

Allyson Diek Transcript

Transcript

00:00:09 Speaker 1

Welcome back to the After Mary Washington podcast. My name is Amede.

00:00:14 Speaker 2

I'm Sasha.

00:00:15 Speaker 3

And I'm Shelly.

00:00:16 Speaker 1

Yeah. So today we're joined by Allyson.

00:00:27 Speaker 1

Kind of. Just introduce yourself and talk about maybe your major and when you graduated.

00:00:33 Speaker 4

Sure. I'm Allyson Diek, I am a graduate of Mary Washington College, 1993. I created an Italian studies major. I worked with Doctor Ascari at the time and developed program that incorporated literature, history, Art, Latin.

00:00:52 Speaker 4

All kinds of fun things. At one point I declared a German major. I also studied Spanish and Russian. A little bit of background in high school, I studied German and then Spanish, and then I was an exchange student on my 13th year of high school to Italy with American Field Service.

00:01:10 Speaker 4

So I lived in Italy for a year.

00:01:13 Speaker 4

with a family and learned Italian.

00:01:16 Speaker 4

You know, my dream life will force myself to learn another language somewhere.

00:01:22 Speaker 4

After graduation, I tried a couple of different venues that didn't work out and at one point I was debating moving back overseas to teach English and ultimately I got a job in a doctor's office, which I did for about 5 years, just sort of trying to figure out where wanted to go next. I have to admit I kind of got my job.

00:01:42 Speaker 4

Through luck, my boss of 25 years owned a tile store in Albany.

00:01:49 Speaker 4

New York. And he was actually friends of my parents from many, many years and they were buying tile thinking he had one store and it turned out he had 24 stores and they were chatting with him. And it turns out ohh yeah, you can go to Spain and Italy every single year and go buy tile and talk to.

00:02:10 Speaker 4

Factories. So I connected with him and learned the business a little bit just locally at a retail store in Rockville, MD. It's amazing. The things that you can really use languages for when you start looking, you know, importing is kind of fun if you can find the right company to work with. I've been very lucky. It's a family business.

00:02:30 Speaker 4

25 years. I'm still enjoying myself, having a great time. One of my favorite things about this is how many different languages I get to speak when I go visit with other people.

00:02:39 Speaker 4

But I use it every single day I write emails to the factory. Sometimes they'll call on the phone. I find that communication is sometimes easier by speaking their language. Fewer miscommunications, even though they all speak English quite well, I have discovered a handful of people do use Google Translate when they write emails to me.

00:02:59 Speaker 4

So that's apparently become much more prevalent.

00:03:02 Speaker 1

So you mentioned that you speak mainly Italian every day. So what language proficiency level kind of where you at when you graduated and has that gone up a lot just from how much you use it or where is that at?

00:03:16 Speaker 4

Well, I started relatively fluent, having lived in Italy for a year. So the good thing about Mary Washington was it just sort of hammered in the grammar for me. No more reading literature and focusing on on that. But for the most part it's it's maintained itself.

00:03:34 Speaker 4

If I find daily practice either listening to music, watching movies, writing emails, talking on the phone with people, that's probably the best way to continue.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

So other than learning a language, you mentioned that the the career that you're kind of in, you didn't really foresee that you're gonna be doing this. So what kind of soft skills or just general abilities did you gain from Mary Washington or?

00:03:56 Speaker 1

And living in Italy that helped you just for like your general career search or just for anything you're doing.

00:04:02 Speaker 4

Well, when I went to college, I remember my father saying it's a liberal arts school. Just get a good liberal arts degree and you'll have the basics of everything. Strangely enough, we were at the start of the computer generation and.

00:04:16 Speaker 4

I did not.

00:04:16 Speaker 4

Know how to use a computer very well.

00:04:20 Speaker 4

E-mail began when I was in college. If you can even imagine that it's kind of a strange thought. I think knowing how to think creatively, the various classes that I took just really helped.

00:04:32 Speaker 4

In terms of soft skills, you know, writing skills, critical thinking, learning to think outside the box, I took a great classics religion class and the professor said think for yourself. Try to get rid of your past training that your family might have raised you with and come up with your own concepts. And I've used that forever. You know, always.

00:04:52 Speaker 4

Try to think for yourself and don't rely on what people tell you.

00:04:56 Speaker 4

Dig into things and educate yourself.

00:04:59 Speaker 1

That's that's really interesting. I I've definitely heard similar things would like a liberal arts degree. It's like you can do whatever you can do anything at all about, like learning to communicate in writing and oral skills like that. So what advice would you have for language majors specifically that are either recently graduating or in their kind of junior senior year of?

00:05:18 Speaker 4

It all depends on what you're doing. I mean, it took me 5 or six years before I found what I wanted to do, so I I think right out of the gate, it might not always be the easiest to find a job immediately in the field that you're looking in. So try different.

00:05:33 Speaker 4

Things just look around.

00:05:34 Speaker 4

You know, see if there's something that you enjoy. Like, for me, I I didn't really have a business.

00:05:39 Speaker 4

Background. I took some business classes. I took accounting, you know, so having a general knowledge of things like that. But I think if you.

00:05:44 Speaker 4

And find an area that sounds interesting to you, and then educate yourself on that and dig into that. Definitely go out and meet people in that environment and and don't expect to find it immediately. You know the fact that it took me until, yeah, seven years to find the job that I now have and I've had for 25. I mean when people ask me for my resume.

00:06:05 Speaker 4

It's one piece of paper.

00:06:07 Speaker 2

When we were looking down the list of alumni, the Italian studies really jumped out at me. I didn't know that Mary Washington ever had something like that and saying that you created that was really fascinating do.

00:06:18 Speaker 2

You think that?

00:06:19 Speaker 2

Being able to create your own major and pick and choose from different subjects and departments gave you a more well-rounded degree than maybe just.

00:06:28 Speaker 2

Majoring in German or Italian or like accounting or something like that.

00:06:32 Speaker 4

That's a really good question. I did it more out of necessity since it didn't exist and Doctor Ascari was so great about it. He really wanted me to pursue that in the end. If you look at my, what is it the program from when I graduated? It's a special studies which some of my friends continue to remind me to this day.

00:06:53 Speaker 4

I did find it interesting to have to kind of look across a variety of majors and topics to find things that fit into an Italian degree since it didn't exist. I did love that about having a liberal arts education was all the various things, because sometimes there's something that will spark your interest and you have no idea. I think it's definitely helpful.

00:07:14 Speaker 4

To expand and not just focus on on one thing if you can.

00:07:18 Speaker 3

Going back to your college years, did you ever regret majoring in the language, or did you have doubts that you'll ever find a job with that major?

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OK.

00:07:29 Speaker 4

Oh, no, never regretted it for a second. Not at.

00:07:32 Speaker 4

All over the.

00:07:33 Speaker 4

Years I've had moments where I've debated leaving my job and trying to do something different, and I've always thought to myself I have such great marketed skills.

00:07:42 Speaker 4

It's just a matter of applying them to something, you know the languages are such an added bonus to anything you do. You can apply them to.

00:07:51 Speaker 4

anything and I think that's the important thing, it's it's an additional.

00:07:55 Speaker 4

So if if.

00:07:55 Speaker 4

I suddenly decided I wanted to go into finance. You know, I could learn about finance, but still have the languages. As an added bonus, and I only have my bachelors. I never went on to do a masters. So obviously that's a whole another direction people could look into.

00:08:12 Speaker 1

So you mentioned that you had colleagues kind of internationally, but you also know a lot of people from Mary Washington. So based on your experience, how high do you think the demand is for graduates who have two or three languages that they're able to speak?

00:08:28 Speaker 4

I think it's a huge asset. I mean the world today compared to when I graduated, everything is international, everything is connected. Our world is so small. We are so interconnected. It's amazing how many ways we are connected. And I think the ability to communicate with other people and other cultures, I find that people are so much more open when they find out that you speak more than just.

00:08:51 Speaker 4

English and you're not forcing them to communicate with you, but you're trying to communicate with them. I find it really opens doors.

00:08:58 Speaker 4

And it really it makes for a much more collaborative connection and partnership. So I would assume that anybody who speaks more than one language is going to have a huge, huge asset on their resume.

00:09:12 Speaker 2

Going off of the looking for jobs outside the US when you first graduated with Italian studies, was that something you thought about? You know, moving abroad and looking for a job? Or did you know that you wanted to work in the US for people graduating with a language degree? I think that's sometimes a choice that they have a hard time.

00:09:32 Speaker 4

I think at some point I wanted to work overseas. I remember originally trying to get a job with the IMF in DC. I can't remember why that didn't work.

00:09:41 Speaker 4

Out, sometimes it's a matter of, like I said, getting a couple of jobs, getting a feel for different things, figuring out because you may think you want to do one thing and then you start working at it and.

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Find out. Wow, that really isn't what I.

00:09:54 Speaker 4

Thought it was going to be.

00:09:56 Speaker 4

But it puts you in touch with other.

00:09:58 Speaker 4

Things so.

00:10:00 Speaker 4

I think it's important to just.

00:10:03 Speaker 4

Keep looking around and and look for the thing.

00:10:05 Speaker 4

That really matters.

00:10:08 Speaker 4

I think it really connects with you.

00:10:10 Speaker 3

What are your top 3 greatest accomplishments personally?

00:10:15 Speaker 4

I don't know. I have not prepared for that question.

00:10:21 Speaker 4

I I love that I've had a job that is more than work. I found something to do that I enjoy. I have colleagues who've become friends from overseas. You know, when we visit each other's countries, we all connect.

00:10:38 Speaker 4

And get together.

00:10:40 Speaker 4

I'm really proud of just being able to take the degree that I got from Mary Washington and translate it into a really happy life. You know, I have a lot of work.

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Life balance I I.

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Try very hard not to overdo one over the other.

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And a great circle of friends. Quite honestly, most of them are from Mary Washington.

00:10:59 Speaker 1

Yeah, I think that's I think that's all we had.

00:11:04 Speaker 4

Well, thank you so much. I appreciate.

00:11:06 Speaker 4

You guys reaching out?

00:11:08 Speaker 2

Thank you. Thank you again.

00:11:12 Speaker 4

OK, good luck to you all.