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Catherine Fogarty

President/Executive Producer, Big Coat Media, Story Hunter Podcasts, Writer

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction, 2018

I realized after I wrote the book...that this is really where my passion lies, in telling great stories.

Two years before applying to the MFA program at King's, Catherine Fogarty read an article in the *Globe and Mail* about a 1971 riot at Kingston Penitentiary, Ontario. It struck her as surprising that she had never heard of it before. She cut out the newspaper clipping for safekeeping.

"I've always had this ideas folder on my desk, so I threw it in there," Catherine explains. She would never have thought she would be revisiting the story as the subject of her first book.

Catherine has been writing for most of her career, particularly for television. When she heard about the MFA in Creative Nonfiction at King's, she signed up with the intention of improving her writing skills. Writing a book, however, was never the goal. "I'd written some short stories and articles for the newspaper, but when I got into the program they said, 'you've got to have a book proposal!'"

Suddenly, the story about the riot came to mind. "I went back, and I pulled this little piece of paper out. I had no idea it would take up the next four years of my life!"

In *Murder on the Inside*, Catherine tells the story of the 1971 riot. However, piecing it all together wasn't as straightforward as she had anticipated. "I realized pretty early on that this was not going to be easy. Every door

that I tried to open was quickly shut in my face,” she explains, mostly due to the lack of public information about Canadian correctional facilities.

The book required an incredible amount of historical research. “I always joke that I became the accidental journalist! I had to learn very quickly, but I certainly learned a lot from the instructors in the MFA program about how to research, how to dig, what to look for and where to look for it.”

The MFA program also teaches students how to navigate the publishing world. Catherine points out that one particularly helpful component was learning how to put together a book contract. “That was invaluable to me, because I was very fortunate, and I got the contract from my publisher.”

Despite her accomplishments, Catherine emphasizes the fact that success doesn’t happen overnight. “People come out of programs and they want to change the world. That’s fabulous, but it’s not going to happen right away. You’ve got to start at the ground level and work your way up.”

She goes back to the earliest days of her television career. “If we had to make coffee for the crew, we did that. I remember walking through fields with my cameraman helping him carry all the equipment – we did whatever we had to do!” she recalls.

Starting out as a social worker, Catherine pivoted into the television world and never looked back. After a 25-year stint in television, including nine seasons as co-executive producer of the lifestyle show, *Love It or List It*, she continues to learn and to challenge herself.

A few years back, one of her colleagues asked if she would be interested in creating a documentary about young women with breast cancer.

“My first reaction was, I create design shows and cooking shows – I have no idea how I’m going to do this. But it was so important to me. I literally had to go back to ground zero and learn how to film a very intimate documentary.” And she did.

“It’s about learning and growing based on the experience and not being afraid of it,” Catherine says. “We all get pigeon-holed in what we do. People are very quick to label you.”

She experienced this again when meeting with agents and publishers to pitch her book idea in New York. “Who are you to be writing a book about a riot? You’re a television producer,” an agent told her, “you can’t write a book because you write television shows about redesigning people’s homes!”

Catherine’s response? “Well, you know what? I can! And I did!”

In addition to her book, she’s been devoting more time to her recently launched podcasting company, *Story Hunter Podcasts*. When COVID-19 shut down the production offices in 2020, Catherine took advantage of the time at home and started to write scripts and record podcasts.


“I realized after I wrote the book...that this is really where my passion lies, in telling great stories.” In whatever form they come in, whether it’s reality television, true crime podcasts or historical research books, Catherine will continue to tell great stories.

Murder on the Inside is published by Biblioasis and will hit the bookshelves in April to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Kingston Penitentiary riot.

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Connect with Catherine Fogarty

 Website (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210415113606/https://www.storyhunterpodcasts.com/>)

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