome city to us. I come from a town [of] 8,000 people, so that's a pretty big school.

SH: So what did you guys major in?

Kukoda: I majored in political science, and I took production and radio classes.

Mirk: I ended up doing literature, but I was a film major for a while and then I was a history major, but then I ended up doing literature and writing as sort of a last resort. I actually wanted to study journalism, but there wasn't a journalism major at my school.

SH: Did you always want to be a writer, Dan?

Mirk: First I wanted to be an archeologist, then I wanted to be a ninja, then I wanted to be a cartoonist, then I wanted to be a reporter, like, for a real news organization and then I ended up sort of falling into this.

SH: How did you guys get started working at The Onion?

Kukoda: After college, I moved back to Buffalo and started writing for an alternative newspaper. Later I moved to New York, was doing improv and sketch comedy and freelance comedy writing, met someone at The Onion that suggested that [I] submit a joke, and I did that and became a contributing writer for Onion News network and was eventually hired full time two years ago.

Mirk: Well, I'd always been a really big fan of The Onion. It had always been a dream job for me. The only real reason I started working here is because I got the internship before any other jobs panned out — it wasn't really that I chose this over serious journalism. ... I was highly unqualified for any legitimate job — so a lack of skills is what led me to The Onion.

SH: What kind of jobs did you have before The Onion?

Kukoda:

All sorts of jobs — I worked for a company that unplugged computers. [We] would go to an office and ... for some reason the employees weren't fit to unplug the computers themselves so they would call this company. I got paid a lot of money to crawl under desks and unplug computers and put the powers cables in a bag.

Mirk: I was an RA in college. I was one of those people that was supposed to break you up if you have alcohol in your room. I was very bad at that job — I was like a negligent RA. All my programs were like, "We'll watch a movie and eat pizza," and then I would not even attend my own event.

SH: Do you find it's easier to write satire than serious news?

Mirk: It's more fun, obviously. It's actually really similar — basically the whole style of writing for The Onion is the same I would use for the radio. It's actually much less different than you would think. The format and the way we lay out stories — all the same rules of journalism still apply to what we're doing. [You] still need to cite your sources, even though you're making them up.

SH: What are some of your favorite topics to write about?

Mirk: I think that, typically, you just try to write jokes about what you think is obscure or makes you angry, or things that are stupid or disgusting, because the jokes that we typically like the most are the ones that are tearing something down or [have an] angry point behind them.

Kukoda: The day after Obama's election, we did a story about [how] Obama's supporters are basically drowning, because they don't know what

to do with their lives after the election is over. It was really funny and silly, and I'm really glad we made a joke about the Obama administration that quickly because people were saying, "You aren't going to be able to make fun of Obama," or that people won't want to because many of the writers are left-winged.

SH: So what are your plans for Valentine's Day?

Kukoda: I am going to get a special Valentine's bag of combos, you know — just watch happy couples out my window.

Mirk: I have a special lady in my life that puts up with my 700-pound body — I'm not really 700 pounds, I'm actually skinny. My plans are to not make her cry for the day. That's as romantic as I think we're going to get. Last year I tried to cook her some lamb chops, which is ambitious considering that my previous cooking experience was a grilled cheese sandwich and cereal, and I set off the fire alarm like four times in one night. Actually right after Valentine's Day is when Jack and I are coming to your college. So I think that will be our Valentine's Day treat to each other. It's our little getaway — stay in a bed and breakfast in Kirksville.

Kukoda: You do have stores that sell the teddy bears and Mylar balloons, right?



Daniel Mirk



Jack Kukoda

Feb 18th
The Onion comes to
Baldwin Auditorium
7 to 8:30 p.m.

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