



EVAN REN

Big Country Preps

A winner of 18 Associated Press writing awards in a 17-year career, Evan Ren's road into journalism was an improbable one, beginning on an Arizona construction site nearly 20 years ago.

In fact, until August of 2000, he was literally swinging a sledgehammer for a living, working as a land surveyor in Tucson — a job he despised.

During this time, he wrote multiple letters to local sports editors, getting a positive reaction from friends and family who noticed he had a flair for the written word. But it wasn't until an afternoon in 1999 when Ren finally had a moment of clarity.

While cleaning out his storeroom, he discovered his old high school yearbook, in which he found a note from his journalism teacher on the inside cover: "Evan, I hope someday, somewhere, someone will understand you or impress you enough to take your obvious talent and head it into the great directions it could go. ... Send me a bylined story someday and I'll edit it or improve it."

It was at that moment that the age of 34, something clicked.

Ren realized the dream he held of being a sports writer as a high school student could still be pursued. And with a little added coaxing from his wife, Kristyl, he soon approached the local afternoon paper, the Tucson Citizen, for a tryout as a correspondent.

To his surprise, the Citizen staff not only praised his work, but put him at the top of their correspondent rotation — assigning him to major-and minor-league baseball, professional boxing and multiple front-page features.

During spring training in 2000, Chicago AP came calling, using Ren a correspondent to cover the White Sox during their month-long stay in Tucson.

“It was surreal,” Ren said. “For a time, I was working on construction sites during the day, and covering the Chicago White Sox by night.

“I’d go to work the next day and tell the guys ‘Hey, I got to interview Harold Baines and Frank Thomas last night,’ and nobody would believe me.”

The dual existence was short-lived.

A little more than a year after beginning his work as a correspondent, Ren quit his day job as a surveyor and boosted his part-time schedule of college courses to a full-time slate.

By June of 2001, he had landed his first full-time newspaper gig with the Killeen Daily Herald, where he would remain for five years before receiving a job offer from the Abilene Reporter-News.

Since putting the sledgehammer down for good, Evan has collected 13 Associated Press Managing Editors writing awards, four Southwest Associated Press Sports Editors regional awards and an APSE national honorable mention.

His feature work has appeared in publications such as “Baseball America,” “Military Times” and “Dave Campbell’s Texas Football” magazine.

He now joins Daniel Youngblood at BigCountryPreps.com for “one of the most exciting projects of my life.”

In his spare time, Ren is currently working on a book project that “I’ve been sitting on for the last 20 years and finally have the opportunity to write.” He is also an avid NHL hockey fan.

He and Kristyl will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary on Dec. 19, 2022. They enjoy travel (recently accomplishing a long-stated goal of going to New York City), barbecuing and fighting over the remote control.