My name is Emilia Ruzicka, and I’m a junior at Brown studying Data Journalism. I’m here—well, virtually—with Ivy Scott, another junior and journalism concentrator. The year 2020 has been filled with big surprises and momentous occasions both on and off College Hill, and Ivy and I noticed that a lot of on-campus publications at Brown were celebrating major milestones, too. The Brown Daily Herald, Brown’s first news publication, is switching offices after living at 195 Angell Street as long as anyone can remember. Comedy magazine The Brown Jug is celebrating its centennial this year, as alt-weekly The College Hill Independent counts 30 years in print. And as for satire publication The Brown Noser, they’re approaching 15 years of publication in just a few months.

In honor of these big achievements, we thought we’d take a look back at the histories of these storied publications to see how they’ve evolved, how they relate to one another, and what they bring to campus today. I think you’ll find that despite their many differences, all of these publications share a desire to honor their own past, while evolving to better fit the audience of the present. So here you have it, an abbreviated history of the silly and the serious, as told by students at Brown. [pause]

Narrator: Part One—The Second-Oldest College Daily in America. [music fades]

Colleen Cronin: I started writing for the BDH my freshman fall semester, and now I'm the Editor-In-Chief so I don't really write anymore, but I edit. So it’s been three years at the BDH.

Narrator: This is Colleen Cronin, the cheerful Editor-In-Chief of The Brown Daily Herald. A junior at Brown hailing from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, campus news was a dream of Colleen’s since childhood.

Colleen Cronin: I kind of always knew that I wanted to be a journalist. One of my sort of fictional role models growing up was Rory Gilmore. She was Editor-In-Chief at the Yale Daily News when she went to Yale in the Gilmore Girls show. So when I got into Brown, I had this idea that I was going to join the college newspaper and I one day was like, ‘Okay,’ and I googled during the summer before I got to Brown ‘what's the college newspaper?’ and I found out it was
The Brown Daily Herald. I looked at the Wikipedia page and it said second oldest college daily, and I was like, “Ugh, I'm sold.”

Little did I know that like every other college newspaper claims to be the second oldest college daily in the country, so that wasn't really a claim to fame. But I walked in the first day, and I went to one of their open houses, and I really loved it.

I think that everyone says that they had this moment when they become Editor-In-Chief later. But I do think I really had a moment when the Editor-In-Chief was telling us about, ‘Oh, you gotta do this, this, and this,’ and it was the New Writers Training and blah, blah, blah, and I was like, you know, someday I want to be the Editor-In-Chief. So I stuck with it, and I’m glad for it.

Narrator: Now a primary news source for Brown faculty, staff, alumni, and students, the Herald’s focus and writing style have evolved significantly since the first issue appeared on campus newsstands in 1891. From the publication of the first issue-- which was secretly dropped on the doorsteps of college dormitories on a chilly December night-- the BDH has become ubiquitous on College Hill, available in nearly every coffeeshop and academic building on campus. After a rocky printing history during the World Wars, the Herald resumed daily publication in the 1950s. Editors maintained this tradition for more than seven decades, until the novel coronavirus pandemic forced the paper to end its print circulation of 4,000 daily copies and transition to a fully online format this March.

An excerpt from the paper’s 1951 archives provides just one example of some key changes between post-war daily publication and today, while also serving as a unique look back in time:

Reader: Friday, September 28, 1951. Headline: Brown to meet Temple in season’s opener. Brown’s social-minded undergraduates swing into their first big football weekend of the year today with a freshman-sophomore Flag Rush, and a Faunce House terrace football rally preceding the cheerleaders’ rally dance to be held at 8:30 p.m. at the Narragansett Hotel.

The annual Flag Rush will take place this afternoon at 3:30 at the Marvel Gym parking lot. Cedgy Barksdale, head of the Vigilance Committee, said, “The Flag Rush this afternoon will bring together the Sophomore and Freshman classes in the traditional battle. The Frosh will be trying to overthrow sophomore domination, while the latter will be defending their honor. We of the VC hope that both classes will be well represented at the Rush. But let us all remember that it is a game in which sportsmanship is of primary importance.”

The Flag Rush will be preceded by a preliminary “tug of war.” The ground has been dug up for twenty-five feet around the pole and water started flowing into the pit at seven this morning and
will run until just before the Rush. The pole has been well greased and a small Brown pennant fixed to the top. The Rush is to last for five minutes, as the Frosh will try to reach the flag that represents their freedom from the oppression of the last few weeks.

**Narrator:** An… interesting tradition, and— for better or worse— an archaic one. In reflecting on her time as Editor-In-Chief, Colleen Cronin discusses what she sees as the most significant changes.

**Colleen Cronin:** I think the Ivy League is still a really important sports conference, but sports are not covered in the way that they were covered in the fifties that they were covered in the sixties or even how they were covered in the two thousands. We don't do big, front page, one photo and it's the football team stories anymore. I don't know how much that has to do with us or that has to do with Brown sports itself.

**Narrator:** Instead, the *BDH* focuses on more academic campus news, covering student and faculty research, museum and art exhibits, club events, and guest lecturers. Recently, one question the editors have navigated is how many off-campus events to cover, and from what angle.

**Colleen Cronin:** We also don't do… you know, we used to do a lot more national news, a lot of international news, which I think the *Harvard Crimson* still does. We're a lot more niche than we used to be. We really cover what we think students are going to only get here because there is so much more news out there. People used to pay for the *Herald*, or the *Herald* was the only newspaper that they read, maybe in conjunction with the *New York Times* or the *New Yorker* or whatever. You could write about a bunch of other stuff that wasn't really exclusive to the *Herald* and it was fine and it would still be a unique story. What we cover and how we cover it is now very different.

**Narrator:** And *The Brown Daily Herald* isn’t the only publication on campus that has evolved significantly over time. [pause] [transitional music plays]

**Narrator:** *Part Two—Funny Guy.* [music fades]

**Reader:** ‘Bombshells. Revolutions. Outrages. WOMEN. N’everything… [pause] Jesting. Uncanniness. Glamour… Will all have a place in *The Jug* office next year. Lots of other notables will be present, too. Shhhhh!’

**Narrator:** These are the words of the odd acrostic poem that begins the May 1931 issue of *The Jug*, Brown’s literary humor magazine and the university’s second oldest publication after the
BDH. Started in 1920 and with a bit of a rocky history, The Brown Jug is celebrating a century of mostly biannual publication this fall.

**Benjamin Doyle**: I had heard of The Brown Jug before I came to Brown and I was really excited to write for it ‘cause I was really big into college humor in high school and that was Brown's magazine. And when I got to campus, I asked around and no one knew what it was.

**Narrator**: That’s Benjamin Doyle, a junior at Brown and self-proclaimed comedy junkie whose passion for college humor began when he was just a freshman in high school. Ben is responsible for spearheading The Jug’s revival in the fall of 2017. Now, he is Editor-In-Chief of the magazine alongside longtime friend Oscar Rousseau, both of whom are here with us today.

**Benjamin Doyle**: I went to the Student Activities Office and they told me it had been out of print since like 2009, and that really, it hadn't been big on campus since the Great Depression.

**Narrator**: After The Jug was founded in 1920, it published regularly until 1933, when students and other readers could no longer afford to buy the paper. The Jug was revived briefly in 1967 and stayed afloat for about a year before disappearing once again. Nearly two decades later in 1986, students renamed The Jug “Exit 20.” This persisted until 1999, when it reverted back to its original moniker. In 2008, The Jug once again faded until Ben picked it up in 2017.

**Benjamin Doyle**: The people at the Student Activities Office were like, ‘Do you want it?’ And I said, ‘Sure.’ A good deal of the editors on staff that first year were just like people in my dorm hall, in the Jameson basement. I was very lucky to have such good friends like Oscar to help me along—

**Oscar Rousseau**: —That’s right, you were.

**Benjamin Doyle**: [laughing] Thank you. I mean, I was big into humor writing and all that, and none of my friends were, but they just did it anyway. [to Oscar] And I think you find it fun now?

**Oscar Rousseau**: It's a good time. I mean, yeah, when I started at The Jug, it was myself, Ben, five of our friends and… three or four people that we found that were mildly interested. And it just kind of became a thing.

**Narrator**: Perhaps even more than The Brown Daily Herald, The Jug editors confirm that the magazine has seen quite a transformation over the past 100 years.

**Benjamin Doyle**: It's not racist anymore!
Interviewer (Ivy): Oh, wow! Good call!

Benjamin Doyle: Yeah, big leap. It used to be racist against all the minorities. Everyone.

Oscar Rousseau: It was really awful.

Benjamin Doyle: We've dug through some old issues, and I mean, it was the 20s and the 30s, so I don't know what we were expecting…

Oscar Rousseau: But even for the time, it felt like they were really giving it their all.

Benjamin Doyle: Yeah. So it's hard to be like, ‘We love being a part of this tradition’ when a lot of the tradition was not great.

Narrator: One-liners like

Reader: “‘Won’t you have lynch with me tomorrow?’ suggested the Georgia Colonel to the negro prisoner;”

Narrator: have been replaced by much more culturally sensitive content that aims to critique institutions of power, rather than celebrate them.

A recent publication from the Spring 2019 issue is entitled “Top 5 Video Games to Play While Your Home is Leveled by Jeff Bezos and His Battalion of Drones.” The clever list includes games like Borderlands 2, whose charm “lies in its ability to prepare you for a future pillaged by corporations who hold more power than the government,” and AdVenture Capitalist.

Reader: “Jeff Bezos has ripped out all your electrical wiring with his bare hands, which is why this mobile game is a great addition to this list!”

Narrator: But on a more serious note, The Jug editors highlight that in addition to addressing the complex history of their publication, a key component of running the magazine is continual reckoning with traditions of Ivy League elitism that have dominated America’s comedy scene since it began.

Benjamin Doyle: College humor magazines have sort of always been at the heart of what we think of as the most important comedy institutions in America. Saturday Night Live and the National Lampoon, all of those came out of the Harvard Lampoon. I think it's a really
interesting, sort of foundational starting point for these institutions that have radically changed the course of comedy in this country. And I mean, again, that's largely because it's like these Ivy League kids keep becoming the only humor writers in the country, for better or for worse.

**Interviewer (Ivy):** So do you think you’re funny?

**Oscar Rousseau:** I think it's pretentious to think you're funny. Everybody is funny to some people. I think it's harder to then translate that to a specific medium. I think the thing that I've acquired through *The Jug*, and through just writing a bunch, is translating what I find funny to a piece of paper that other people will find funny. But I don't necessarily think that I'm funny in an absolute sense or that I'm funnier than anybody. I think we have just practiced enough to then write something funny… [pause] [laughing] Well, but that's also pretentious.

**Narrator:** At an institution like Brown, it’s little wonder that comedic and hard news sources alike are grappling with histories of elitism, and how to make themselves more accessible to the general community. [pause] [transitional music plays]

**Narrator:** *Part Three— Free Radicals.* [music fades]

**Interviewer:** How would you describe the *Indy’s* target audience, and how does that compare to the actual audience?

**Deborah Marini:** I think the goal is definitely that the audience is Providence outside of Brown.

**Narrator:** This is Deborah Marini, a Metro or city news editor for *The College Hill Independent*. As a sophomore at Brown, Debbie is fairly new to the editing role at Brown’s resident ‘alternative’ weekly, which started in 1990. She’s still learning the ups and downs of how to produce content for one of *The Brown Daily Herald’s* main competitors on campus, and one of the primary weeklies in Providence at a circulation of 2,000 weekly copies. Unlike the *BDH*, the *Indy* has elected to maintain print publication in spite of the pandemic.

**Deborah Marini:** I'm pretty sure we advertise ourselves as Providence-based for the Providence community and I think that one big problem is that sometimes the writing at the *Indy* is a little too pretentious to really be accessible to anybody that's not an eager college student. The joke that I hear a lot is that the *Indy* audience is like the *Indy* staff and like each *Indy* staff writer’s two closest friends. And maybe like somebody's parents. Just because all of the articles are also pretty long and sometimes inaccessible— often not, but yeah, I don't know how well-read the *Indy* is outside of Brown.
Uplifting marginalized voices is an ideal that the *Indy* shoots for, and I think we often fall short in that way because I think sometimes people are uncomfortable with interviewing anybody. Especially reaching outside of the Brown bubble to interview people.

**Narrator:** Despite some friendly competition usually displayed in kickball tournaments or Twitter wars, the *Indy* and the *Herald* do share many of the same concerns about how best to represent the Providence community. With such different audiences, however, they approach the problem in very different ways, according to Colleen Cronin of the *BDH*.

**Colleen Cronin:** There was a time when we just cut the Metro section altogether, I think because it was in response to, “Well, people are just going to get their Metro news from the *ProJo*, why would they get it from the *Herald*?” So there was no Metro news for a long time, or it was maybe one or two writers who were doing it. Now we have a whole section, and I think that's because the way we cover Metro news is a lot different. It's a lot more Brown-focused or a lot more student-centered. How is it going to impact students? How's it gonna impact life at Brown? *[transitional music plays]*

**Narrator:** Colleen highlights the fact that editors from various publications are constantly reflecting on their role in the media landscape alongside major city publications like *The Providence Journal*, known colloquially as the *ProJo*. Especially juggling the hats of both student and editor, college journalists must also consider how central coverage on student life should be to campus publications. The debate surrounding this issue extends past hard news and into the realm of comedy various comedy publications. *[pause] [transitional music plays]*

**Narrator:** *Part four—The Onion of College Hill [music fades]*

**Nate Kublin:** I definitely think our audience is the Brown community. We try to write things that can reach beyond Brown, but one of the main sections of the newspaper is “on campus.” And there's even another section called “off campus,” which means that it's not about campus things, but the fact that it's identified through whether or not it's related to being a Brown student is also a signal.

**Narrator:** That’s Nate Kublin, a staff writer for *The Brown Noser*, the University’s satirical publication modeled after *The Onion* and founded in 2006. Nate is a senior now, but started with the *Noser* halfway through his sophomore year, when he was still a pre-med student instead of an English concentrator. After four years, he’s made friends with everyone from STEM researchers to theater kids, but he considers the *Noser* to be a major source of community, as well as a way to bring Brown students together through a focus on satirizing campus events.
Nate Kublin: I do think that the Brown community is our biggest audience even though people outside of it can read. I think one of the biggest things that we do—the glue that binds—even if there's not a global pandemic going on, pointing out things that are happening and relatable to the Brown community. We make a reference that not everyone in the world would get, but every single person at Brown would get. We make some kind of joke about The Brown Daily Herald or we make some kind of joke about the V-Dub dining hall or about graduation. I don't think that's exclusionary of anyone at Brown, but if you don't go to Brown it might not be immediately obvious what the joke is.

Narrator: After examining the progression of the Noser from its birth to now, Nate says he’s seen significant changes that parallel the evolution of fellow comedy publication, The Jug.

Nate Kublin: When we go to socials and parties for the Noser they always bust out a box. They've kept one edition of the Noser, every single edition since it started. And if you look at the really old ones they get pretty heavy. I'm hesitant to use the word offensive, but there’s definitely stuff in there that a lot of people at Brown would label offensive. Things like jokes about bombing civilians during the Iraq war, or just like very… I think, insensitive. Especially once you start going back fifteen, twenty years ago into the backlogs, you can tell that it had a pretty different tone.

It wasn’t until a little over a decade ago that I think a couple people really took hold of the Noser. It went from just this freeform group of people writing things that they find funny into feeling more like a legitimate publication and it’s kind of held that form ever since and only improved upon the process, if not kept it constant.

Narrator: Nate says he’s aware that comedy is used in many different ways, but sees the Noser as an escape for students.

Nate Kublin: I think we're just trying to make something that's funny. And I think we're trying to... I think Last Week Tonight or The Daily Show take very topical things and make them manageable. But I think, minus this coronavirus-impacted edition, the Noser for the most part doesn't try to do that, where it's more of a distraction than like a coping mechanism or a way to process information. I think the Noser does a very good job of giving people a distraction and a break.

Up until two or three editions ago, the Noser had never mentioned Trump in a headline, which I thought was kind of shocking that we were able to go two and a half years of his presidency without talking about Trump. And I think that's just because, like, we didn't want to talk about it unless it was a very, very good headline, and it didn't feel that heavy to provoke, and it didn't feel
like a *Last Week Tonight* or Stephen Colbert monologue type joke where it’s trying to take jabs and break down what’s going on in the world or it's over-the-top nonsensical. But even the politics ones aside, a lot of the headlines that we're doing aren't—as a Brown student, I can say everything is inherently political—but the headlines that we do for the most part aren't overtly political.

**Narrator:** This role as a satirical oasis amongst the stress and anxiety of the college lifestyle is contrasted with *The Jug*’s more freeform and often politically-opinionated content.

**Nate Kublin:** I think the biggest thing is that the *Noser* really, really strictly adheres to the style. We are a newspaper, first and foremost. And then from there we try to make comedy fit to it. So if we have something that's absolutely hysterical and will make you laugh harder than you've ever laughed before, but would just not make sense in a newspaper, we would either have to cut the headline or find a way to change it to make it fit better because I think that is absolutely the top priority is adhering to the style. Because once you give up on the style and the format, the rest of it just kind of starts to crumble because we aren't just like a vague publication.

We are a newspaper that just happens to be funny. And I think that's the biggest thing. I think *The Jug* doesn't adhere to anything as strictly as that, it's kind of more of a collection of humorous writings over multiple different styles, which I think there is a space for, but I think it's also just very different from what the *Noser* is trying to do.

**Narrator:** The Editors-In-Chief at *The Jug*, Benjamin Doyle and Oscar Rosseau, feel similarly.

**Oscar Rousseau:** I think the easiest way that we distinguish ourselves is by contrast to what the *Noser* does, where they have a very satirizing-the-news angle, very similar to what *The Onion* does, whereas where we kind of cover the rest of the written comedy field.

**Benjamin Doyle:** Monologues, lists, short stories, plays, poems, just like prose humor, generally speaking. And we're also very art-oriented. *The Brown Jug* was the first Brown-RISD publication, like the first dual publication, I think during the 60s.

**Narrator:** Since its founding, *The Jug* has always included humorous cartoons, illustrations, and artwork to accompany its written work. During its short-lived revival in 1967, *The Jug* began to include RISD students on its staff, and the tradition stuck.

**Oscar Rousseau:** When you're reading it in print, you're really getting like a piece of complete work that has just been catered specifically in its order, in its presentation to Brown and
RISD students, but that could still apply at large. Very little of the humor that we write and the art that we illustrate is specific to Brown. That’s something that I think also sets us apart from other humor publications at Brown, is that we're not limiting ourselves to just making jokes for Brown students.

Benjamin Doyle: It’s sort of a crutch, and just comes off as elitist most of the time.

Narrator: Ironically, in its early days The Jug contained nothing but Brown references. And while the ads for Times Square hotels, new cars, and spring breaks to Paris definitely indicated a certain level of 20th-century aristocratic readership, today those same campus-themed jokes double as a kind of time capsule.

Reader: “It seems we don’t plant class ivy here at Brown. How do we expect to keep our traditional ivy in good repair unless each class plants a slip? Of course, it’s nothing to the Jug Board. We don’t care if Faunce Hall never gets covered with ivy. In fact we don’t care if it never gets built. We’re going to graduate anyway, before the last rivet is driven.”

Narrator: These are the words of one humorist in the 1930s, apparently in reference to an old Ivy League tradition of planting a new slip or sprig of ivy on campus for every graduating class. While quite pretentious and, arguably, not that amusing, it is funny to think of a time when Brown’s great architectural canons were still under construction. And the one advantage to Brown publications appealing to their own students, whatever the purpose or format, is that some writing truly is timeless.

Reader: “Brown senior applying for a position in corporate: ‘And will I have a chance to rise, sir?’ Corporate Executive: ‘Why, certainly. Every morning at 6am.’” [laugh track]

Narrator: There you have it, an abbreviated history of some of Brown’s dearest news publications at Brown, both from a silly and a serious perspective. Each tries to find their niche while grappling with their history and staying accountable to their audience. The one thing they all have in common is a love of writing, which writers and editors alike share through the engaging stories they produce each day, week, month, or semester.

Thanks so much to the Brown students who volunteered their stories. Once again, this has been a podcast production from Emilia and Ivy, so thanks for joining us while we Tell It Like It Is [applause track] [exit music plays].