

Hello, and welcome. I am your host, Neil Ward, and I'm grateful that you are taking time out of your day to learn more about design educators' paths to tenure. I truly appreciate it.

On this episode of Tell It To Neil, we're chatting with Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, Jarred Elrod, from the University of Florida, in Gainesville, Florida. Let's listen in.

Neil: Hey Jarred; how are you?

Jarred: I'm doing well, Neil. How's it going?

Neil: Pretty good, thank you for joining us on Tell It To Neil.

Jarred: Thanks for having me.

Neil: Let's get started here. So, how did you get into the design field?

Jarred: I've told this story to a lot of different people and pretty much the same way every time. I definitely can attribute it a lot to luck and being around the right people at the right time and of course having a really supportive family but it started out like if you've read Paul Sahre's book, Two Dimensional Man, very similar. When I was a kid I was just drawing all the time; I loved to draw. I didn't really know why but I used to just stay up all night and try to replicate things that I was seeing; when I was a kid it was usually the basic stuff that you would want to drawn like jets and motorcycles and went through like a Dragon Ball Z phase and all that stuff but I was just constantly drawing and I still have some notebooks from when I was in school and they're all filled with little drawings of trucks and animé things that say, I hate school, over and over again which is ironic because I signed up for so much extra school and now I work at a school but it started with just a love to draw and then a visit to the High School Counselor's Office in the really small town that I grew up in that said, oh you like to draw? Well you should think of Graphic Design. I didn't know what Graphic Design was; I'd heard of the term, I was eighteen, I wasn't really thinking about the future very much. I applied to one college...

Neil: So, where did you grow up?

Jarred: I grew up in the Texas panhandle in a really small town called Borger, Texas: B-O-R-G-E-R, and it's close to Amarillo, so if you've ever driven through Texas on I-40 it is the part of the Texas panhandle that has the big Texas Steakhouse where they have the seventy-two ounce steak. Anybody that's ever been through there; that's how they know it. Oh yeah, you have that seventy-two ounce steak. I was like yeah, that's pretty much right. But, so I grew up in Borger, Texas, about twelve thousand people, it's a big oil and gas kinda hub; refineries and stuff there, most of my family works in that industry and I went to college at West Texas A&M University for Under-grad where I got my BFA in Graphic Design, so I had that visit, probably a five to ten minute visit with the Counselor at High School said, hey, you should think about Graphic Design. All my friends were going to college for Engineering; I'm a pretty competitive person so I'm like, well, if my friends are going to go to college...this is making me sound really horrible but it's like...if my friends are going to go to college...

Neil: Not at all!

Jarred: ...I should probably go to college and I actually ended up rooming with, who's still one of my best friends, my room-mate Jay, who I lived with for three years who also went to West Texas A&M University as part of like a pre-admitted Medical School Program at Texas A&M University because West Texas A&M was a satellite school; he actually just got his first job as a Doctor but as you can imagine, being pre-admitted to Medical School he was very driven, really intelligent, really well spoken. I was always intuitively intelligent; I could draw and had skills but that was really the first time I was ever around somebody that really cared about what they were doing with academic work and who was really dedicated to that kind of thing and I think that kind of my natural competitive drive kind of pushed me to do what he was doing and even though we were the same age, he was kind of a really big role-model for me because I kinda like to fly by the seat of my pants and I was really intuitive and here is this person that I was living with that was really dedicated and cared about grades and that kind of naturally translated into my academic coursework during my four years at West Texas A&M University, so that was another person, my room-mate that really kind of helped me along and was in the right place at the right time and...

Neil: It's good to have some friendly competition.

(04:40)



Episode 2

Season 1

Jarred: Yeah, yeah, absolutely and so there was that. But West Texas A&M was a small school. I only had basically one Professor for each area so like Painting and Drawing, Graphic Design, Printmaking and Digital Art, there was kind of one person for that and I had an amazing Graphic Design Professor, I still talk to him all the time; he's retired, but his name is Bob Carruthers and he's an amazing illustrator. His office was, I remember the first time walking into his office it was just covered in posters and he had stuff all over the place and awards and I could just go in there and talk to him for two or three hours and even when I signed up for Graphic Design, the first two years at a four year institution is usually core work, 2D Design, 3D Design, Drawing classes, even going through the first two years, I still really had no idea what Graphic Design actually was until I started taking courses with Bob and actually going to his office and talking to him and looking at what was up on his walls and what he was showing me and he was a really influential figure for a lot of different ways because he recommended me for my first internship which turned into a job at an advertising agency in Amarillo which was close to Canyon which is where West Texas A&M was and he also showed me letterpress and talked to me about what was then Yeehaw Industries in Knoxville, Tennessee which became Church of Type in Santa Monica and now I think it's going back to Johnson City but I can't remember the name, but it's Kevin Bradley and his partner at the time, Julie in Knoxville, Tennessee; Yeehaw Industries, Bob showed me Yeehaw, showed me letterpress, I was doing my own little letterpress experiments, relief printing for projects and then he talked to me about Graduate School one day, much like the Counseling Center...not the Counseling Center but the Counselor in High School: hey, have you thought about Graphic Design? Bob was like, hey, have you thought about Graduate School? I was like, no I haven't, but maybe I should because I like you and I trust you so and you know, I was working at an advertising agency, I'd already had over three years under my belt full-time, like thirty hours a week by the time I graduated because there were a lot of opportunities because it wasn't really a bit market so I got my foot in the door really early and by the time I graduated Under-grad, I was doing presentations for clients and going to work in suits sometimes and we would present to banks; I was pretty well-seasoned by the time I finished Under-grad and I was already starting to feel a little burned-out and a little kind of tired of doing that. The initial excitement of a billboard or whatever, had kind of worn off and I kind of started to see beyond that and I started thinking about sustainability and the value and the ethical side of what I was doing, especially for clients that I didn't really care to work for, mainly banks and telecommunications companies, those were my two least favorite things to work on and started to think about, maybe there's more to this than just advertising and being in an advertising agency for the rest of my career and when Bob showed me letterpress and I started experimenting with that, then he showed me University of Tennessee and talked to me about applying to Graduate

School, I ended up applying to a couple of different places and University of Tennessee offered me a Graduate Teaching Assistantship and at the time once again I was totally ignorant, I didn't even know what that was. I was like, well OK; they were like, oh, we're going to offer you a Graduate Teaching Assistantship and I was like: that's great. What is it? And there was like a pause on the other end of the line for like five seconds and they kind of explained what that meant and I was like yes, sign me up for that; that's what I want. So, once again, I went to Graduate School and it was a radically different method of design education than what I went through at West Texas A&M University because it was a small program, it was very intuitive. In Tennessee they were teaching kind of Bauhaus principles for Sophomores and the approach to design education and research was totally different than anything I'd been exposed to so I really had to kind of re-learn. I knew how to get to the destination but I did it in a very different way than they did it and it was kind of shocking at first but it was really great for me to have to re-learn kind of a different language so really, honestly, the answer to that question, I just again, right place, right time, right people that cared about me and just tried to put out positive vibes and be nice to people and I try not to burn bridges and that's been something that's really helped with my career trajectory. That was a long answer to your question; sorry.

Neil: No, that's OK, that's OK. We have time! So, now kinda two questions off of that or maybe a couple more. At what point during your schooling or your industry experience did it kinda click with you that you might want to be a design educator?

(10:00)

Jarred: I could actually trace that back to one specific project and I can't say that it was the moment in time that I said I want to become a teacher: I could tell a story about that too and I can get to that but the moment in time that I realized that I needed more out of design and wanted, and knew that there was more out there was I was working on a piece of direct mail for a telecommunications company that was a big client of ours so it was a big client of ours, telecommunications company; it was a piece of direct mail, I was working on it and you know telecommunications companies, especially big ones like Comcast are kind of universally hated; they're not great with customer service and while this was kind of a local regional company, they had a reputation for just being a really crappy company and I knew that and I'd used their services before and we were making this stuff that definitely didn't align with what their actual services were like so I started feeling pretty bad about that and like I said earlier, the initial kind of excitement of making things and getting them approved and working with clients had

kind of worn off and I remember sitting there thinking about, I was doing the print estimate and we were going to print like twenty thousand or thirty thousand of these things and I was thinking about what I'd do with the mail when I get it, like direct mail when I get it is I just throw it in the trash and a lot of places, they recycle and stuff like that which is great, but when I was growing up in West Texas, even in the early 2000s when I was working at this agency, there's no recycling. There's still not really any recycling there so I was thinking about just all of this stuff that's going to get thrown away and I just really got kind of fed up with it and at the same time there was a lot of turnover in my office; it was a partnership and we had a satellite office and the partners were fighting with each other and it just really...

Neil: Well that's not good.

Jarred: No, it just...it was really kind of a bum environment and I was only...I think I was twenty or twenty-one; even already then I was like, I can't see myself doing this for ten more years; I gotta make a change. And this was about the time when I was finishing Under-grad and doing a lot of experimentation and learning about what else was out there and I'd never lived outside of the kind of Texas panhandle area, well I didn't know what it would be like...what was that?

Neil: About what time...what timeframe was this?

Jarred: This was my senior year of Under-grad, so I was...that would be 2007, 2006 and I didn't know what it would be like to move away, I just kinda knew that I wanted to and of course it ended up being a pretty big deal because it was Texas to Tennessee which is not really a huge...I didn't think it would be a huge deal but then I started looking at how many miles it would be and how long it would take me to drive there and what it would mean to be that far away and how long it would even take to fly because of the connecting flights and it started becoming very real. As I said earlier, I didn't know what a Graduate Teaching Assistantship was and when they said that you'll have to teach a class for us to pay your tuition, I was like, yeah, I'll do that and I didn't really give it a whole lot of thought because I was accepting this offer and I'll work with that later on down the road and of course as teaching became closer, it was never something that I thought I would want to do and I was really pretty terrified, but after the first week of teaching my first class I knew that I liked it; it was an exciting experience and the thing that I liked most about it and the thing I still like most about it was being around the students and being around people that are excited to learn things and the moment when you have something really

good to say and you realize that a student hasn't had that knowledge yet and is willing to hear that, is ready for you to share information with them, it's still really exciting for me. Like, whoa, let me tell you about typography. Because I'm a huge typography dork and I can talk about that stuff all day and as long as people are willing to listen and I still...I love being in the classroom with people that are excited to learn; I like that it changes every year. It's really great to kind of, to keep you out of a rut and I think that a big part of life is learning to stay out of ruts and to keep things interesting and to keep changing things and to keep re-thinking things, you know, the ability to do that and to kind of innovate and kind of re-think how you teach classes based on information and experience and research is really exciting to me so I knew that I wanted to be a teacher after that first class and I thought it could be a viable career path and because I'm in a kind of a dual career partnership with my spouse, you know, I've been in a situation before where I had a job offer back at a firm or I could do adjunct teaching and freelance on the side and even though the money would've been better at the firm, there was always this kind of intuitive kind of drive to teach because...because of being able to interface with students but also to have the flexibility and there's just some kind of pull there that always kind of pulled me in that direction. Even when I had opportunities to get out of teaching.

(15:40)

Neil: It's not a bad gig!

Jarred: Definitely not a bad gig!

Neil: So, correct me if I'm wrong, but if you were coming from Texas and you went to Tennessee you pretty much went from Orange to Orange, right?

Jarred: Well, West Texas A&M was a Texas A&M School, so we were Maroon, but you're talking about...but you're talking about University of Texas which is Orange, but that's going to be a Burnt Orange.

Neil: Ohh...

Jarred: People get mad at me when I'm in Austin because I still have some Tennessee stuff...that's not the real UT...dude: Tennessee was there like a hundred years before your School so...gonna have to

give you a hard no on that one but...University of Texas at Austin's a really great School, it's a really fun town if you've ever had a chance to go there before, I'd recommend it if you haven't.

Neil: I will have to do that. I haven't been there yet.

Jarred: But as you know, University of Tennessee's definitely not a Burnt Orange: a very bright, highlighter Orange.

Neil: No, it is!

Jarred: Like, Hunting Orange.

Neil: Almost, almost, yeah. So, you were at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for your MFA degree and what type of work were you doing there?

Jarred: Yes. So, that...that was a major transition for me moving to Tennessee. I did have the Graduate Teaching Assistantship; I assisted in Graphic Design classes as part of my Assistantship the first year, and then the second and third years I taught in the Foundations program, so primarily I taught a time-based media class called Intro to 4D which I really kinda fell in love with and really enjoyed teaching. Another part of my Assistantship which kinda got added on which is why I wanted to go there was to help run the University of Tennessee letterpress shop so myself and Hilary, another graduate student that was in my cohort were asked to kinda help start collecting type. We had a big donation from somebody and Printmaking was donating another press that they had and we were putting together basically a small print-shop with two letterpresses; a Challenge Proofing Press and a Vandercook SP15 and they asked us to organize type and kinda get the presses going and start running workshops and open hours as part of our Assistantship and they offered us money to do it and it was fantastic and I spent two years doing that: I loved every minute of it. I still think about it actually, you know, my work day used to involve, and I did it in the evening from like five-thirty to nine or six to nine or something, basically involved going into a letterpress shop and listening to music and talking to people and showing them how to print and making jokes and it was a really great time and it really helped that the letterpress shop was literally about ten steps from my studio which was a fantastic set-up and like many graduate programs, I was taking elective coursework in different areas outside of Graphic Design and inside Graphic Design. Graphic Design seminars, the first two years, and then thesis which lasted

the full third year and that was where my research interest in design process or to be more specific, the experience of design process really kind of started to take shape and like many things in my life, it really happened intuitively and I didn't know that it was taking shape until after my thesis show was really kind of over and I sort of trying to kinda reflect on what had happened and what worked about it and what didn't and I'm still doing that today. I've been out of Graduate School almost ten years now and I'm still thinking back to that year and making connections that I didn't really get during that year based on the research that I'm doing now and the work I'm doing with my spouse who is a performance psychologist, so a big part of what I'm doing for research right now is incorporating or applying mental skills training more specifically mindfulness-based practice to the design process to both facilitate alternative ways to ideate for projects and also to increase mental toughness and resiliency in getting from Point A to Point B in a process and I should have my spouse here to talk about that more specifically as the expert in that area.

(20:17)

Neil: It sounds really interesting and I would love to know more and I'm sure you're going to be presenting at, I don't know, UCDA or SECAC or something like that, a conference like that in the future?

Jarred: Yes, we have done a few presentations at a few conferences this year. This academic year we presented at two conferences, two national conferences which was great. We did a project together with one of my classes; I'm working to see if I can teach a graduate seminar that would basically be a full semester where we would partner for a full semester with graduate students to kind of see how we could grow the work and kind of explore other areas of how we could apply facets of performance psychology to design process to create more unique outcomes.

Neil: Well, I wish you luck in that and I hope it pans out.

Jarred: Thank you. So do I! So far, so good!

Neil: Yeah, well, so after graduation you mentioned that was about ten years ago, you needed to kinda take the next step and find a job. So, walk us through, what's been happening in the past ten years?



Episode 2

Season 1

Jarred: Oh man! So, you thought the answer to the first question was long. This one's probably really about to be long because a lot has happened in the ten years since I finished Graduate School and a lot of it, and I wouldn't change anything if I had to go back. I'll just preface this, before I start this journey, I'll preface it with that. I wouldn't change a thing; really both my partner and I are super-happy with where we ended up, but it was a long, winding and at times difficult journey for both of us to be in a place that we like, doing the type of work that we like and a lot of it kind of centered around this idea of a dual career couple: we're both very driven, my spouse is a Psychologist, I'm a Design Educator and a Graphic Designer. We're both very passionate about what we do but at the same time we're both very interested in a lot of other things and we like to be very busy but something that really made it tricky for us was that I was going to move back to Texas after Graduate School and actually met my spouse my last year at Graduate School and decided to stick around because I was, you know, the relationship was great and I really saw that it had a future and at the time when I was getting ready to finish, my spouse was pretty much right in the middle of her PhD in Psychology, which is not as long as like a full-on medical degree where you go for like ten years but ended up being about probably eight...eight years I think she did; she's, I mean, probably going to...if she was here right now she'd probably be not happy about how I'm explaining all this stuff! Basically it was five years of Graduate School, it was a one year residency which is a placement program, kinda like a Medical School residency but it's only one year instead of five years and then there's one year of post-doc hours that you have to do to even qualify to become license-eligible to practice as a Psychologist. If you don't have your license, you have to practice under somebody else's license, so it's a very long process and she was, I think she was in her second or third year of just the Graduate School when we met and I was finishing so she had a couple more years in Tennessee, we got a great little house together in South Knoxville which is now exploding, if you've been there recently: it's crazy. Knoxville's like the whole town is exploding, it's amazing. Hello, Knoxville, by the way! So I decided to start looking for work locally and I found a job at Pellissippi State Univer....or Pellissippi State Community College, so I mentioned earlier that before got onto my first teaching job outside of Graduate School was at a Community College, and Pellissippi State's a large Community College right outside of Knoxville. I taught there for two years, I really felt fortunate to get a job teaching right out of Graduate School; I loved the people I worked with, they were really caring, the students were fantastic, I really enjoyed my time there, there was less of a research expectation, it was more about teaching and kinda running the School which I'm very passionate about teaching. A part of my research is still about teaching and pedagogy and so that was a good fit for me. The only down-side was there was pay, the pay could've been higher, I don't think that it was...it was necessarily sustainable for real growth trajectory. When you start at a low wage it's really hard to end

up getting paid a lot over the course of the career because if you start low, you're getting raises in small increments which means that you're going to stay paid low for the rest of your career basically, so you know, I was really enjoying teaching there, I knew that maybe it wasn't going to be the forever job because my spouse was finishing her PhD and then Texas Tech University actually recruited me for a Visiting position and they basically offered me double the salary I was making at Pellissippi State...

(25:50)

Neil: Wow!

Jarred: And I had an opportunity to work with somebody that is still a great friend and I care about and admire and was one of my top inspirations in Under-grad. His name's Dirk Fowler and he's a letterpress artist that works at Texas Tech and I had an opportunity to go work with him for a year and it meant a year of distance when my spouse was going to be finishing her PhD coursework in Tennessee: I'd be in Lubbock, Texas which is near my family in West Texas which was also a draw because I'd been living away from home for a while, and I got to work with Dirk and it was an amazing opportunity and the pay was really great. Not quite double but pretty close to double!

Neil: How did that opportunity come about? Did someone just pick up a phone and be like he, Jarred, come work with us, or was there a little more networking involved or...

Jarred: There was networking. Because I'd...because Dirk was such an inspiration, he actually came to West Texas A&M when I was there and lectured and showed posters and of course I was like right up at the table afterwards asking questions and talking about it. Dirk had actually gone to West Texas A&M also. Bob, being the common thread there once again, the guy that I mentioned earlier, facilitated a relationship; we all went out to lunch together, so he had been kinda following what I was doing and we stayed in contact through Graduate School, so I had developed a relationship with him over time and he knew that I was starting my career in teaching and he also knew that I know what it's like to live in West Texas. It's not...living in West Texas is not easy for a lot of people, especially if you grew up around water and trees. Lubbock and Borger, the area I grew up in, it's like being at the ocean but if the ocean were dirt. It's just flat, it's desolate; it's beautiful at times and treacherous at times because there are dirt storms; they call them Haboobs. You can look it up...

Neil: Oh Jeez!

Jarred: Yeah, look it up: you'll see. It's...it's a beautiful place at times and it can be a harsh place at times, but he knew that I could live, I knew what it was like to live in West Texas, he knew I had family and when I explained when I was leaving Pellissippi I had family there, they were really gracious about it. It was really sad to leave after just two years there but it was definitely networking and connections and kind of the maintenance of those relationships over the years and I did the Visiting position there; my spouse and I did the distance, so once she finished her coursework, I was finishing my Visiting year at Texas Tech University, it was time for her to go on internship, which as I mentioned before was a placement-based program and she was actually placed at the University of Florida so you rank, you select Universities, you rank on a list and then you match: it's called a matching process and she matched at the University of Florida, not placed, I'm sorry, but she matched there and Florida, the idea of moving to Florida was really exciting for me. I had maybe an opportunity to stay at Texas Tech. One thing I did know was that I definitely didn't want to do distance for more than a year; my spouse wasn't interested in that either. She had to go to Florida and I thought the idea of Florida sounded really exotic so we both took off to Gainesville, which is actually where we're at now, but I'll get back to that a little bit later, so we did our year in Gainesville; my spouse did her internship at the Counseling Center on campus and met a lot of great people. We loved Gainesville our first time around. It's beautiful here, we love the University, it's a really...it's really diverse: there's a big international presence; the city's very progressive, a lot of biking and hiking and paddle-boarding. We're outdoor people so it was a really good fit for us.

(30:07)

Neil: It sounds amazing!

Jarred: It is amazing! Job-wise for me, it was definitely a hustle year, so I basically started cold-calling...like cold emailing programs in Gainesville at the University of Florida and then in other surrounding towns and oddly enough, my program coordinator, her name was Carla Tedeschi, or is Carla Tedeschi, still at Texas Tech University, who I didn't know before I started at Texas Tech; and loved her, she's a fantastic program coordinator and an amazing person. She had actually worked at University of North Texas with Maria Rogal who was the program coordinator at University of Florida whenever I came the first time, and she's just finishing a sabbatical here now but Carla actually called in

a good word for me with Maria and when I got here, I was interviewing for jobs working for UF as a Graphic Designer, working in the community as a Graphic Designer, working at an art gallery. I had job offers from an art gallery and from an...like a part of the campus that had Graphic Designers and then I had this offer to teach some Adjunct courses and as I mentioned earlier, that kind of draw to keep teaching and stay in the University culture really kind of pulled me and I accepted the position to do some Adjunct teaching at UF. I actually taught at another school that first semester about thirty miles away so there was time where I would ride my bike to Campus in the morning at UF, teach two classes in typography, ride my bike home as quickly as possible, jump in the car and go about thirty miles to teach an afternoon class at another small school in Ocala, Florida, called CF. College of Central Florida, and they're an affiliate of UCF in Orlando and I taught a digital imaging course there in the evening. I did that commute twice a week which was about a sixty mile round trip on I-75 which was not pleasant in our car that was like, breaking down because...

Neil: Oh no!

Jarred: ...everything that we owned at that point was, you know, breaking because it was going through lots of moves and it was really old and as you can imagine, I wasn't making a lot with Adjunct teaching and internships, they don't really pay very well either for people going through PhD Psychology programs, which is a whole 'nother topic of discussion, so we were just barely scraping by. It was still a wonderful year: we fell in love with Gainesville, we met a lot of really great people. I got to know Maria really well and really enjoyed working with her and the students and I got to teach in the studios at UF which the Seniors and the Juniors and the Grads have dedicated studios and you get to go teach in the studios which is fantastic; I really like doing that because it's great studio culture. So, that was a good year and then after that year was up, we had to move again because there were no real opportunities because my spouse was on a one-year internship and I was just Adjunct teaching, so there was no summer pay or anything, so we were applying for jobs. I interviewed at a couple of places; didn't get any offers. Thought I was going to get an offer at Colorado State, had a really amazing interview and it didn't turn out because they hired somebody that had been Adjuncting for them for a while...

Neil: Oh no!

Jarred: So that connection thing came back and got me but Amanda, my partner, ended up getting hired for a post, it was a full time position but she needed to get her Post-doc hours and we were

prepared to kinda take on the full time thing but she was hired at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, so we moved to Tempe...or we moved to Phoenix and Amanda started her position at Arizona State and once again, I started cold emailing the Faculty there, when we went for a housing visit I set up a few meetings with Design Faculty, met with them, got my foot in the door, with no connections at Arizona State, which was lucky. I met a guy named Kyle Larkin, who was really cool, very talented designer; still working there. He's very active in AIGA in Phoenix and he was super-nice and I ended up becoming...I actually Adjunct-taught the first semester and worked part time as a Graphic Designer for the University, which was challenging for me because it was very...it was very micro-managed and at that time I was used to teaching and doing kind of what I wanted to do creatively and I wasn't used to having people tell me, like art-direct me, so taking that feedback was really difficult and I was lucky enough, I think when they realized that I had some solid experience teaching, they brought me in as an Instructor, which is one level above Adjunct for the second semester in the Design School at ASU. Phoenix was not really our favorite. It's beautiful in the winter-time. I think I have kind of a negative...I remember it negatively because the first month we were there I got stung by a scorpion in our house!

(35:44)

Neil: Good grief!

Jarred: I think it was all downhill from there. Scorpions are pretty common in Phoenix. I did talk to a lot of people in Phoenix that lived there their whole lives and they'd never seen a scorpion, but we had scorpions all over our house and they told us when you find a rental house, ask them if it has scorpions or not. We asked them and they said no, there are no scorpions. The first day we moved in, there was a scorpion in the bathtub and we were like...hmm...think we were lied to. But I got stung by a scorpion the first month and that was really weird. And it was just a big city; the road rage was like at Level Ten because of the commuting and it just wasn't really a good fit for us so after Amanda got her Post-doc, even though she could have stayed on full-time, we decided to make another change. Texas Tech came knocking again; they had tenure track positions available. The actually sent a recruiting packet, the Director there at the time sent a recruiting packet to me in the mail and it was really a big deal; I was like wow, I'm really being recruited for this job and I went to teach at Texas Tech for two years and my spouse got a job as a Psychologist and Performance Psychologist with Texas Tech Athletics who she still does consulting for today and had a wonderful two years teaching in a tenure track job at Texas Tech University and loved my area there and loved working with the people there and had an amazing

experience. During that time, we were in Phoenix, my mum was actually diagnosed with cancer and so getting back...

Neil: Oh no, I'm sorry to hear that.

Jarred: Oh, it's OK, it's life, you know, but we were in Phoenix, she was diagnosed, Texas Tech was kind of knocking at the door and I was like wow, we could be close for treatment and stuff like that so we kind of made a tough decision to go to Texas Tech again and we did that for two years, had a wonderful experience and then lo and behold, University of Florida had a tenure track position open and somebody emailed me about it and said hey, you should look at this and, you know, going back to that year that we had in Gainesville and really how many boxes it checked and I think that this kind of is what a bunch of the questions on your list really kinda centered around, so kinda like the Holy Grail of what a good position would be like because (a) it's in a place that you really like. We both really liked Gainesville. (b) they offered me a position. I didn't think I had a chance of getting a job so I just put a packet together, I wrote some really edgy stuff and just like threw a Hail Mary because like, this is a Top Ten University; still, even though I've been at a Grad School for ten years, I still feel like, and I have jumped around a lot and I think because of that, I have a lot of experience and I'm pretty resilient but I still feel like I'm not there in terms of experience so I just threw the Hail Mary and was surprised when I got an interview and then was even more surprised when I got invited to Campus and was totally shocked when they offered...they offered me and they actually made another hire out of Texas from the University of Huston, me and another person and she's awesome and I've really enjoyed working with her. Her name's Gabby; maybe you can interview her?

Neil: Absolutely. I'm open to it.

(39:23)

Jarred: So, the first check-box was, it's in a wonderful place. We loved Gainesville. The second check-box was that it's a great job, I really like working with the Faculty, I knew I liked the students; they knew we really liked the University, the campus, culture, the international influence, how progressive everything is. And then they offered my partner a job at the Counseling Center, which was...we were kind of in shock. Like, normally, dual partner hires don't happen at like lower levels and it wasn't like they offered her the sweet gig or whatever, like I was the new Dean coming in and they were just going

to place a partner somewhere or something like that. But because she had the experience working at that Counseling Center, knew how to use their client note system and all that stuff, they wanted her. Like, oh, you're coming back? Please, please come work for us because we need people right now and all the while we'd been developing a private practice for my spouse in Texas and so she took a part-time job at the Counseling Center and we started building her private practice here in Gainesville. We had to change the name because of a conflict with somebody else that had a business here, so we're working on that now and I just finished my first year at UF. It was really busy; my program coordinator was on sabbatical the first year so that spiced things up a little bit to have two new people and the program coordinator being on sabbatical and basically just one Senior Faculty so yeah, it was a busy first year but my program coordinator, even though she was on sabbatical, she didn't really have a sabbatical because she helped us the whole year and really made it do-able and it was busy and there were a lot of kind of open-ended questions and tough kind of problems to solve but she was available the whole year and really made it do-able for us, so learned a lot the first year back at UF, so here I am, back at the beginning of another tenure process, just finishing my first year, so, hoping not to leave here for a bit. We're tired of moving!

Neil: Yeah, really, that's seven positions over the past ten years. That's a lot of moving!

Jarred: Yeah, and you know, the moving takes its toll. Physically it takes its toll. Mentally, but it takes its toll financially the most.

Neil: Oh yeah.

Jarred: That was the biggest deal for us, especially with the internships and the Adjunct and the Instructor positions and the cost of moving. We still own the home in Tennessee and we're renting it so we are renting a house and having to do maintenance from a distance on it which was not pleasant and then we bought a house in Texas too because we were pretty set there and I didn't expect that we'd be moving, I didn't expect this to happen, so we just bought a house in Texas so financially, we were really kind of starting to dig out of the hole and get some stability but when this happened, we decided to sell both of our houses. We sold both of our houses in the same month. Luckily they sold the first day on the market, both of them.

Neil: Wow!

Jarred: We made enough money to pay off Amanda's student loans and when my grandfather passed away, he left me his 1989 Winnebago RV...

Neil: Yeah!

Jarred: ...And so we traveled in it pretty extensively so we would actually when we were in Texas, we would take the RV from Texas down to Florida to a place close to here in Gainesville and camp for two weeks so we were pretty well traveled and then we're comfortable living in it and driving it long distances so we're like, if we're going to do this, we cannot take another financial blow like this: we have to do something dramatic. So we sold our houses and we lived in the RV for about six months. While we lived in the RV, we saved all of the money from our pay-checks and saved up enough money to buy a house and to live on and really minimized the financial impact of the move. Oops...email...but it was a difficult journey and it was an amazing journey too; living in an RV was fantastic. We actually, because we have pets, we have two cats and a dog, we couldn't live in an RV park because they don't allow cats so we actually put an ad on Craigslist said: hey, we have an RV, this is who we are, we have these pets. If you have land in or around Gainesville and would be willing to let us live on your land for a while, we would love to pay you if you could let us have our animals or do land-work or whatever and actually got some really interesting responses and several viable responses. We actually came during the summer before we moved and met two couples that had land and kind of were willing to host us for that brief period of time and we settled on an older couple here that lives just outside of Gainesville, Scott and Sherri Camil, and Scott's a Vietnam Veteran, was really active in the anti-war movement after Vietnam, was kind of a local Gainesville celebrity because of some of the work that he did with John Carey and the VVAW after the War and is still really active locally with like the Sierra Club and stuff like that...

(45:09)

Neil: Wow...

Jarred: And his spouse Sherri with that and they're both amazing people and they have a beautiful piece of land and they welcomed us like we were family and we still play volleyball with them every Sunday. Scott and Sherri have a volleyball court and we play volleyball with them and we still go have dinner with them. They're amazing people and they would not take our money! We helped them with

mowing stuff on the land and we were actually living in the RV on their land when Hurricane Irma came through Gainesville. Of course by the time it got up here it was transitioning from a Category One to a Tropical Storm but if you've ever been in this area in Central Florida, there's huge, towering pine trees everywhere which are beautiful and live oak trees; it's just trees everywhere. And the first year we lived here, those things, they're beautiful and they're still beautiful, but after you see trees like that falling over when wind blows and crushing people's houses and stuff, the trees become scarier. So that was kind of our first experience of that but they actually let us stay in their house with our pets during the storm and the generosity of people is amazing and you know it was a tough experience to do that but at the same time we've met so many amazing people and had so many amazing resilience-building experiences that have allowed us to kinda get here, so again, like I said earlier, so lucky to be in the right place at the right time and to meet people that care about us and that...I told you it was going to be a long answer to the question, Neil: sorry!

Neil: No, it's OK! That's fine.

Jarred: But I think that about sums it up!

Neil: Absolutely. So...

Jarred: Thirty minutes later...

Neil: It's OK. So, when you...oh my gosh...so many questions: where to begin? So as you were transitioning from Texas Tech to UF in tenure track positions, did you...did you try to negotiate some years towards tenure at UF or did you decide, you know what? It's better if I just start fresh here?

Jarred: I learned a lot about tenure at Texas Tech, those first two years that I...that was really my first tenure track position so before I was Adjuncting and doing Instructor or Visiting so I was really kind of...I don't want to use the word shielded from that stuff, but in a way I didn't have to deal with that so the first two years at Texas Tech, I really learned a lot about how to document things and kind of what to expect out of a process and I had really great Faculty that mentored me so, you know, I thought, maybe it would be a good idea to try to negotiate that but my intuitive thought was that, well, now that I know kind of what to expect, I think I'd rather start fresh because I built kind of a good base at Texas Tech but I felt like it would be better to kind of start and have the full process time to actually kind of build my



Episode 2

Season 1

résumé for tenure, so I didn't even attempt to negotiate the two years in the tenure track I had at Texas Tech. I do know people that do that and I know also people that attempt to go up for tenure early which for me right now, things are happening but I don't think enough things are happening to warrant going up early for tenure.

Neil: Hmm. So, can you compare, contrast your time as a Visiting Professor, Instructor or Adjunct, versus the tenure track positions, like what was different between those two positions? I mean, aside from the obvious but...the tenure packet.

(49:34)

Jarred: Yeah, obvious things are going to be you have service...larger service responsibilities in a tenure track position. Generally you're paid a little bit more, even over a Visiting position. The Visiting and the Adjunct was much more of a kind of a hands-off; you weren't, you know, part of the self-governing process, you know, that the Faculty goes through to get things done, i.e. serving on committees and service to the University and stuff like that. It was more just about teaching and having positive interactions with the students and kind of just getting the job done that way. Tenure track position's a lot different because there are a lot of other expectations, so you may be getting paid a little bit more but there's a much larger expectation for service to the University, there's obviously the expectation that not only do you do research but the research is cohesive and focused in a way that makes you kind of an authority in a specific area which for me, that's difficult because I'm interested in so much stuff and I think that that's really where my interest in design process research as an area of research interest came from, because the process can yield so many different forms and in the experience of the process it's what gets me excited about design and I love to teach so...you know, I would definitely say the main difference is being a part of that self-governing body as a tenure track Professor, you're definitely going to be exposed to politics and they do exist at almost every University. Unfortunately and sadly. And you know, you definitely have to learn how to work with people that may or may not understand what you do on a day to day basis or what your field is and you have to be able to facilitate positive relationships with people outside of, not only just your area but your School. You have to collaborate and you have to do all this stuff and I think maybe one of the hardest things is to learn how to manage your time where you actually have enough time to quote-unquote, do research. You know, I'm sure you've probably heard this before too. Oh, I'm so busy, I'm so busy, I need to do my research or whatever. I feel like when you say that enough times, do my research, you build up this really weird

stigma about doing research so when you do get time...oh, I should be doing my research right now. Well, what is my research? And you have to really kinda refocus on it to kind of start down that path of actually doing work again and getting things published and submitting things to publications. Another thing I've noticed recently and kind of wondered about is why so many conference applications and abstract applications happen during the school year when everybody's so busy. Because I always find myself trying to cram stuff in before deadlines...

Neil: Yup!

Jarred: ...during the semester and I'm like...what...and I feel like I'm not submitting the highest quality document because I'm trying to force it. But then again, maybe nobody wants to work during the summer, I don't know. But technically we're supposed to be doing research in the summer. That's what I've been told. I don't know about...I guess your podcast is research, so you're doing a good job this summer!

Neil: That's what I'm hoping, that's what I'm hoping. Yeah, summers are a great...a great time to be able to focus when there's no other teaching responsibilities there.

Jarred: This is true.

Neil: At UF you've just finished your first year there and have they been pretty transparent about the tenure and promotion process there?

Jarred: Yeah, I would definitely say my area coordinator was...has been and is transparent about it...excuse me, sorry. A lot of it's, you know, when you get hired there's a whirlwind of activity going on: you're preparing for classes and they give you, you know, the book with the handbook with the T&P guidelines in it and the packet and you know, yeah, I'm going to read all this stuff later and then you know, classes get started and you really just kinda have to learn it as you go but even though our program coordinator was on sabbatical, she was still really pro-active in getting us started and letting us know kinda what to expect. There were definitely still a lot of points in time where both Gabby and I, the other new Faculty, which I'll say helps a lot having somebody else going through the same thing to kinda ask questions to and commiserate with when things are confusing, but were are still a lot of times where we had to kind of fill in the blanks as to what needed to be done and when, because it

seems like a lot of times people just automatically expect that you know when all the deadlines are for things and how things are supposed to work so there's some question-asking involved and of course the UF does things a little bit differently than Texas Tech did. At Texas Tech we had an online system called Digital Measures that we put everything in during the year...

(55:11)

Neil: That's nice.

Jarred: ...and that would basically...it was nice and it output a report. The report is what the Director used to write the annual review in areas of Service, Scholarship and Teaching. Here it's kind of the same but we have...there's actually a committee at UF called the F-Pack Committee and we put together what we call the F-Pack Document which is like it has to fit on two pages and it's all of your activity, you know, during this year. So my first year it was only kind of a truncated period of time because I'd just started. Luckily had some really pretty good stuff come through like right when I started so that helped to go on the F-Pack report, but you put together the F-Pack report and you submit it and you actually interview with the Committee and the Committee gives you feedback on how to make the F-Pack report better or what's confusing, what needs to be clarified, you know, you have this under Service and that should be under Teaching, you know, stuff like that. Then you take the F-Pack report and you put it in an online system that we have here that's much less detailed than what Texas Tech was but it's another acronym, I can't even remember off the top of my head what it is. But there's a deadline for that too and if you do a good job with your F-Pack, which I really worked hard with my F-Pack and like the first draft of my F-Pack that I did, it sucked. I mean, it was horrible and I had a really tough interview with the F-Pack committee and I will note that there were no Graphic Designers on the F-Pack Committee so somebody asked me, you know, what Consulting was and you know, those are...you know, while the languages are pretty similar, there are some differences, so not having a Graphic Designer on the Committee, they kind of...to talk to about that stuff was kind of challenging for me. So I left the meeting really a little confused about some of the feedback because it didn't really fit what I was doing for Research or Scholarly activity or even Teaching and Collaboration. So I actually approached my program coordinator who was sabbatical as I mentioned, and she graciously spent a lot of time with me on the F-Pack and kind of showed me how she had done things, shared reports that she had done before and I actually reached out to another new Faculty member in Painting and Drawing and she was really nice and showed me her F-Pack document and spent a lot of time getting that document right so when I

actually put it into our system for the Annual Review the Director would see, it was really kind of a seamless process and I felt like I put my best foot forward and squeezed as much out of everything that I did the first year as possible and I did a lot, both myself and the other new Faculty member, Gabby, because our program coordinator was on sabbatical, the other Senior Faculty member I mentioned is a really great guy, pretty quiet to himself, I like working with him a lot, but he actually over the holiday break, fell downstairs and shattered his leg and had to have surgery and was out for like a month, so...

Neil: Oh Jeez!

Jarred: ...there was a lot of adversity so there was all that going on. I ended up taking an extra class in the spring semester to cover both the vacancy left behind by the injury that we sustained to our program and then a few other things and one thing that I'm seeing more and more on my...and I don't think it's necessarily a good thing for like, actually getting tenure that I'm seeing on my report is this kind of new topic that doesn't really fit in anywhere and it...they call it Service Related to Teaching here and that basically, what that entails is collaborations. So there's, you know, basic, I would say probably it's definitely a University-wide kind of initiative but at most universities, Faculty, you're encouraged to collaborate outside your discipline on projects and stuff like that and it's this buzz-word and it has been for a while and everybody likes to talk about collaborating and bringing areas together and working in and outside your discipline and I actually had the opportunity to do that on a few pretty big projects with my students this year and I've always been good at collaborating with people and I think that that's why I interview well, because I have pretty good documentation of that, but I did a project with the President's Office where we had the President of the University in our Graphic Design Studio and we had students pitching with him projects, personally, which was really great and then I did a collaboration with Computer Information Science and Engineering for a class that they run every year called BR For Good and it was basically...

(1:00:21)

Neil: Hmm...

Jarred: ...this like, semester-long sprint, or a series of sprints where teams were put together and they worked on...long story short, they worked on wicked problems and how VR could help in either raising

awareness of those issues by experiencing them in virtual reality or actual kind of a utility like the project that one was called Virtual Crash Cart. And a Crash Cart is what a doctor uses and a medic, like an Emergency Room when they're doing emergency surgery so like you have to know where everything is in your Crash Cart so the VR digital product was actually a crash cart simulation where you could learn about where everything was in your crash cart. It was amazing, so I was able to pair designers in one of my class with those Engineering teams and we did this big event and there were hundreds of people there and it was a really cool thing. It was a...can we say bad words on here?

Neil: Sure.

Jarred: It was a shit-load of work and it took a shit-load of time. I mean, it took...the President's project was too, because we ended up laser-cutting these cards and we worked with a printer and these collaborations are good for the University but they take tons of time and energy but when you go to write it up on your report it's like...I spent probably a hundred and fifty hours on this and this is not going to help me for tenure at all. It just gets relegated to this Service related to Teaching weird category that doesn't really fit anywhere but when you're in the moment, you're trying to facilitate good experiences for the students, you're trying to collaborate with people; you want those things to succeed and you want to take advantage of...that's the reason we work at big D-1 Universities is to be around people that are really good at what they do and in a perfect world, that's what you want to do and if I could make one change to the process and I actually heard somebody else say this the other day and it really made a lot of sense to me was, I would make collaboration count towards tenure. In a way that's more real. If you did a cross-discipline collaboration or something like that, I think the most masterful Faculty members learn how to do that in ways that counts towards tenure traditionally, so you know, for example, we do the VR For Good project or whatever, and then we submit that to a publication or something and we continue that and that would fit into more of a traditional kind of publication like an archetype or whatever, that would count towards tenure, but just the collaboration itself, making the connections, spending the time, you know, there's definitely something to be said on that. One of the things I wrote about on my report for Areas for Growth would be to be better with time management and I think that that's probably on every tenure track Faculty member's Areas for Growth lists or whatever, but it's really hard to just turn off the faucet or I should say fire-hose during the semester, at least like the way it was last year, and adversity happens all the time and focus on your research: it's tough to focus on your research when there are other pressing issues, so those are definitely challenges and I think that the tenure process has been around for a while and it's changed less than a

lot of other things have changed in our culture and I think that it's getting tougher and tougher to kind of define things clearly. There's a lot of grey area and that's challenging.

Neil: Yes, especially when it comes to podcasts!

Jarred: Yeah, yeah. How does that podcast fit into your tenure? If I get...if I get work published on Print Magazine's blog, does that count as a publication? Because it's a blog or does that...does that count? I mean, I don't know. One person's going to say yes and another person's going to say no, you know, and probably depends on the area that they're from too.

Neil: So far, I have gathered that as long as it is peer-reviewed, it's good.

(1:05:00)

Jarred: Right! See, that's Neil spinning his magic there, right?

Neil: Well, what peer-review means, that's a whole 'nother topic we can get into on another episode!

Jarred: Yep! We could also talk about contributing new knowledge to the field and what that means.

Neil: Oh yeah! Well, our hour is about up, so do you have any other parting thoughts or up-coming projects that you would like to talk about?

Jarred: Well, first of all I want to apologize to your listeners for the long-winded answers to your questions; I hope that it wasn't too boring. Projects to talk about? I guess I could talk about, working on a couple of really interesting projects right now. But I just finished my first mural, a public mural which was really fun; never got a chance to do that before.

Neil: And where might we see this mural?

Jarred: I did...well, I haven't posted public photographs of them really yet outside of just like Instagram stories about the actual painting process because I just finished them. But they're in Gainesville, they're in a downtown parking garage. There's this thing called the Urban Revitalization Project and they put

out a call and you had to submit an idea and they accepted ideas that they liked and I really found, they're all typographic...they're type-based murals. I actually did...

Neil: Ooooh...

Jarred: ...I did ...yeah, unexpected. They look way different than most of the other murals which are like dragons and fire and you know, like...people with crazy faces and stuff like that, but mine are...I was channeling my inner Ed Ruscha or Robert Montgomery, I guess: two artists that I love but they're all type-based. I actually did an exhibition in Knoxville, Tennessee at RALA: Regional And Local Artisans, who I love, they're great people. I did a First Friday exhibition there, had a collection of writings, just short one or two sentence thoughts that I have called Black Velvet and I had about thirty of them and I had two or three that really kind of stuck out to me, that were just experiential writing based on kind of what's happening in life and culture right now, really observational stuff. A lot of very similar to what I did with my thesis project at University of Tennessee where I developed a writing practice and I created illustrations based off the writing practice and it was very process-oriented. Black Velvet's very process-oriented and I like to create these series of these collections, I call them series over time, and so I chose a couple and submitted them and so the murals were a lot of fun. I'm working on a series of posters right now that address the gun control debate in America. Social justice oriented illustration and poster work, it's a very traditional Graphic Design-y thing to say, but that's like the, that's another tough thing, have like a two-prong approach to research which is kinda tough; you've got the experiential process stuff and then the social justice initiatives with illustrative work and poster work. I'm working on a series of prints that are traveling in an exhibition, and actually screen-printing those posters right now and I still do some letterpress too, so keeping the hands dirty. But I'd say the murals were fun, it was new and I did another project that was social justice oriented that...we'll have to talk about it another time, but actually got to make graphics for NFL helmets which was also very exciting.

Neil: Yeah!

Jarred: So yeah. Not to be used in the NFL but like regulation football helmets that are worn in the NFL where I did these fake teams for these helmets and created this thing called the Hall of Shame which is kind of a parody of the Hall of Fame and actually had people vote which was again, very experiential. Tried to tie it all together. That was a really fun project too. I like the self-initiated experimental stuff. I like being in experimental place; honestly, I do enjoy working with clients, especially clients that, you

know, there's a mutual level of respect between designer and client and client and designer but really where I get most excited is being in an experimental place and that's another great thing about teaching and working at a University is that kind of thing is encouraged and I really appreciate that.

Neil: Thank you again for taking time out of your day to be on the podcast.

Jarred: Well, thanks for having me, Neil, it was a lot of fun.

Neil: Well, I hope to see you soon at the next conference.

Jarred: Yep. I hope we cross paths again soon.