Okay. I hope you're all ready because this is "The Humble History of the Podcast" i.e. how did we get here? And luckily for you or not coincidentally my personal biography kind of ties in line with the podcasting sort of landscape. So I'm going to tell it from a first-person perspective. I hope that's exciting.

Okay way back in 2005. Me, personally, I read a book. It's a book. I would recommend you getting and I'm going to put it in the recommended reading section. It's five dollars on Amazon or other Indie bookstores. My favorite is The Strand. It's called Radio: An Illustrated Guide.

Why am I bothering to explain my particular beginnings? Because even though I went to journalism school, I did not study radio before getting into this. That's important and I'll come back to it.

In the mainstream world of media, at the time I was working for the Washington Post, some of these companies including the USA Today, the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal they were early adopters of something that was sort of bubbling up called podcasting where you just directly created a file in audio form and sent it out to your listeners. This was very very very different than radio. And that was a really good thing. It was a really exciting thing. It didn't have to sound like a you know broadcast announcer in a booth being this sort of ubiquitous source of knowledge. It could be kind of a room a room for experimentation. At the Washington Post we had three podcast that I worked on Aone where someone usually me literally read the Aone story, so people can catch up on the day's most important news.

The Politics Podcast was just a roundtable show with some of our political reporters. And we would do one off projects in terms of narration. The first one I worked on involved a shooting at Virginia Tech. So this was very experimental times, but because of that and related to that we had very limited technology. We use Audacity or Edition. Free software that came with other packages. We hand coded our RSS feeds and set them up to new servers via XML. This is not super important for you. But just so you understand that most of these used to be very handcrafted will help you understand why the podcasting space can be particularly precious because a lot of people have been in the game since they had to do it all by hand. You would you just fetch FTP to set it up, throw your files up on a server and a lot of podcast producers and media companies had their own podcast players.

So, what did that sound like? Well, it sounded very very interesting and very different than what we have now. It was some scripted shows, some things that sounded very much like radio. Some were magazine-style shows. Some were segment A is going to talk about swimming in you know, the fishing hole. Segment B is going to talk about Yemen. Some segments 3 is going to talk about a new book. Some of them were narrative. This was certainly the This American Life kind of style and then some were sort of QA panels kind of back-and-forth table conversations. If you look at the pictures on the right, you can see very very early iTunes. This is what it looked like this could possibly be rid of the reason that it didn't get adopted in a mass medium, but you can kind of see that the iTunes Store has obviously evolved well and beyond where it was, but this is essentially what people were sort of trying to catch on to.

Okay? 2009 - 2010 extinction level event. What happens is all these people who are experimenting, putting a cool quirky interesting kind of content, making stuff that sounds like radio. Making a lot of stuff that didn't sound like radio. A lot of it died out.

Why? Because there was no mass adoption. People weren't listening in the numbers that would sort of justify the medium. We had no measurements, so we couldn't tell, we could tell many people were downloading a file but not how many people were listening to it. There was no benchmarking. So I would say my podcast is number one and iTunes. And somebody else would say my podcast is number one and iTunes and you would have no idea what those things meant. No automation as we just walk through. Every file was hand coded and hand uploaded via XML, not a particularly arduous process, but it didn't make it much easier. And there was no diversity of content in terms of who got to be a host. For the most part it was still very very still very dependent upon people with access and power, sort of perpetuating that. And all of this led to the fact that there was no money in it.

So what was left? The things you'd expect. A few very very popular public radio shows and terrestrial radio shows these still dominate the charts. This is your This American Life, Radio Labs, Joe Rogan. These are shows that basically could be on the radio because a lot of them used to be. And some of them still are. But they also do very well as podcasts. I don't consider these podcasts as much as I consider these radio distributed digitally, but that's kind of a conversation for another day.

And then if you go to any podcast conferences, or you go deep into the archives, you'll see a lot of shows that sort of very B to B. They're done in, there are a lot of them are about marketing. Some of them are about tech. It's sort of hobbyists with podcast, which is great. But the storytelling leaves a lot to be desired and but because they were so cheap and easy to make they also kind of persisted and these are the people who didn't give up when they didn't make money because they didn't have to make money. Where's the terrestrial radio and public radio folks were making money through radio, so they kind of just could afford to keep distributing podcast through digital and getting good numbers, even though the money wasn't there. In some cases, at WNYC, we were giving Radiolab away for free for people who would sponsor a spot on its radio program. The idea of doing that now where you could command a six-figure sum for a pre-roll ad all things. I'll explain in a little bit is bananas.