

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

What I could have done differently is that I could have put myself out there, stayed after hours, ask for help, ask to shadow, and it's not that those opportunities weren't available to me, I just had a lot of inhibitions. When I think it took me seven years to become assistant editor, it's like, "Oh my gosh." It's one of the reasons I do so much mentoring now is to demystify the process.

Sarah Taylor:

Hello and welcome to the Editor's Cut. I'm your host Sarah Taylor. We would like to point out that the lands on which we have created this podcast and that many of you may be listening to us from, are part of ancestral territory. It is important for all of us to deeply acknowledge that we are on ancestral territory, that has long served as a place where indigenous peoples have lived, met, and interacted. We honor, respect, and recognize these nations that have never relinquished their rights or sovereign authority over the lands and waters on which we stand today. We encourage you to reflect on the history of the land, the rich culture, the many contributions, and the concerns that impact indigenous individuals and communities. Land acknowledgements are the start to a deeper action.

Today, I bring to you an interview with Bettina Zachariah Treviranus. She's obsessed with and has a deep love of stories that began when she learned how to read. By trade, she's a television editor and producer of such shows like Work in Progress, Dominion, and Grimm. By name, she's a devoted daughter, wife, mother, and friend. Bettina believes that stories are what humanize us, teach us, strengthen us, and connect us. We discuss her career journey and how she landed her current position as assistant editor.

Speaker 3:

And action.

Speaker 4:

This is the editor's cut.

Speaker 5:

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Speaker 4:

Exploring the art ...

Speaker 5:

Of picture editing.

Sarah Taylor:

Bettina, thank you so much for joining us on the Editor's Cut.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Sarah Taylor:

So I am going to steal a little bit from the playbook of Post in Black. They always like to start their episodes with an icebreaker.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Great. Okay.

Sarah Taylor:

So I'm going to do it with you.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Awesome.

Sarah Taylor:

What is the last show that you binge-watched?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

My gosh. I binge-watched so many things. I'm trying to think because I basically do chores all the time, so I'm constantly watching ... I think I just rewatched Modern Family because I needed comfort foods, I'd already seen it, but it was like I'm stressed and so I just need something that is comfy and I know it, and it has a lot of episodes, so I don't have to leave my warm blanket for a while.

Sarah Taylor:

I totally get that. Sometimes I'll catch myself rewatching Gilmore Girls just because I'm like, it's comfortable.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, they've done psychological research about why people like to rewatch things and it's because what's going to happen. So if you're kind of in a period in your life where there's a lot of unknowns or uncertainty, that's a very comfort ... it used to be West Wing for me, until Netflix took it off. I would actually fall asleep to the West Wing because I knew seasons one through four so well, that it was a way of getting my brain to stop thinking about all my problems and just listen to the audio and fall asleep.

Sarah Taylor:

I love it. I bet you, there's probably studies that have been done during the pandemic where ... to see which shows were the ones that people chose to watch.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

I think that'd be really interesting to investigate.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Sure, mine, I just finished watching *The Watcher*. I watched it two nights in a row.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Okay.

Sarah Taylor:

It's like we're recording around Halloween, so I felt it was a really ... it was kind of spooky, so it was fun. Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah. Yeah. Very neat.

Sarah Taylor:

Not comforting at all, but fun. Okay, well tell us a little bit about your yourself and what led you to a career in post-production?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I am from Chicago and I as a kid, would read a lot and for me, when I read a book, it plays like a movie. I'm Indian American. My family upbringing was very strict, so we were not allowed to watch TV Monday through Thursday. So Friday, Saturday, Sunday were the only days, so what was available to me in terms of entertainment were books. So I would just lose myself in books. They would play movies in my head to the point where if I was reading a book and I got a phone call, I would take the phone call and be like, "Oh, I missed the rest of that movie." I go, "No, no, it's a book. I can go back to reading." So I would think a lot about, "Oh, I would want to make this book into a movie," but growing up, that felt very distant and far away and things that other people did.

So I went to college, didn't know what I wanted, resisted declaring a major forever and then, finally I majored in English and secondary education and was like, "Okay, I guess I'll be a high school teacher." And that felt very right for my family like, "Oh, she'd be a great teacher." And so everybody encouraged me to do that. I didn't really want to, but I didn't have in my head other options. Then, I actually did student teaching. I absolutely hated it. Then, I took on a long-term substitute teacher job where a teacher was going to go have a baby, so I finished out her year for her. That was my like, well maybe it wasn't so bad and I remembered it badly and then, I tried it and was like, "Oh, I still hate this. Well now what do I do?" And I always incorporated a lot of movies in my lesson planning.

So I was like, "Well, I guess I'll go to film school." So at this point, I was out of college for a year and I didn't think anybody would accept me into film school. So I went and I did an internship in Washington DC for a year to strengthen my grad school application. That program put me with a documentary producer and I was basically free work in her basement. I would answer phone calls, digitize photos, and that was the first time I saw an editor working and I was like, "Oh, this is so cool," what they were doing. What I realized is I was in musicals and when I would watch rehearsals, I would think, "Oh, if it were me, I would put the camera here so we can see this person." It's effectively editing. In my head, I just didn't know at the time, that's what it was.

So I went to Chapman University in Orange, California and you had to ... they have a conservatory model and you had to declare what your emphasis was and like everybody else, I put director first and then, my second was editing because that was what I was exposed to. I didn't even know what cinematography

was. I knew I was not going to be a good production designer and I did not feel at the time I would be a good writer or a producer. So I didn't get into the directing program, but I did get into the editing program and that is kind of what set me up down the line. It was basically those set of experiences, kind of nudging me towards post.

I got an internship my third year of school ... no, I'm sorry, my second year of school with Battlestar Galactica, and my third year of school I was hired as a post-production assistant on Battlestar.

Sarah Taylor:

Amazing.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So my third year I was working, I was going to school and I was getting married. So I lost a lot of hair that year.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, that's like all of the major fun stressors.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It was like ... yes and for me it was like "Well, I want to finish school and I don't want to say no to this job and I really want to get married, so I'm going to do it all." And in retrospect it's like, "Girl, you could have taken some time. You didn't have to do it all, but you're young and you think everything has to be right now."

Sarah Taylor:

Yes. Yes.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

And I tend not to take time. I tend to cram it all in, if I can.

Sarah Taylor:

We sound very similar. So where are you now? What are you doing now?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So a few years ago for family reasons, my husband and I moved back to Chicago. So now, a very unintended positive consequence of the pandemic has been that remote work has become a very real option. So before when I moved to Chicago, that was in 2017, I would reach out and be like, "In post, why can't we do this remotely? There is really no reason we all have to be in an office." The responses I got was, "Oh, the infrastructure isn't there and oh, security." And I was like, "This intuitively doesn't feel right, but I don't know how to vocalize why this feels silly and wrong." Then, the pandemic hit and nobody could go into an office and suddenly, all those problems went away.

Sarah Taylor:

Real quick.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So I did a couple of things in between. I took one job for seven months where I flew back and forth to LA from Chicago every week for seven months to keep up my resume. And then, I ended up getting hired on a show in Chicago. So that kept up my resume, but then as soon as I realized there was work from home options, I started setting up my resume just to raise my hand because not being in LA sort of ... it's easier for people to forget you as an option. A former editor I worked with needed some ... his assistant was being bumped up, so he convinced the head of Post to bring me on as a cover assistant editor. It was funny when the tech department was setting me up and they were like, "Oh yeah, this is the software we used to control rovers on Mars." And I was like, "If we can control things on Mars, of course we should be able to remote into half a country away," is what I'm saying.

Sarah Taylor:

We're in space, God dammit.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

This is the type of thing that like, it doesn't feel right but I can't figure out why these answers don't feel right, and really what it boils down to is that the industry wasn't ready for it. It had to be forced into it.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

That's what I do now at the moment is if there isn't a job for me in Chicago, I will look for remote work into LA and I keep LA hours and it's just been a ... for now, and we'll see how long it lasts because the pandemic is still going on. We'll see if people will keep wanting to work remotely. I think there is some real positives for people in terms of work-life balance and just not having to sit in LA traffic and not having to sit around and wait for an output. There is some real positives to having some more control. Now, some people hate it, some people want to be in the office, they want that face time, they want to be out of their house. Property is very expensive in LA. So I have the luxury of having a guest room, and so my Avid is there and it's very easy to separate myself from my family and work. That's not the easiest thing to achieve in LA. So there are people who just need that space.

So I get both sides of it. My idea would be a hybrid situation. I love working from home, but I do miss the camaraderie and sitting around and laughing at outtakes and having lunch with everybody and becoming a little family over the course of a show. That stuff I do miss.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I'm with you on that. I'm with you on that. Well, since you've mentioned, you work from home, you have a guest room, what does your typical day look like as an assistant editor at this current stage, working remotely?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So because I work in ... I remote into LA, I'm two hours ahead of LA so my day starts at 11, which means ... I also have two kids, so the mornings are basically my time to spend time with them, get them ready for school, get them going and run all the errands. And what's really been nice is I can do appointments, doctor's appointments, dentist's appointments, whereas that's harder after hours to get anything

specialized done and now, I'm trying to jam it into my workday. So that part has been awesome. Then, basically, my days as an assistant editor is basically what my editor needs. So when we're in dailies, I prep dailies to the editor, how they like it. Some editors want script syncing, some editors want it in frame view where they can see what all the angles are. So, it's really however they want it and then, depending on where we are in the show, what needs to be done for all the other departments.

So right now, my current show, we are well out of dailies, and I have a to-do list. So for example, we onlined a show a couple of days ago, I got the van back last night. Tonight I'm going to ... when we get off the phone here, I'm going to check the van and make sure that it's correct to what I turned over. So I have a little to-do list of checking in with different departments, checking in with my bosses, and then getting whatever work, if there's sound work or outputs or turnovers to do. Just structuring my day so I can take care of all of that, in a timely fashion so that I'm not ... I like to be the rock in the department where I am trying to make it as easy as possible and to minimize chaos because I feel like every TV show gets to the point where it's crazy and chaotic and what can I do personally to lower that?

Because I love making television, it is literally my favorite thing to do in the world. So, if there's something I can bring to the table that makes it a cool, fun experience, then I want to do that because ... yeah, I read something like, "Only 2% of the people in the world love their jobs." It's like, "Ugh, really? That's it."

Sarah Taylor:

That sounds awful.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I know we should all love our jobs.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

We've spent so much time there. I don't know if that's a real statistic, but I read that in some kind of headline.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's like, "Oh, I must be really lucky."

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I feel it with you. So is there any sort of ways of organizing as an assistant that you always use or is it always changing for the editor you're working with?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I consider my specialty is like I tailor myself to my department. This is the most embarrassing part of my story. It took me seven years to become an assistant editor. I actually went up to post producing chain at

first, I went from post-production assistant to post-production coordinator to post supervisor to associate producer, mainly because I got that first internship at Battlestar, and that was the easiest way to go up the chain because it was very hard for me to get into the union because the union, you had to do 100 days non-scripted union work. And I had a lot of, in retrospect, very silly tech fear. In my opinion, there's no great way to train to become an assistant editor. There are things like master the workflow now, but at the time, people would tell me, just take the job and fake it until you make it, which even now that I actually know the job, it's like, "Are you crazy?" This is-

Sarah Taylor:

You need to know.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

There's a lot of things that's like I would not have been able to figure out. What actually ended up happening was I got onto a job, a friend advocated for me and it turned out that that show was block shot. So two episodes were shot at the same time. So another acquaintance that I knew who later on became a very good friend, he was an assistant editor. He and I started at the same time, and he trained me, and that was just the perfect confluence of events. Then, all the experiences I had of being the post producer, associate producer, it actually complimented me being the assistant editor because I know as the assistant editor what to do, but I also can think through what's the best way I can do my work to set the post producing department up for success.

Also, I can ... because a lot of post producers are not super technical, I can act as a translator for both sets of people, for the tech people, like the assistant editors and editors and the post producers who need to finish the show. Sometimes there's like, we're not speaking the same language because one group has never touched an Avid. They may know the terms, but they may not understand the work that ... for example, how much work a turnover can be.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So I can work as a translator to both. So when I interview for a job, I am very careful to observe what the editor needs. If the editor is super high maintenance, I am right there, I will cater to your every need. If the editor is very low-key, awesome. My job is so much easier, and I don't have to worry as much, right?

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Or if I know that there's an editor who's not super attention-to-detailly then I have a running list of things to make sure I double check because I know that editor is not going to check that. And it's just a thing that I learn, and like I said, I tailor myself to my department. So maybe the editor is really high maintenance, and the post producers are very low maintenance and so that they're on top of what they need from me or maybe the post producers are not super on top of their things, so I will be checking with them like, "Hey, when do I need to do this turnover? When do I need to do that turnover?" So it's

sort of a balancing act of what needs are there that need to be filled, that I can do that service, what value can I provide?

Sarah Taylor:

I think I need you in my life too. How do you navigate all of the, kind of understanding what the editors like remotely? Is it just by having Zoom calls and getting the vibe?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Right, so one of my first jobs was with an editor I worked with previously and it was a lot of footage and I organized it and it was a lot of very sped footage. So I had to do a lot of speeding up and syncing. So I sent her the bin the way I had done it for her previously because it was in my head like, "Oh, I know how she likes her footage." And then she was like, "Oh my gosh, I can't work like this anymore," because what had happened was she had gone on to another show. On that show, she worked with two other editors who liked their bins organized differently, so she adapted to that and sometimes things are better than your previous way of doing it. So what happened was like she hadn't realized, I think at that point she was watching the same footage, both slow motion and sped up.

So then, I was like, "Oh, okay, that's not working for you. How do you want me to do it?" So she sent me a screen grab, "This is what I want the bin to look like." Great. So I then reorganized the bin, on my current show, my editor and I, we weren't on the same page about paperwork because paperwork is usually in person. I just would do both binders and remotely ... on the previous shows I'd done remotely, the editors just took care of their own paperwork to the point where I didn't even think to ask the current editor, "How do you want your paperwork done?" And then by day two or three, he was like, "So let's talk about the continuity." And I was like, what? Because he's Canadian. He was calling all of the script supervisor paperwork continuities, and that's not what I call it from LA, so we had to first get on the same page language-wise.

And then, we talked about, I was like, "Oh." And so then, we talked about how he wanted his paperwork and then, I made sure every morning to do it that way. It was just a thing that ... so it's just basically lots of communication, lots of checking in. I mean, most people are fairly easygoing, fairly capable. So it's just, they know what they want, and it's something, if I get hired, then that's like one of the first questions like, "How do like your dailies? How do you your paperwork?" And things like me forgetting the paperwork, I have a Google Drive of notes for various things. In my Google Drive, I was like, "Oh, make sure next time for your next job, you ask about the paperwork." Because it wasn't intentional. It was just like two jobs. I didn't have to worry about it and then-

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, totally.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It just fell out of my head because it wasn't staring me in the face.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, that totally makes sense.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

I think that's really ... every job we learn something I feel like for myself.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Whether it'd be technical or a new way of telling a story or whatever it might be. That idea or that, I guess practice or ritual of making notes at the end of a project, is that something that you do where you're like ... or when you come across something like, "Oh, this is something I should always be doing, or this is something I should check on." Do you have your own master the workflow set up? Is your ... what you've done like your-

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, so I have a Google Drive of all kinds of notes, screen grabs, processes, write-ups on how to do things because there are so many things that you're asked to do as an assistant editor, that it's hard to remember from project to project. For example, this is the first time on this show that I've been asked to do a drop frame output for captioning. So the other assistant editor figured it out. I did the write-ups for a future show because usually ... and this is also from my producing background, that's a line item that you give to the finishing house, and they create those outputs. On this show, I think they wanted to save some money, so they're having assistant editors do it. As it's something that I'd never had to do before that is ... it's valuable to me to take the time to sit down and write it out.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

And I do screen grabs of menus and I'll notate on the menu where the thing is.

Sarah Taylor:

That's amazing.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, and then, what's also helpful is when I'm on a project and somebody else doesn't know how to do something, I was like, "Oh, I have a writeup for that," and I'll just shoot off the email. It's not exactly the same process. Maybe the Avid has changed a little bit because they always upgrade.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It may be a starting point to train that person or maybe it's a starting point for us to figure out in this new version of Avid, how would you do it? So it is ... and anything I see on forms and everything, I'll take screen grabs and save it. Just anything that I think is useful that I think ... because I don't have a brain

that I can remember all of this stuff. So I will forget ... after I do dailies the next show and have to do dailies, "How do I speed up and sync a clip again?"

Sarah Taylor:

What was I doing? Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, I don't like reinventing the wheel. To me, that drives me nuts. For every show, I create what's called the assistant editor checklist, and that is literally everything from dailies to wrap that's in a checklist because I feel like most shows get very busy and crazy and I'm sleep-deprived. So if I have to do three turnovers of like music turnover, sound turnover, picture turnover, I don't want to read four different spec pages every single time I do a turnover. So every time I do a turnover, I wait for feedback like, "Oh, you missed this, or I want you to do this differently." Once the turnover has been done and accepted and I haven't heard anything, I add it to my assistant editor checklist like, "Here is all the things you ..." every single step and it's literally a checklist so that I don't ever have to think about how to create that particular turnover again.

It served me, on my current show, I got a call at 11:00, you needed to do the sound turnover for an episode that wasn't mine. I was like, "Oh my gosh," that's stressful when you don't know the episode because you don't know the pitfalls or whatever is particular to that episode, but it was also a time when it was stressful, because my aunt had passed away earlier in the week. I was not thinking super clearly all week because of that. It was 11:00 at night after a really long day. I think I also was coming down with the cold. So the checklist was really nice, and that like all the thinking that had to be done to do this turnover was already done. I just had to follow the steps. It's also a way of not missing an element like not, "Oh, I didn't forget to do the way files. I didn't forget to do the QuickTime reference." It's all idiot-proofed.

Sarah Taylor:

You are blowing my mind. I feel like I need to-

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Because I made a lot of mistakes.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I think that's great.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, and this is all from the dumb mistakes I've made over-

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's like, "Okay, I don't want to do that again."

Sarah Taylor:

That's really smart, and saving yourself from extra stress, because I find for myself too, I'm in a smaller market, so I often ... I've just recently in the last few years, been able to bring assistants on, like just bring on my own person to be like, "Okay, you're going to be my assistant. I'm hiring you for this."

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Sure.

Sarah Taylor:

Then trying to teach the person what I want, I'm like, "I don't know. I change every time I do a show," or it's always different. To have access to, "Here's everything that I do. Here's the step-by-step. That's amazing. That's such a brilliant thing to think about."

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Well, and also then when I start a new show ... because again, I forget what happens from series to series, I can look at the old checklist.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

How did I do it there? And it may not be the same process again, but at least, it's like, "Oh, I remember I had to do this." I should maybe do it on this show. At least check, do I need to do it here? For example, I do a lot of mentoring, so I had a friend who was in non-scripted work and we were trying forever to get them scripted and he called me, he's like, "I'm getting ready for an interview. Can you just talk me through it?" I was like, "Yes," and we talked about everything and then, I sent him my checklist. I was like, "This is from dailies to wrap, everything. Even if you don't know what it is, it's a paper form of what one process is. So you might have done some of this as a reality assistant, but it's like a jumping off point and you can always call me and we can work through ... we have this guide that's not nothing."

So it's just something that I started doing for myself and then, I've just found it's very useful to ... and the assistant editor checklist, I make it and I share it with everybody on my team, all the assistant editors. I'm always like ... obviously, I'll make mistakes on it because of typos, or it'll be organized in a way that maybe in my fugue state made sense, but later on when I'm doing a turnover, it's like, "Why is this line item here? This doesn't make any sense." So I encourage them to change it or whatever. It's also, if there's three teams, three editors, three assistants, I think it's nice for the finishing departments to get the same elements from every team so that you're not ... if we can all use the same presets.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

If we can all use all the same things coming from the same teams to the same departments, I think would be really nice. So it's not like I demand that people to use the checklist. It's just like, "Hey, if we can all get on the same page, same presets, that would be really nice." One of the things that I've done on this show for the first time is when I did the turnovers, the other assistant editor taught me how to save all my individual presets for every output and every element creation. So we all saved it to one

particular Avid profile. Then, we were able to drag the presets the other person created to ours. So when he figured out that drop frame thing, I was grabbing all of his presets. I figured out all the, I don't know, the sound EDLs presets, so he grabbed all of mine. So it was just really nice to not have to reinvent the wheel over and over again and just make it easier. It's a little thing, but it makes it easier.

Sarah Taylor:

I really enjoy your approach of the ... like you're being collaborative with it.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Because sometimes I find there'll be a tech issue and you're like ... at least I did this when I was younger, kind of ashamed to ask, "How do I do this?" So I love how you're doing it where you're like, "Well, he figured it out so then we did it." It's like your team, which you are, and we should be, we should all be a team.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's a very competitive industry. Early on, my first show was a very heavy visual effects show, and the assistant editor at the time that trained me, showed me a very quick way of labeling the show with a subcap creator that somebody else developed online. It was like ... because it was my first visual effects show, it was just standard, "Oh, this is a really quick way to label the show." On my next show, I taught the assistant editors how to do it, how to do that. I was a producer at that point in that show, and one of the assistant editors was like, "I love this." And I was like, isn't it amazing? Don't you want to teach everyone? He's like, "No, I want to be the only one who knows it. So I look like the fastest assistant editor."

I don't like that mentality. I am very much a rising tide that lifts all boats. I don't really feel the need to compete because I think there's just so much work and even if there was a lack of work, that I don't like the cutthroat element to what our industry can have. To me, I would rather build the relationships and make it a pleasant experience, and in general, I think that's why I've been able to keep up my career after having left LA is because based on the strengths of the bonds that I've created, I think people enjoy working with me. I think that people can count on me and depend on me. I mentor people and I help people find work so that I am present in their minds when opportunities come up like, "Oh yeah, Bettina is still around."

So I think in general, if maybe I were more cutthroat, maybe I would be further along in my career, but I am comfortable. Maybe not having gone as far, but I'm comfortable with who I am and the relationships I've built and the experiences I've had rather than just having that, "I want to be the best." I mean, I would love to be the best. I love to win an Oscar and Emmy or whatever, but I would rather be able to just overall, have a pleasant and happy experience than somehow falsely portray myself as the fastest assistant editor, I think that's just silly.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I'm with you 100%. That's great. Good advice too for people that are up and coming in industry. I feel like it's those connections we make and the relationships we have. It's all ... I find it's mostly word of mouth in this industry. Even from what I've heard in LA it's a lot of word of mouth.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Well, and the hilarious thing about that particular assistant editor is it is such a small industry, that particular show ... so I went from producer on that show to assistant editor because there was a family emergency. So I had to leave in the middle of the show and I had to leave LA for four months, and when I came back, they needed affiliate assistant editor just to wrap the show.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So I came back as an assistant editor and this guy was still on. I ended up recutting the season finale, which ended up being the series finale. It was like this big deal, the studio ponied up \$30,000 to reopen the show and this and that, and it was like this possibility that maybe would be ... there's a better chance of it getting picked up for season three and it didn't happen. That recut earned me, had there been a season three, an editor's chair on that show. And later on I got onto another show and again, when people look at your resume, they kind of know who you've worked with. I had heard that he had told everybody that had it gone to season three, he was going to be an editor on that season. It was like absolutely not true.

Sarah Taylor:

No.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's just one of those things where there is also a pragmatic way of looking at this, and that your reputation will follow you.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's too small. It's way too small of an industry. So, when I came back to that particular show, he was the only original assistant editor left, and he was basically cashing a paycheck, and the other two assistant editors who were fill-ins were struggling the entire time because he was not helping them. There's value in being on a show long-term because you know all of the skeletons in the closet and everything and he had another job, so he had the deal that he struck with the producer, was that he would come in the evenings and help out with this other thing, but he just did not make himself available to anyone. It was very clear he was cashing a paycheck and buying dinner and walking out the door.

And I saw this because I had been there at the beginning, and I'm seeing this at the end, and it just made me crazy, because it's like, "Oh my God, you could be helping these women and you're not, and you're just cashing a paycheck, because the producers were all out doing the onlines and mixes." Nobody is seeing what is going on. I was very vocal. I'm like, "This guy is just passing and cashing a paycheck. You're not getting your value. He's not helping." So he lost his standing with that team, and it was also, the team that was talking to me about all the things he was bragging about. He wasn't very positive in their eyes either. So now you have two sets of people that are not particularly impressed with you.

It's just a thing where that stuff follows you around, incrementally, and then there's a watershed moment where nobody wants to work with you anymore.

Sarah Taylor:

100%. Yeah, I've seen that happen a lot.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I don't know, we make television. We make entertainment. It shouldn't be-

Sarah Taylor:

It should be fun, right? It shouldn't be secrets that we can't ... like there's a bajillion YouTube videos out there now. Now, you can really research stuff. So let's share, let's not keep everything too closed.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Well, and also, we're competing with everything for people's attention. It's getting harder and harder to get people to pay attention to TV because there's so many other things that are out there. So I don't know, it's going to be harder and harder to be on shows that go long term and things like that. So it should be a pleasant experience because we're always going to have to bounce around from project to project. It's going to be rare to find a modern family that goes for 11 seasons.

Sarah Taylor:

Nothing is a guarantee.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

No. So it should be nice. Not like, "Ugh, here's my new next crappy team to work with."

Sarah Taylor:

I like it. I like your attitude. So your Google Drive is a must have, I feel like in your edit suite.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

What are other things that you need to have in your edit suite?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I have a very specific planner that I have that I get from Staples every year. I'm going to show you, I know it's an audio podcast, but like you can see it has like a year.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

And what I like about it is that it has two things, it has a page dedicated to every day. So I can write down every single thing, but it also has the month view.

Sarah Taylor:

I love it.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

The reason this helps me is that I have a to-do list for every specific day because I have in my head, two bosses, I have the head of post-production who's going to ask me to be doing things and I have my editor who's going to be asking me to do things. It's useful for me when somebody's like, "Hey, when did you do that turnover? I don't know. It's dawned and saw it in my head." If I look at my planner, I can tell you what date it is.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

And then the month view, when I get my schedule from the head of post, when is the online? When is the music? whatever it is, if I fill it in, then I can sort of backtrack and figure out what I need to do when. So for me, I have the wide angle lens of the project as a whole on what needs to happen, usually for the head of post and then, my day to day, what needs to happen. That's usually for the editor. Then, I have all kinds of writing things. My black pen is for writing the to-do list, but I have three different highlighters. Orange is for all the stuff that still needs to be done from previous days that I haven't gotten done. Blue is for stupid little techie things that I learned on this show. For example, the notes that I took to create that drop frame, that's in blue so that I can go back later and write up the thing.

Yellow is all the ... my to-do list will also encompass, "Oh shoot, I got to make the dental appointments for the kids." So when I go through the planner, it's like when I have time to do the home stuff, all I have to do is check the yellows. Yeah, so it's a way of balancing, because I don't want to have to do 47 to-do lists. It's all in one place but it's also a record of things. So there's accountability.

Sarah Taylor:

Very cool. I just bought a very similar notebook yesterday.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Cool.

Sarah Taylor:

For 2023. So a bit smaller, but yes. I love the month view and then, yeah, I have a DV so that's ... yeah, the color coding, I think that's really clever. Now, what has been something that you found challenging in your career that you've overcome, and how did that go?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I think the two things were basically, I felt very overwhelmed at the prospect of being an assistant editor because I felt like there was just this magnitude of things I didn't know, like the tech stuff ... I think now kids are more tech-savvy. They're on their apps and they're editing for TikTok and things like that. The first time I took an editing class, it was like, "You can separate video from audio?" That was having to retrain my brain. Even though I was studying editing and I had done the online workflows and everything in school, I did not feel like I was prepared to take on an actual job, and it was very true. It wasn't until I got that job with the assistant editor where we started at the same time because of the block shooting, that I got the education that I needed.

So what I could have done differently is that I could have put myself out there, stayed after hours, asked for help, asked to shadow, and it's not that those opportunities weren't available to me. I just had a lot of inhibitions. I was so inhibited just that ... well, like what you said when you were younger, you didn't want to ask anybody when you didn't know how to do something. That was me to a tee. It was like to the point where it was just ... when I think it took me seven years to become an assistant editor, it's like, "Oh my gosh." It's one of the reasons I do so much mentoring now is to demystify the process.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes. Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So a friend of mine who I think felt very similarly, I had her shadow me on a show. The very first thing I did is I'm going to show you this visual effect that the editor asked me to do, and I had no idea how to do it. Here is all the things that I did to try to get to that visual effect. So I had already gone through the process, but I knew she was coming in. So I saved that example because even the idea of, "Oh my gosh, what if an editor wants me to score a scene? Oh, there's so much music in the world and I don't know all these scores, and how would I do it?" I tend to overthink things and it was so overwhelming.

On one of my shows when it came to music, the editor was like, "Well, I look at the titles of the pieces," which was like ... it was a great piece where he was like ... we were on this show where the composer for Vikings gave us ... was our composer. He gave us the whole library for the cues for Vikings. So, he was like, "The rape of Golgotha isn't going to work for this marriage scene." That's true. Then, he showed me how to sort the bin by duration. He goes, "If the scene is 45 seconds, the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to look at all the 45-second cues and just see if ... do any of those have the correct feeling?" It was getting over my own inhibitions to go, this may seem overwhelming.

If you open yourself up and ask the questions, somebody has already invented the wheel. You just have to figure out who has done it. Can they teach you? Are they willing to teach you and just be able to put yourself out there. So that was a big, just self-imposed stupid insecurity that I had done, like I had done to myself. Then, the other thing was, when I moved to Chicago, it was just a very logistical thing, how do I keep working? I'm not particularly interested in doing independent films. I'm not particularly interested in doing commercials. How do I actually stay relevant? How do I connect with the people out here who are making television?

So I really worked my contacts. I really tried to bring values to the shows that I got on and just be that person that somebody wants to work with again and not be shy about asking for ... in the show that I worked on here, I ended up becoming an editor, but I asked for that.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, I think that's huge.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Nobody discovered me, but I saw that there was an opening and I asked for it, which Bettina from 10 years ago would've been like, "I hope they remember that I work here," and now, I've gotten the job because it's not that people are not interested in helping, it's that once again, there's so much that are demanding people's attention that there is value in raising your hand.

Sarah Taylor:

100%.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

And that can feel ... if you're a person that's not used to doing that. That can feel out of your comfort zone, or maybe you're being too pushy or too ambitious. Ambitious for women seems to be like a negative thing. So those are things that I've had to make myself comfortable with and go, "This is not a bad thing to ask." And the worst thing that can happen is that they say no, and if they say no, they say no.

Sarah Taylor:

At least they know that you are wanting it, right.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

That's the biggest thing. We don't put ourselves out there. The opportunities could disappear, and I think that's a really good piece of advice. What has been one highlight from your career so far?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's been cutting on my show. It's a show called Work in Progress, it went for two seasons. Lilly Wachowski of Matrix fame was one of the exec producers, and I would never have imagined that my first editing job would be for her like that-

Sarah Taylor:

Amazing.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, and I just learned so much, and it was an opportunity for me to work on a show I really believe in. There's a really strong, powerful and healthy message about mental health and getting therapy, and these are all things I believe in. So I think it's this amazing thing that not only did I get to be an editor, after moving to Chicago, which I never expected. I got to work for Lilly, which I saw The Matrix in high school. Again, I never would've expected.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I got to work on a good show. So many things that I've done is like, it's fine, but it's not something that I feel strongly about with my heart and soul and the things I was able to be very proud of the show. So just those, for one show to check all those boxes. Do I want other amazing experiences? Do I want the statues? Yes, but just to have those things, I feel very fortunate and very like, "Oh my gosh, what an amazing outcome for a decision I made that I wasn't sure about, to move back to Chicago." It also taught me that there are possibilities out there. When I was telling people in LA that I was going to move to Chicago and try to work for the Wachowskis, it was very much a, "That's nice." and I understand that better, that reaction better now.

I also have given myself some more credit. I see possibility where other people don't, and that doesn't mean I'm stupid. That means there is patterns and things that maybe other people dismiss where I go, "No, there might be an opportunity there and there's no reason not to try." Even I didn't think about, "Oh, maybe I'll cut for them." It taught me there are more possibilities than most people imagine and there are more possibilities than maybe you even imagine, and to just keep yourself open to those things, and like you said, raise your hand, put yourself out there, because why not? You never know, the first person who actually ended up helping me become an assistant editor, I had this list of all the people who could help me.

He wasn't even on my list. It just happened that he was the one. So you just never know where opportunities may come from. Just be open to it.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. That's amazing. I had one short film that made it into Sundance, and I was like, it didn't even ever cross my mind, that that would be an option.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, there's moments where you're like, really, possibilities are endless. We could really be doing all sorts of fun, awesome stuff. I think you saying being proud of the work you're doing, that's huge for me too. I might be working on smaller documentaries, but the messages and the stories that we're telling, if I feel like I'm impacting somebody's life and it's impacting my life and making me a better human, then I'm winning triple, right?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Doing the job I love, meeting great people and sharing stories that are so important.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Totally.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. I think we're really lucky in our world.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah. That 2% that likes their job.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Yes. You've talked in the past about being a parent in post-production and it's something that we don't always talk about or it's only asked of the women, "Oh, what's it like being ... how do you balance?" I do want to have a conversation about what is it like ... how has your life changed as a parent in post versus what it was like before? What's different for you?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It was a huge journey, and in grad school specifically ... they had this thing where you could meet with an editor over a lunch, like a group of us could meet and you could talk about her, and this female editor, and during lunch, I raised my hand and I was like, "I'd love to know your perspective on being a parent." She laughed and was like, "Huh, good luck and then, turned." It was the most infuriating experience to this day of my life, because this is a thing I love to talk about. I 100% believe if you want ... you can make it work to be both in post and be a parent, but there are so many things I would've done differently, had I understood how difficult it would be. Post-production is very demanding in terms of ... especially if it's a harder project, you could be there for hours.

So one of the things that I wish I had done differently is one, I wish it didn't take me seven years but two, I wish I had built wealth, not because I want the fancy cars or anything like that, but it would have set me up to be in a better school district. To be able to hire help. To be able to hire services, like laundry services, because the first few years when my kids were young, I was doing it all and it was insane. It's not because I didn't have the money. I mean, I didn't have as much as I wanted, but it was this mentality of I didn't grow up with nannies or babysitters. I didn't grow up with cleaning services and things. So these are very real things that can help and contribute to not only your home life, but your mental health as well.

Because if you want to be a creative and a parent, then ideally there are some things that you can farm out. In this moment in time, since I'm working from home, I have to do less of that because not having a commute, I could be doing an export and I can start a load of laundry. That is very doable and plus, with the pandemic, there was some hesitation of bringing other people into the home. So it is a huge balancing act and the things ... if there's anything you can do to set yourself up so that you can compartmentalize the things you don't have to take care of, so that you can be more present for your kids so that you can give yourself time and space to recharge, so you can be the creative.

One of my favorite shows, I would be thinking about during my long commutes back and forth, because I would think about story points and how is this better? How can we better talk about this second? And that's because I had that one hour commute. Whereas, I don't think about story like that right now in my work from home job, because every moment that I'm not working on the show, I could be doing a chore.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

For me, becoming a parent has been about all of this time I had outside of the show now goes towards ... because the women usually do all the mental load work as well. Doctor's appointments and Tracy's birthday is coming. I got to go pick up her gift. So okay, if you are responsible for the mental load, if you are responsible for the kids, if you're responsible for the cleaning and the cooking, how does that get restructured in your home? What things are going to help you get that? So if I could talk to Bettina from 2008 who had just graduated, I would've been like, "You want to be a parent? So now you have to think smartly because you're not going to be one for years. So now is the time where you can put into making all that money to set aside to buy that house in that code school district to hire the help."

And that was just ... if that editor had talked to me like that, that would've been very helpful, because I'm learning that by stumbling into it, and it was like after the fact. It's just something I ... this is why I do so much mentoring. I would love to talk to young women about that because I don't ... it's not that I think you can have it all. That I think is a harder mentality. I think there should be grace in what you dream of what you want, but if you don't achieve that, or if you feel like you have to change your goals, it's not that you're any kind of failure or anything, but I also think if we can mentor each other and talk to each other and sort of teach each other our lessons, we're just setting up the next generation and the next group a little bit better.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

If on some level the message, is you got to do it all. On some level, that's kind of baked in and so, how do we empower instead of, I don't know, setting ourselves up for ... trying to be super women beyond what's reasonable.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah, exhaustion. You know what, it's okay to have a career and be passionate about your career and also love your kids and be a passionate about your family.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

It's okay to have both of those things. Sometimes work is going to get busy and your kid is going to spend time with the babysitter, or your kid is going to spend time with grandma, and it's great for them to have relationships with other humans too.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

100%

Sarah Taylor:

It's great for a kid to see their parents doing work they love, because we're the only 2% percent.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yes. No, it's absolutely true.

Sarah Taylor:

It's huge.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah, it is just ... I have friends who have a hard time giving their kids to other caretakers and things, and I get that. I felt that.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

You're saying them building other relationships, it's absolutely true, my kids love their babysitters. My kids love their grandma, my mom. So, it's also letting yourself build a village in a society that doesn't really inherently have villages. So again, there is some baked in resistance that we can break down and go, "No, these are the positives of you having this passionate thing." Also, just being happy. I'm a better mom if I'm happy. I would say the worst time was when I couldn't figure out how to make everything work from Chicago, and I didn't have that creative outlet, and I was not a great mom. I was just miserable, and just having the work has made me a much better mom because I'm more fulfilled, right?

Sarah Taylor:

100%.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

So I can be a much better mom if I'm happy.

Sarah Taylor:

Yeah. Yeah, and I think that's another thing ... or this could be a whole other conversation, but how we as humans often and maybe as moms or maybe even just parents, we identify as I'm the mom or I'm the editor, or I'm the whatever, instead of just being a whole human who has a job that you love who has a kid, and you can be all those things, but you're not identified as the thing. I think that's where it can be hard, where you're like, "But I'm the mom and I need to do X, Y, Z," and whatever.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

I'm laughing because when I got married at my wedding, people were like, "Oh, you look so beautiful." And I was like, I'm so much more than a pretty face. I work at a TV show. I just got my master's," like it was this, like ...

Sarah Taylor:

We do need to say out loud. No, I do this cool job, and I also am educated, and I am-

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

Because we are all those things. We're not just the one thing or just the job or just the mom. Anyway, you have to go to work.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yes, I'm about to, I'm getting dinged on Slack.

Sarah Taylor:

Yes. Okay. So one last question. What can we watch or what's coming up next for you that we can all tune into and just celebrate you and your awesomeness?

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Currently, I'm on a show called Class of '09. It's supposed to come out sometime next year on FX. It's on Hulu for FX.

Sarah Taylor:

Okay.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It stars, Kate Mara, and it's an FBI thriller. So that's currently one of the project that I'm on.

Sarah Taylor:

Very fun. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for spending time with us today. I loved everything you said. You had so much great advice in there. So for all those young assistants out there, this is a repeat, I think, episode to listen to and I feel like Bettina, I think you have a second career of being maybe an educator of some sort because, well, you have an education background, but you need to share that Google Drive.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Yeah.

Sarah Taylor:

You can make some money off of it.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

It's hysterical.

Sarah Taylor:

Anyway, thank you so much. Enjoy your workday and we will hopefully talk soon.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Thank you.

Sarah Taylor:

Take care.

Bettina Zachariah Treviranus:

Bye.

Sarah Taylor:

Thank you so much for joining us today, and a big thanks goes to Bettina for taking the time to sit with me. Special thanks goes to Alison Dowler and Kim McTaggart CCE. The main title sound design was created by Jane Tattersall. Additional ADR Recording by Andrea Rusch. Original music created by Chad Blain and Sound Strip. This episode was mixed and mastered by Tony Bao. The CCE is proud to support HireBIPOC. HireBIPOC is the definitive and ubiquitous industry-wide roster of Canadian BIPOC creatives and crew working in screen-based industries. Check out hirebipoc.ca to hire your next group or create a profile and get hired.

Speaker 5:

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