

For the Love of Language: Interview with Kimberly Davis

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“The starving part of being a starving artist is not very romantic unless you do it for love of language.”

This bit of advice is from a recent email interview that I conducted with Kimberly Davis of [Sublime Design Studios](#) and [Madville Publishing](#). She also has the distinction of being an adjunct instructor in the First Year Writing Program at University of North Texas. Mrs. Davis, who was the first student to graduate from the Master of Fine Arts program at Sam Houston State University in 2015, has a litany of life experiences that have brought her to her present situation. Her journey through education has taken her from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, to the University of Miami in Florida, to our beloved Sam Houston State University, then to Columbia College Chicago and finally back to SHSU and Texas, where she has settled down to juggle her multiple careers. She has even, literally, sailed around the world and then came back to her roots in America. Through all of this, Mrs. Davis has taken her “love of language” and used it to shape a life filled with literary meaning while, at the same time, becoming a role model to the people around her. As you will see, her education took many wild turns but each of those changes in direction was instrumental in making her the person that she is today.

To begin with, Kimberly Davis’ college career started in 1978 at Stephens College in Missouri. She envisioned a future similar to Jacques Cousteau, so she began to study Marine Biology. After packing two years of classes into one, she settled into Key Largo, Florida, where she split her time between night classes at the University of Miami and working on dive boats during the daylight hours. She quickly became disenchanted with the career path of a Marine Biologist “when [she] discovered that those guys get PhDs to count fish eggs for the rest of their lives,” she told me.

Then she came here, to SHSU, where she took a sharp turn in her education to study music as an applied music major. She learned classical guitar and worked with the Jazz Choir doing arrangements and singing with them. Soon after this, she was introduced to an artist from Chicago and they married. Here, her path swerved north to Columbia College in Chicago. She earned a degree in Arts and Entertainment Media Management that taught her about [the business of producing and promoting art of all kinds.] At the time, she used her degree by working in the music business. Little did she know that this career path would be providing her with experience that she would need in her future endeavors as the owner of a small publishing company.

Her life took another thrilling turn when, after spending three years as a sound engineer in Chicago and then getting divorced, she ended up on the island of Nevis in the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean. She reinvented herself as a seamstress and worked for the hotels on St. Kitts and Nevis [sewing heavy canvas awnings, doing sail repairs, and upholstery]. This led to more nautical jobs on yachts that sailed around the world. On her travels, she met a “handsome Englishman” and they married. They settled down in Spain to begin their family but [family matters meant] they made the move back to [Kim’s home in] Texas.

Erroneously, Mrs. Davis had left Columbia College years before thinking that she hadn’t received her bachelor’s degree. Upon learning that she had indeed earned it, she made the decision to enter a graduate program. At this point, her children were almost grown and she was ready for the next step on her winding journey through life. So, as she was living close to SHSU, she researched her options there. She told me, “I’d written a book or two by then, and wanted to continue in either communications or creative writing.” She was pleased to find out that professor Scott Kaukonen, at SHSU, was just getting the MFA program up and running, so she applied, was accepted, and became the first student to graduate from the newly established program. During this time, she was first a graduate assistant and later Assistant to Paul Ruffin at Texas Review Press. Connections there led her to work with Goliad Review and Press.

During the uncharted course of her education, she started her freelance web designing business, Sublime Design Studio (2001).... She opened another small business called Madville Publishing after she left Texas Review Press in 2018. These two businesses are the culmination of her past experiences. She has been able to put her business knowledge and work ethic together with her people and writing skills to do something that she loves for people that she cares about. ...

When asked what her happiest memory is from Sam Houston State University, Mrs. Davis recalled the many times that she presented papers at conferences. She said, “several professors were instrumental in encouraging [her] to [do this]” including Helena Halmari, Paul Child, Bill Bridges, and Diane Dowdey. She says these conferences “introduced [her] to the wider world of academic writing.” She also shared pleasant memories of presentations by visiting writers that the Creative Writing Program at SHSU made possible. She credits her high school English teacher, Vincent D’Amico, as an influence in her choice to explore the path of English. His impact on her has been so lasting that she has remained in contact with him throughout the years.

Naturally, one of my questions to Mrs. Davis was to solicit any advice she might have for current English students at SHSU. She wrote back that she would give them “the same advice [she] has for

authors” which is “get a day job.” She informed me that there is plenty of *work* for writers and teachers, but none of it pays enough to live on. “Make sure you are going into this with your eyes wide open,” she advises. Also, she suggests that current students subscribe to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Read everything you can about what is going on with jobs in the humanities on University campuses now.” ... She points out that students must “understand that this work is not about the money, it’s about the love of the printed word.”

And this brings us back to the quote that began our journey into Kimberly Davis’ life. “The starving part of being a starving artist is not really very romantic unless you do it for love of language.” It is apparent that Kimberly Davis has taken her “love of language” with her throughout the winding journey of her life and she has picked up knowledge along the way that has shaped and molded her into the person that she is today. This dynamic teacher, entrepreneur and mom, now helps people to achieve their goals.