

## 92. Judith Roberts: The Flip of a Coin

### **Gavin Kelly**

Hey everybody, you're listening to Beyond 1894. This is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University, and this podcast is produced by Louisiana Tech's Office of University Communications. And because of that, we have a special guest host for this episode. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it to one of our interns from University Communications this winter quarter.

### **Madeline Kalmbach**

Hi, I'm Madeline Kalmbach and like Gavin said, I'm an intern here at the University Communications Office at Tech. And today I'm going to be interviewing a very special guest, Dr. Judith Roberts. She is an associate professor of Communication and Media Studies here at Tech, and she is my professor. So welcome, Dr. Roberts.

### **Judith Roberts**

Thank you. I'm so excited to be here.

### **Madeline Kalmbach**

To start off, I know that you're a big tech lover and a part of the Tech family Bulldogs. Can you tell us a little bit about your journey with tech and you went to tech yourself and how you started here.

### **Judith Roberts**

So I actually started here by flipping a coin. That is not a joke, real. So when I was growing up, I was an only child. from Oak Grove technically. I went to forest High School and lived in a small community of goodwill. We don't have a red light. We have one gas station. So that's nobody knows where that is. So I used to say Oak Grove but my parents were big on education wanted to make sure that I made sure that I continued my education after high school. My mother started her bachelor's degree in teaching when I was in kindergarten. So she graduated from you LM which I think at the time was still NLU. Wow, when I was in fourth grade and started teaching after that, and my dad was a tugboat driver, mainly on the Mississippi River. So it was a very physical job, but he was away a lot of the times. So he wanted to make sure that I was educated properly. And where I didn't have to do the physical labor and be away from my family like he was. So when we were deciding where I was going to go to school, they really wanted me to go to U LM because it was closer and I could come home. I was like, No, I don't want that. So it was between you LM tech and Louisiana college where one of my cousin's was going at the time and I wanted to be with her. And I flipped a coin a couple of times in tech one. That was that was honestly how I decided and it was the best decision that a coin has ever made for me. I was so excited. I met all my bridesmaids at Tech. I met my husband here met him the very first day of school. As a matter of fact, I thought he was the most handsome man I've ever seen. I know right? And was so shy at 18 years old that I actually did not start dating him until like a year later, because I was so shy. But yeah, got my master's degree. He and I both finished up in 2005. We got married right after we graduated, moved to New Orleans. Katrina sent us back. We were in New Orleans for a whole month.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Oh my god, horrible timing.

**Judith Roberts**

It was terrible timing. it actually turned out really good. Because we came back he started working with Malcom Butler for the sports information department here and tech athletics. I started working for the restaurant daily leader. And yeah, so that was my first big girl job at a college and I went on to get my master's degree from Grambling State. Came here to Tech was actually kind of working for the public relations department. At first. It wasn't actually yeah, at Tech. It wasn't you see, at the time, it was kind of merged with the journalism department. It was interesting. It was a very interesting thing. But I really wanted to teach and so I was strongly encouraged if I wanted to teach to go get a PhD, which I did, I had a co worker at the time who was getting her doctorate from University of Southern Mississippi and she said it's a great program. And I said that sounds lovely. Went there. Got a PhD and here we are.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Wow, was that online? Or?

**Judith Roberts**

Oh, it absolutely was not. Okay, so

**Madeline Kalmbach**

you had to go!

**Judith Roberts**

one year? Yes, one So Kyle actually he was when he was working with Malcolm he ended up quitting then to pursue his Master's in Counseling. And so he would drive me to Southern Miss one day a week we would I would take eight hours a classes we would drive back at home about one or two in the morning. And then I would be back at work depending on if it was the summer, the regular academic year, you know, at 7:30 or eight o'clock and working you know, after hours to you know, make up for that last day at work and

**Madeline Kalmbach**

dedication and that was for the Ruston Daily Leader.

**Judith Roberts**

That was when I work for tech only we did public relations. Because I only worked at the leader for maybe a couple of years and then I was offered a position here at Tech and absolutely took it was my dream job. So obviously because I'm still here. Yeah.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

What did you do for them when you were working that position at tech at first, writing

**Judith Roberts**

a lot of the press releases, the eventual goal was to move me into a teaching position once I graduated with my masters. So I did a lot of shadowing with the teachers who were teaching journalism at the time. But yeah, mainly just, you know, writing press releases and talking with the media organizing the media was it was a lot of fun.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Did you know have you like always known that you wanted to teach like with your mom? Yeah. Teacher?

**Judith Roberts**

No, I did not. I just I zoomed I did not want to date. But what it came down to was, I did not want to teach lower levels, like I saw every weekend, she was up at the school, doing bulletin boards, talking with parents doing all this other crafty stuff. Yeah, that was not my repertoire. I am not a very crafty person. So but once I realized that, you know, teaching just kind of came naturally for me, or it felt like it came naturally. And I really enjoyed it. And I love teaching. I love being with students and getting to hear their ideas and hearing where they're going to go for internships and jobs. And it makes me so happy to see students develop from that freshman year through their senior year, and even now, through grad school like it. It's the most rewarding thing I've ever done. Yeah,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

that's great. And you've helped so many students. No, you have like every student that's had Dr. Roberts has a Dr. Roberts story of how she helped them get something or it really encouraged them to do something that they didn't think they were able to do like pursuing a master's degree or pursuing a field like news or actually being on camera and things like that. So you said you're so your husband teaches at Tech as well. He's

**Judith Roberts**

an adjunct. Okay, so he's an adjunct professor? Yes. In marketing

**Madeline Kalmbach**

and marketing. Did he go to tech for marketing? Now he

**Judith Roberts**

actually is, so he's a double masters. Okay. He got his master's in counseling and guidance from tech. And then he went to work. He was the Chief Marketing Officer at a nonprofit in Monroe. And he worked there for about 10 years. And so that commute back and forth to Monroe was it gets old after a decade. Yeah. And with two young kids, and, you know, I was the one who, you know, if they had school activities, or something, I was the one who was taking care of all that doctor's appointments, you really miss out on that. So he, we actually had, you know, the position open with Lincoln parish journal, where we were able to partner with Malcolm and CO publish Lincoln parasternal, together, and he kind of said, you know, think this may be what I want to do. And so at the time, he was working on his master's degree in business from LSU s. So he said, you know, what, if I adjunct to and, you know, worked in Lincoln parish journal, and I said, what, whatever, you know, whatever you want to do that makes you happy, and that you enjoy, because I mean, you know, I tell students all the time, work is a long time,

you need to really, you know, enjoy what you do and everything. And he said, uh, you know, I think I think I could, I would enjoy doing this. I said, Let's do it. Yeah. Because I mean, he was he enjoyed working at the center. It was a good place to be great people there. But you know, it was just time for a change for our family. And it's been very beneficial. And he loves, you know, working together with Malcolm and me on the journal. And you know, being there for the kids. So own different activities, and school lunches, and pickup and orthodontist appointments and all, you know, the fun stuff that comes with,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

right, the proximity makes a difference. But very much does. Yeah. And so was he a counselor

**Judith Roberts**

ever as he was he was a counselor for a couple of years. And then when the position in this company opened up to four chief marketing officer he applied, got it and was in that role for several years.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Wow. And I know people love his classes, too. I hear lots of fun things about him as well. And y'all both teach social media strategy type classes. Yes. Can you talk about like the yalls, two classes that y'all teach in?

**Judith Roberts**

It is so fun to kind of see the differences and what he focuses on, and what I focus on in class and just kind of compare notes. Because that's been a lot of fun. In fact, I have one of his former students in my class right now. And she's using a lot of the techniques that she learned in the marketing class in our class, which I think is just absolutely so much fun because my social media class is more of like the capstone class where you do some video work, you do some website editing, journalism, work, public relations, releases, all encompassing in one class, and his worked with more of the marketing side. And so I tell students, you know, use whatever tools you have at your disposal, and so she has brought in a lot of The marketing tools that she's learned for that class, but yeah, it's it's so much fun to say, well, what are your students doing? Well, your students working on well, you should see what minor do

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Yeah, it's like friendly competition is it's so much fun. That is so much fun. I have a friend in his social media strategy class right now. I can't remember the exact number of it. But yeah, she loves it. And it's funny like hearing Yeah, it is more of the marketing side. Not necessarily the more technical side of it, just understanding more like what is going to drive people to improve their social media and like actually increase profits if that's what they're working on. And that is really cool that y'all can vote, have the similar classes, and people might not even know that you teach them. So it's kind of funny. So you mention Mr. Malcolm Butler a lot. And do you, you and your husband, y'all own the Lincoln parish Sheriff, now, right, Malcolm

**Judith Roberts**

and Kyle and I are all co publishers of the Lincoln parish journal. We all have more of equal say in what goes on in Lincoln parish journal, but definitely he Malcolm and Kyle are the ones who carry the heavy

lifting for them. I mean, I do a little bit but they're, they're the day to day in and out nitty gritty ones who, when you see the final product when you get the email every morning at 655. They're the ones who take care of that. Okay,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

wow. So you went from the rest and daily leader to Public Relations here at Tech to the Lincoln parish

**Judith Roberts**

journal, social media management in between. Okay,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

so how, like, how did that happen? How did you end up being a co publisher of the Lincoln parish journal?

**Judith Roberts**

it just, we were approached about pursuing publishing it. And at the time, I was kind of like, I was getting ready to go up for tenure. And I just said, I have no time for this. Absolutely not. There's no way and cause it. But wait, what if we did it together? And I said, Oh, well, this could work. So and it has, and it was more of a? Let's see what happens at first, you know, let's see, can we actually get this off the ground and running? Can this be a viable source of income? Can we make it something that the unit the town needs, because I do think that having multiple publications in one town, having multiple media outlets in any city is beneficial to the citizens like you have different opinions, you have different stories that are being covered, that is so necessary to a growing community and forreston to have to, I think that is just a sign of how good Ruston is doing and how far we've come from when I came here. 20 years ago.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

It's interesting, because so many people at Tech, I realized this when I got to tech, they just love tech, and they stick around. And so you hear a lot of people say how different it was.

**Judith Roberts**

We didn't have a theater. Wow. Yeah,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

it is. It's just different. And so did you were you approached by the Lincoln parish journal, because of your background? Or because of a personal relationship? Or a probably a little bit of both?

**Judith Roberts**

A little bit of both? And it probably did help that Kyle has a background in journalism as well. Yeah. And that he has a master's degree in business because he does all of the management and marketing side of things, or he does a lot of it. And I surely could not do what he does. Yeah.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Da Are y'all located downtown or wherever?

**Judith Roberts**

We don't have an actual office building? No. So it's all remote work. Wow. All of our writers are have remote work. And we all oversee different writers. And yeah, everything is done on their own time. Which is kind of fun, too.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

But it is cool. Y'all are Mo and how many employees do y'all have?

**Judith Roberts**

I'm gonna say a rough estimate of probably seven or eight riders and two individuals who work with ads and design and social media. Oh, wow. Besides Carl Malcolm and I,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

so the Lincoln parish journal is digital. Mostly right?

**Judith Roberts**

Yes. So one of the reasons we're able to keep the news free because you know, you can go to Lincoln parish journal.com and get the day stories yesterday stories, I mean, all the stories for free. And that's one of the things that was very important to me, when, when I came on with Lincoln parish journal was I wanted to make sure that it would stay free because I think that's important. And it was easy for me to go out and tell students and community members about it and say, hey, look, you can sign up for free and get it for free. But one of the ways that we're able to do that is because it is a digital newspaper. Yeah. And also, I know one of the other issues is, you know, we're, you know, saving, we are saving money on not having to do it. written copy. But also another thing is like everybody has a phone in hand that has connectivity to the internet. And it's something where they can get the news immediately. Or whenever they need it by just go into our website, go into the Facebook page. Yeah, getting it on their email. It was just something to get the news out there quickly and effectively, without having to say, Oh, wait, we had to wait to print this paper out. Right. And so it's more of an immediate feel. Yeah,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

for sure. It also is fun to have like the news for people who are coming to tech. Like, I remember when I was coming to Tech, I did look and like I'm like, what kind of paper and how do I read about what's going on in Ruston? And yeah, it's cool because the rest of the community so intertwined with tags, when I read the Lincoln parish journal, I'll talk about tech so much and it's I think it's cool, because it's not directly affiliated

**Judith Roberts**

with tech right now. But I mean, think about at tech and Grambling are the two biggest employers of Lincoln Parish Yeah, like it's relevant that we have news about tech and about Grambling because you either work here you go here or you know, somebody who works here, or your kids go to school at AE Philips are at the Early Education Center here on campus. It's it's important to know and there's so many events that happen on campus that the community can come to last last week. Hold on that last week. Back during Mardi Gras season, I brought my kids up to Union board's Mardi Gras Mambo

because that was open for the community and there was a parade and that there was balloon animals that were actually swords that they were making. But I mean, it was something fun that they could do and celebrate Mardi Gras because they weren't out of school for Mardi Gras. So you're able to still celebrate and do King Cake walks and do make masks and everything. And so I think that's important for the community to know, again to kind of connect Town and Gown right situations. And I think it's important for college students to know what's going on in their town. Local journalism is so important on that aspect that you know, what's going on in your city. But also, you know, there's activities downtown that you could participate in as well. I mean, we have the auditions for Fiddler on the Roof for ruston community theater that will be coming out soon. And you know, we may have students who want to participate in that. Yeah. So I think that's it's important to connect the city with the universities, it's mutually beneficial. Yes, yeah. For students, for faculty and for the community.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

I do love that Tech has opportunities to bridge between the wrestling community and the university.

**Judith Roberts**

my kids all the time. They're so spoiled. We live in Yeah, like they're just cool living in Ruston.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Yeah. There's just fun things that you get to do being like having your parents be part of the Tech family and everything. And so you are you work so many different hats, you have so many different jobs. It's very impressive. How do you think that tech prepared you to be like a business owner of sorts of professor, a mom, all those things?

**Judith Roberts**

I think probably I mean, I do think education is so important. Obviously, I went ahead and got a PhD from it. But I think the connections that I made at Tech were equally as important. My mentors in the Journalism Department, Reggie Owens, and Sally Hollis, Ron Wyden, Wyly Hilburn, who is so well known. They were so integral and making sure that I was as successful as I could be. And then my friendships that I made along the way with, you know, girls, who became my bridesmaids and friends on the tech talk, when we had the tech talk. Oh, my goodness, like one of them is still one of my closest friends. Wow. It's, you know, it's it's prepared me just because of those connections and being able to have a village. We, you know, we say all the time, it takes a village to raise these children. But yeah, it does. And having those those friendships throughout the years, has really been beneficial, not only for me and for Kyle, but also for our kids, too.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

I do. Yeah, I hear so many people say about tech, they just never leave to people from tech just don't leave. And I never I didn't really understand that before I came to tech, because I don't have any family members at Tech. And there are so many people that have so many family members at Tech. So I think tech is truly unique. And people don't want to leave because of the connections they make. I feel like I hear that a lot.

**Judith Roberts**

and you know, my kids, it's so funny. They know they're going to be Bulldogs. Unless something crazy happens. You know, they are going to be Bulldogs when they graduate from rust in high school. And I had one of one of my alysus friends at one time. She said how do you know you're going to go to Louisiana Tech like how do you know this? And she said, Oh, I just know that's just it's just a given for her. She's going to go to I Louis next year. She's gonna go to Ruston junior high ruston high school, and then she's gonna go to tech. And you know, her baby sister will come up eventually. And they'll share a room together and it's gonna be great. Like they have plans. And it's so that right there is so much fun to see the legacy that's going to hopefully occur. And because I mean, Alice already knows who her roommates are going to be a tech and there are friends that I was rooming with when I was in college.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

Yeah. Wow. That's precious.

**Judith Roberts**

It's so much fun. And, and I never had that when I was growing up of, you know, I knew I was going to go to college because my parents were going to insist on it. But as far as where or what it was going to do for me, I had no idea and I think they have a little bit more of an idea of how awesome college is going to be. Yeah, because they they come up here all the time. I try at least once a quarter to bring them up to the 16th floor of Wyly tower so they can look out because it's special to them. And how many how many kids get that opportunity? And I'm sure a lot of kids here in Ruston get that opportunity. But I didn't write and are nearby. Yeah. So I want them to know that and to feel connected to this university. They're

**Madeline Kalmbach**

definitely tech kids and they have a special upbringing. And you probably know so many things about tech and the wrestling community. This is kind of more of a fun question. But do you have any like special spots at Tech or Ruston that you've shown your kids or your like when you go to tag this or anything like that?

**Judith Roberts**

In fact, I was kind of joking. I'm on a search committee. I'm on to search committees, actually, for some faculty members. And I was secretly hoping that I can be the one who gives them a tour around rusted because I just know where I would go. Okay. Just different places like on campus. Always go touch the Bulldogs head, right? Like you just have to and you add they've been putting toys students have been putting toys around there. I don't know what that's about. But he always wants to take one and I say no, you that stays it's

**Madeline Kalmbach**

or I think you can take them it.

**Judith Roberts**

Don't tell her that. She'll take them.



**Madeline Kalmbach**

In the student center. They're filling up the Bulldog with these little like trinkets and stuff. And I think they're like, it's not I think people are taking and leaving things. So it's interesting how that tradition is evolving.

**Judith Roberts**

tell her she'll have to leave something if she wants to take so yeah. But yeah, always the Bulldog. When when I have the kids here for some for whatever reason. They always want to go to tech table because yeah, they think the cafeteria is the coolest place in campus hands down. upstairs and Wylie tower always because it's just such a beautiful view. I always love going around athletics too and seeing the tag and the football stadium hideaway Park. Yeah, hideaway Park is just fabulous. As far as Ruston is concerned, I always love going to the peach store, especially when they have their first peach ice cream. Like that is so stereotypical. And so you know, so much of a Ruston thing. And so we celebrate by our first peach ice cream cone of the season utility. That is my favorite place to go mainly because my kids are highly involved in Ruston community theater. And so I dropped them off, and then I run to utility and it's absolutely wonderful.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

fun. And that's Tech owned as well.

**Judith Roberts**

I actually Art College, a liberal arts dean and a couple of other faculty members, I believe, own utility.

**Madeline Kalmbach**

that is a cool thing about tech and ruston and just like how integrated the two are, and how that like a really great local restaurant is being kept up with professors here.

**Judith Roberts**

the Lincoln parish library, I think that is a gem of Lincoln parish. We love our libraries so much. And then also I mean, I don't know if you include this but like, you know, Kyle and I are highly involved in our multicultural, multi ethnic and multi generational ministry, the springs on Barnett springs Avenue. It's kind of an offshoot of Temple Baptist, but he's actually talking about wearing so many hats. He's the worship minister. Oh, wow. Yes, at the springs. And so I always encourage individuals to go there if if they're religious and or if they're just interested in seeing what a multicultural ministry looks like, because it's it's very unique in Ruston. Yeah,

**Madeline Kalmbach**

that definitely is unique for Ruston. That's cool. Well, I have one more question for you. And just because I had no idea what I was going to major in when I was coming into tech as a freshman, and I am a communications major myself, but if a freshman or an incoming freshman was interested in majoring in communications or journalism, how would you sell that to them? Or what opportunities could that bring them?

**Judith Roberts**

love this question. And I will say if anybody is listening and they are interested in journalism studies are our master's program. They can always email me at J Roberts at la tech.edu Because as you know, I'm very responsive on email. I tell my students all the time If I haven't answered within 24 hours, feel free to bug me until I do because I've probably lost the email because I do like to respond. I know how important it is to respond to students, especially when they have questions, especially concerning their potential major. But I would say communication is so much fun. I don't know another degree where I have so much fun and that I can you can really tailor it to whatever you're interested in. So if you're interested in running and writing, you could write for Runner's World Magazine, or if you're interested, and writing and weddings, you could work with wedding planning and do something of that nature. There's just so many different things that you could do. Besides just the simple you know, when you think of journalism, you think, Oh, well, that just is writing for a newspaper. No, there's like magazine writing, newspaper writing, I'm sorry, newsletter writing, public relations, social media, marketing, all these different things that are just intertwined with communication. And so you really can tailor the major to whatever you're interested in. I mean, that's why it's so important that all of our freshmen students take calm one on one because they need to know how to communicate, no matter what they do. Yeah, I even tell students who, you know, when we have like, career fairs, where it's just going to be a whole lot of it's mainly geared to like engineering students, and like, you know, anyway, because all of these engineering firms have a public relations arm to them. And so whether or not they advertise hard, they probably need somebody in public relations, or who can write press releases or newsletters, internal or external communications. I mean, yeah, at all. So it's a very versatile degree, one that can go and help out with a lot of different disciplines as well.

### **Madeline Kalmbach**

Yes. And as senior I just went to the career fair, and I was, it was fun, because they obviously yes, a lot of it is engineering firms and all these things. But when I told them I was a communications major, they were like, Oh, actually, like, yeah, we do have this and like, do you do this? Are you interested in this and it is so versatile, and like, you can do so many different things with it. And I feel excited to graduate just because I do feel prepared by tech, but I also know that I can do different things with it. And I'm not like married to one discipline and I also have really loved school so I'm not afraid of doing more school and I think that yeah, it's a lot of fun. Well, thank you so much for coming Dr. Roberts and talking with us and I hope that everyone got to know you a little bit better and see how much you do for tech in the Ruston community and we'll be seeing your round. Thanks Madeline.

### **Gavin Kelly**

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