

“You’re not normal.”



I’ve gotten used to hearing many people tell me that over the years. It’s never really hit me how useful being different was until I started working on the presentation to the Alabama chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). The focus of the talk will be dissecting the announcement that led to the discontinuation of bowling, football, and rifle back on December 2, 2014. [The bio included in the description of the talk tells you a bit of my background](#). My fill-in stint for Regret the Error has prepared me well for this (I hope - thanks, [Craig!](#)). This is also my first public appearance as the

incoming president of the Birmingham Association of Black Journalists. I promise I’ll be able to focus on our first meeting of the year (it’ll be on Saturday, January 24 — a link will eventually live here) soon — well, starting tomorrow.

There are probably plenty of folks preparing to attend the session who are Googling me and looking at what I’ve written these last nine years. There’s a chance they’ve even seen [the CV I still need to make current over on Urban Conversations](#). In advance of the talk and some upcoming posts, I’d like to borrow [a page from Daniel O’Neill up in Chicago](#) and share some of the ethics and biases that have taken the journey with me.

**I’m a former student athlete.** Yes, somewhere in the deep, dark recesses of the NCAA databases there exists a set of stats for a left-handed utility player for the 1994 Savannah College of Art and Design men’s baseball team. We weren’t the best squad in the program’s history, but we weren’t the worst either. Depending on how the official scorer recorded my in-game appearances, there’s an outside chance I may be the school record holder in on-base percentage (albeit only because of a lack of plate appearances). Why? That’d be because of the screw in my left knee from discovering a condition during drills one day - the hard way.

I know all about going to practice and missing dinner in the cafeteria; having to lug books and T-squares (I was an architecture major at the time) on buses and planes; and (thanks to my injury) some of the additional headaches associated with rehab and a full course load. Granted, I played in NCAA Division III, so it was all about the degree - and the ribbing that still takes place from time to time online. I still hear from Coach though — [he’s currently an AD](#) (and also a former DIII conference commissioner).

**I’ve managed a few “real” P&Ls.** I started serving as general manager of a boutique hotel in Savannah, GA on October 1, 2001. I lasted nearly 13 months and held my own fairly well considering what had just happened at home in New York City. Actually, I had a top-performing property in the company. It’s not that I like numbers; I’m scared of them, so I tend to spend a lot more time with them to make sure they’re right. It still takes me forever to get through one, but I need to understand them. I got additional practice between 2002 - 2008 as an employee of economic development agencies working with small business owners both here and in Georgia as well as a consultant working with communities in Alabama and Colorado.

Here are a few other things specifically related to this talk -

- I am a Leadership UAB alum (2009);
- UAB provided (for free) the space for the last WordCamp Birmingham I served as lead organizer for (though we did have to pay for wireless access);
- I've helped raise money for WBHM during an on-air pledge drive;
- and I've served as a panelist for one of WBHM's Issues and Ales sessions.

Between this list and the bio, I hope you'll understand how I approached this topic. I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you in the coming days and weeks.

Cheers.