



At Home in a College Newsroom

FOUR YEARS OF DEADLINES —
BUT A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES

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When I applied to be a contributing news writer for the student-run newspaper during my freshman year, I had no idea that I was about to embark on the best, most-challenging four years of my life.

Nearing the end of my sophomore year, I took a wild gamble and applied to be *The Crimson White's* editor-in-chief. When the day came for my Media Planning Board interview, I wore my frilliest pink poofy dress to show off my spunky personality. I was never expecting for my life to change that day.

In typical Maven fashion, nothing starts calmly. Even as an infant, I screamed and cried constantly, never allowing for a moment of peace. My very first day as editor-in-chief fell nothing short of my chaotic life. From that moment on, I knew this would not be an easy role.

There was a protest on the quad over the ongoing conflict in Palestine. There were hundreds of students shouting and marching outside of the student center exercising their First Amendment rights. It was beautiful, really. I had the knack to whip out my phone and start recording when both sides of the rally started to scream, “F... Joe Biden!” I put my phone back in my pocket and switched back to the new Canon Rebel T7 my mom had gotten me as a congrats gift. When I pulled my phone back out, I had thousands of notifications. I could not even open my phone as there was phone call after phone call preventing me from even logging in.

That video ended up getting nearly 20 million views and served as a great measure of the amount of attention we would have at *The Crimson White* for the next two years. While that was a fun, and frankly silly video that went viral, my next dash of attention was neither of those things.

In March of last year, I received an email that a University of Alabama student had been detained by Immigration Customs Enforcement. This was by far the most challenging story I have ever reported, as I felt deeply emotionally connected to it. In the midst of all of it, national news outlets were messaging me every day asking me for updates. My family and friends kept telling me how cool that was, but

I felt nothing but guilt. Somehow, I was receiving praise while the student, Alireza Doroudi, was experiencing the worst. My dream is to one day work for a legacy media outlet, but in that moment, I was not the least bit interested in hearing from them, and I was just selfishly hoping that I could have one week of no news, and especially no national news affecting UA that I was in charge of reporting on, while I juggled tests, homework, and learning a new language.

It was silly of me to think it would calm down. A few weeks later, the president of the United States announced that he was coming to campus. “Great, more national spotlight,” I thought to myself sarcastically. I was tired, overwhelmed and needed summer more than ever, but that was not an option. My staff was having almost identical feelings to mine, but we worked hard and ended up receiving multiple awards for our coverage of the president’s visit to the Capstone.

Over the summer, I continued to follow Doroudi’s story. He decided to self-deport, and when he got back to Iran, he sent me a simple message that said, “Thanks a lot,” in regard to my coverage of his story.

That one message reminded me of the importance of journalism. It is not for recognition. It is not to be self-fulfilling. It is not to promote an agenda. It is to give a voice to the voiceless. For the first time in my life, I felt that I had truly accomplished that.

Though my second year hasn’t been quite as tumultuous, I have still covered the University’s suspension of our two Student Media magazines, professor firings, campus elections, and even the closure of my favorite fast-food restaurant — Whataburger, I miss you. Each one of these stories has reminded me of my reason for writing.

The Crimson White has been my home for the past four years. The place that I have grown, laughed, cried, and even met my best friends. I sometimes joke that I am excited for my “freedom” and to not have to work full time while also being a student, but I know that the *CW* always has a place in my heart. Looking back, it hasn’t felt like work. I am a firm believer that if you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life. I am lucky to have to never, ever work. ●