



- Speaker 1: [00:03](#) This is the *Thank You, 72* podcast brought to you by the Wisconsin Alumni Association. This podcast salutes outstanding Badgers from Wisconsin’s 72 counties. It’s also our way of saying thank you to the people of this state for sending their best and brightest to the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Here’s your host, Tod Pritchard.
- Tod Pritchard: [00:21](#) For almost two decades, Allegheny County native and UW alum Greta Van Susteren dominated the cable news airwaves. She anchored *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* on the Fox News Channel.
- Greta V.S. [00:39](#) Welcome, I’m Greta Van Susteren. Tonight, why did former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright say President Bush made a big mistake lumping ...
- Tod Pritchard: [00:47](#) Twenty-five years ago, a double murder and the ensuing “trial of the century” against O. J. Simpson changed the trajectory of Van Susteren’s life.
- In today’s podcast, Greta shares her biggest regret when she left Fox News, the new project she’s working on now, and much more. Van Susteren was born in Appleton on June 11, 1954. She graduated from UW–Madison in 1976, and Georgetown Law in 1979. I spoke to Greta by phone from Washington, D.C. She began by talking about her life growing up in Appleton.
- Greta V.S.: [01:22](#) What’s interesting mostly is how it relates to the economy. When I grew up one of my friend’s fathers owned the grocery store, another one owned the office supply, another one owned the bank, another was captain of the police force, my father was a judge. It was sort of interesting. It was at a time when we didn’t have Staples or Giant or Safeway or these big chains. I liked it because the community really cared about the community because that’s what the whole economy was.
- Greta VS.: [01:51](#) I suspect it’s changed, or I know it’s changed because now you’ve got a bunch of chains in there, so it’s lost a lot of its small-town nature, but I think that’s true all across America.

Tod Pritchard: [02:01](#) Tell me about your father a little bit. Urban was a judge, campaign strategist for Senator Joe McCarthy, and obviously, you were just a little child during the McCarthy era, but then —

Greta V.S: [02:12](#) Well, actually, Joe McCarthy died when I was three.

Tod Pritchard: [02:15](#) Yes.

Greta V.S: [02:16](#) I don't know Joe McCarthy.

Tod Pritchard: [02:16](#) Right, right. You were so young.

Greta V.S: [02:18](#) My father was his campaign manager in 1946 when I think he beat Robert La Follette in the primary, McCarthy. Then, once elected to the Senate, my father elected not to go to Washington with McCarthy but decided to stay in Appleton, which was a pretty smart decision.

Tod Pritchard: [02:35](#) Yeah. Did that have much of an impact on you growing up? Not really, probably, huh?

Greta V.S: [02:40](#) Not much because I was only three, so I didn't ... Not much. Interesting, though, when I came out to Washington, D.C., the first summer I spent with Joe McCarthy's widow, living at her house. I was only going to spend one night, and I ended up spending the whole summer. She was significantly younger than McCarthy. I think she was about 26 when she married him, and probably not so much older when he died, so she was in her early 50s, and I got to know her. She died in 1979, right after I graduated law school.

Tod Pritchard: [03:10](#) What was she like?

Greta V.S: [03:12](#) She was an artist and very exciting. She was an attractive woman. She knew everybody in Washington, which made her even more exciting to me. She knew Edward Bennett Williams, a very famous lawyer who had been Joe McCarthy's lawyer way back when. She knew senators and congressmen, and it was exciting to know Jeannie McCarthy Minetti.

Tod Pritchard: [03:42](#) That's when ... What time of life was that for you, when you were in Washington?

Greta V.S: [03:43](#) After my junior year of college, I came out to Washington to be an intern for Senator Gaylord Nelson, Democratic senator from Wisconsin. He was, I think he was chairman of the Senate Small Business, Senate Select Committee on Small Business. I was an intern in his office, and that's when I spent the summer living

with her. A typical Washington D.C. intern experience, which is nothing but exciting.

- Tod Pritchard: [04:05](#) Oh, yeah. Absolutely, and of course —
- Greta V.S.: [04:07](#) The funny thing is that, this is the good thing is that ... It's very popular. Softball is very popular in D.C., coed softball, at least it was then. I played on Senator Gaylord Nelson's team, and as a girl/woman, I could hit.
- Greta V.S.: [04:22](#) The following summer, they never offered internships to us for a second time, because they wanted to give other people an opportunity, but you had to have a certain number of women on the field. The following summer, they offered me another internship because I could hit, not because I was necessarily such a great intern. I declined it and did something else, but I always call it "my baseball scholarship."
- Tod Pritchard: [04:45](#) What made you decide to come to the University of Wisconsin?
- Greta V.S.: [04:46](#) It was the only place to go. When I grew up, you just, you went to two places. I went to a Catholic high school. You either went to Marquette or Wisconsin, those were your two choices. Nobody ever went out of state or thought of going out of state. Madison was probably just about one of the most exciting places on earth. Especially, this was on the tail end of the antiwar demonstrations. Madison was just, like I said, one of the most exciting places in the world. Most interesting place, where diverse discussions, debate people from all over.
- Greta V.S.: [05:15](#) I remember seeing my first *New York Times* newspaper in the Memorial Union. I'd never seen that in Appleton. My mother was a New Yorker, and she oftentimes talked about the *New York Times*, and I actually think she got it on Sundays, but it was not like it is now. Madison had people from all over the world.
- Greta V.S.: [05:32](#) It was a microcosm of the whole world. You'd go there, you'd meet people from all different countries all over the world, studying all sorts of different topics. Plus, you'd meet people even from around Wisconsin that you didn't know. I met people whose parents were doctors and lawyers, but I also met people whose parents worked in Point Brewery or other, paper mills. It was just about the greatest place to be.
- Tod Pritchard: [05:56](#) What's your favorite memory of UW—Madison?
- Greta V.S.: [05:59](#) My first night there I went to the Memorial Union. When I started college, 18 was the drinking age, it had just recently

switched. It was always 18, I think, for beer. I went out on the Memorial Union. It was a beautiful, beautiful August night. It was absolutely spectacular on the lake, and I got a bottle ... I sat down, had a bottle of beer. They put up a big screen and played some black and white Charlie Chaplin movies, and someone played a piano to it. They were silent movies. It was just about one of the most beautiful nights in my whole life.

Tod Pritchard: [06:33](#)

What did you major in here?

Greta V.S: [06:36](#)

Majored in economics. I bounced around. I bounced around, primarily see what fit my schedule, mostly. I was a typical student in that I didn't come in with any sort of mission. Although, I wanted to go to law school, so it didn't matter what you majored in, but I chose my courses by how they fit my schedule. I didn't want to get up too early in the morning, like many students. I also took them to meet certain things that I wanted to do. For instance, I went on the world's best trip ever the summer of 1973 with the geology department at Wisconsin.

Greta V.S: [07:13](#)

I went to the Yukon territory, and we climbed mountains and glaciers and studied stones and rocks and everything else. I got six credits. It was unbelievable. It was, I learned more in those six weeks, or whatever it was, than any other time, I think, in my whole academic career. Naturally, I wanted to be a geology major, but then I came back and a lot of my friends who had gone on this spectacular geology expedition were now becoming anthropology majors because they wanted to go to Nepal, because there was another trip.

Greta V.S: [07:47](#)

I think, the first one was Professor Lowden. I think the second was Professor Hitchcock. I'm sure they're long gone now ... To Nepal, so they all switched to become anthropology majors. I was likewise going to do that, although I found anthropology exceedingly difficult, 101. It was clear that I was never going to have a career in it, but I was going to switch majors so I could go on this trip. Instead, I ended up going to Washington to be an intern with Senator Gaylord Nelson, as I noted.

Greta V.S: [08:15](#)

There are just so many phenomenal experiences you can have at Madison, or through their long arm of doing other things like Nepal or the Yukon territory. I should say, I ended up majoring in economics, and it was somewhat of self-defense. Because the one thing that I always thought, academically, is that ...

Greta V.S: [08:37](#)

I've taught at Georgetown Law School as an adjunct professor for at least a dozen years, and it's confirmed what my thought was then. Is that you write a paper in history or English, and the

grade really is subjective. I know this from my own experience teaching. What's the difference between an A and an A minus or B plus? I mean, it's really hard to tell. On a written paper, it's very subjective.

- Greta V.S: [08:58](#) I wanted to go to law school, so I wanted to control, control my grades, so I switched to something, to a discipline that I felt was much easier to control my grades, and that was to economics, which was pretty much, the grading was not so much subjective. It was pretty much right or wrong.
- Tod Pritchard: [09:16](#) You graduated from a UW–Madison, you went to Georgetown Law, and then did you start practicing law right away after that?
- Greta V.S: [09:23](#) I did. I actually wanted to go to Wisconsin for law school, but got wait-listed. Georgetown took me right away. I'll never forget this. I talked to a woman named Doyle, who's a famous Wisconsin name, and it was a rather unpleasant interview because she, obviously, didn't like my father, because the first thing she said to me, was I related to my father? I said, "Yes," and she said, "Oh." Anyway, I always wondered whether I got wait-listed based on that interview.
- Greta V.S: [09:48](#) Anyway, so I got wait-listed at Wisconsin's law school, ended up going to Georgetown. Right after I graduated from Georgetown, I wanted to get a second law degree, which is called an LLM. The E. Barrett Prettyman/Stuart Stiller Fellowship. I was told that I didn't get it right after I graduated law school, but I should go do something, come back, and apply. I got a federal clerkship out west, and then for a million reasons ... Then took the bar in July, and was supposed to start the clerkship sometime in November, but for a bunch of reasons, it didn't happen.
- Greta V.S: [10:24](#) The judge actually wanted to go to the 10th Circuit, and his senator, he told me, his senator said, "Could you put someone on from my office to be your clerk?" He didn't want to offend the senator, so he said, "Will you wait a year?" I said, "Sure," and in the meantime, I got the fellowship, so I did a two-year fellowship at Georgetown, an LLM fellowship called the E. Barrett Prettyman/Stuart Stiller Fellowship. Did that for two years, and then I hung out a shingle with one of my classmates in the program there. There were five us fellows, and one of them Steve Milich and I hung out a shingle and practiced law for about 10 years.
- Speaker 1: [11:00](#) You're listening to the *Thank you, 72* podcast. The Wisconsin Alumni Association is honoring amazing Badgers from Wisconsin's 72 counties. For more amazing alumni stories, visit

ThankYou72.org. That's ThankYou72.org. Now, back to our interview with Allegheny County native and UW grad Greta Van Susteren.

- Forman of the O. J. Simpson Trial: [11:19](#) Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, in the matter of the People of the State of California versus Orenthal James Simpson, case number BA097211, we the jury in the above-entitled action find the defendant, Orenthal James Simpson, not guilty of the crime of murder in violation of Penal Code Section 187A, a felony upon Nicole Brown Simpson, a human being, as charged in count one of the information.
- Tod Pritchard: [11:46](#) Twenty-five years ago, June 12TH, 1994, a tragic event happened that changed your life in a way. I'm sure you had no idea it was about to. Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman were murdered, and Nicole's husband, of course, the football legend, O. J. Simpson, was arrested and tried for those murders. That really, like I just said, just really changed your life. You became a CNN legal analyst. Tell me about that experience.
- Greta V.S: [12:13](#) It actually backs up a little bit, which people don't realize, is that I was, when I was in D.C., during those 10 years that I was practicing law and as an adjunct professor at Georgetown, I was trying cases in my law firm. Sometime in about 1990, the mayor got arrested here, Marion Barry, for a cocaine-related charge. The local media wanted someone to explain, on the courthouse steps, what cross-examination is, what opening statement is.
- Greta V.S: [12:42](#) Of course, any lawyer can do that standing on his head, but they knew me because they had been following my very high-profile murder cases that I tried, the crews. These are the people with the cameras outside the courthouse, so they asked me to do that. I became known to the local community doing local TV, just explaining very fundamental things about trials. They couldn't bring cameras into the courtroom.
- Greta V.S: [13:05](#) Then about six months later in November or December of that same year, William Kennedy Smith, who is a Kennedy relative, had been arrested the April before for allegedly raping a woman down in Palm Beach, and CNN was going to go gavel-to-gavel with the trial, because you do have cameras in the courtroom in Florida. They called me up, so that's when I did two or three weeks then to cover the trial. That's really when I got my start, pretty much, nationally. Then, of course, then O. J. Simpson in June of 1994. Wasn't it? 1994.
- Tod Pritchard: [13:45](#) You were on the air pretty much every day with Roger Cossack, right?

- Greta V.S: [13:49](#) Roger was in LA. Roger practiced law in California. He later moved to D.C. to be part of the CNN show we later cohosted. I sat in a small room on Capitol Hill in the CNN Bureau, watching it on a feed, the trial, and so I saw everything on a feed. People thought I was out in California. We weren't trying to hide the fact that I wasn't, but people just assumed that. Roger was in California, in the studio, not in a courtroom. I was in the studio in D.C. We did gavel-to-gavel. The network would go to commercial, but we would still have the live feed, so we watched the whole trial, both of us.
- Roger Cossack: [14:29](#) Well, I know that Greta differs with me, and Greta, I'm glad you're back there on the East Coast, but I think this evidence is coming in.
- Greta V.S: [14:34](#) Well, I think Roger, you're probably right. The judge will allow it in, but that's because I think it's difficult for a judge to look the prosecution in the eye and say, "Police officers, I know you worked very hard, but in this particular case, you violated Mr. Simpson's rights. For that reason, I have to take the extreme step, which I'm mandated to do by the U.S. Constitution, and eliminate any evidence you seized after an unconstitutional entry." It's a very tough thing for a judge to do. I hope that in this particular occasion, if the judge does see it that way, the judge has the courage to do the right thing.
- Tod Pritchard: [15:11](#) How did you keep that, just day after day, how did you keep the intensity of that? How did you just ... I mean, I would think being —
- Greta V.S: [15:15](#) Can I tell you? TV is a million times easier than practicing law. Sitting there watching a trial and explaining what's going on is so much easier than the actual responsibility of being the trial lawyer, so to me, it was a lark. Plus, when you practice, you have to worry, things about like paying your staff, paying for the fax machine, the lights. TV is a million times easier, and think about this. You don't have people's lives in your hands. If you make a mistake, you embarrass yourself or you shame yourself. If you make a mistake while you're practicing law, you could hurt somebody's life, so to me, it was a lark. It was so much easier.
- Tod Pritchard: [15:54](#) That lark turned into a career, really, for you, right? Obviously, because —
- Greta V.S: [15:59](#) Yes. Unexpectedly. Because when I was growing up, the only lawyer on TV was Perry Mason, and that, of course, was fiction. Yes, it accidentally turned into a career for me. Not one I ever

intended to have. I liked practicing law. My idea of a lawyer goes back to Appleton, Wisconsin, where you hang a shingle on a door, and you wait for the people to come in.

- Tod Pritchard: [16:20](#) You worked at CNN for several years after that. You had a show with Roger and then you —
- Greta V.S: [16:22](#) Then another show.
- Tod Pritchard: [16:26](#) Then another show, right?
- Greta V.S: [16:27](#) Right.
- Tod Pritchard: [16:27](#) Then in 2002, you negotiated a deal to go to Fox News. I believe Roger Ailes approached you, and you were at Fox for *On the Record with Great Van Susteren* for 14 years.
- Greta V.S: [16:40](#) Sort of. Here's what happened, is that in January of 2001, AOL bought CNN. And if you've ever gone through a corporate reorganization, it is brutal to the people who work there. They were firing my friends left, right, and center, and it was very unpleasant. It was, most of our time, we used to spend 100 percent of our time talking about our shows and how to do a better job or what we were going to do. It became people talking in the halls, 75 percent of the time, saying, "Who's getting fired? Who's suffering?" It was just awful.
- Greta V.S: [17:14](#) In September of that year, I had a window where I could talk to somebody else if I wanted to. I notified CNN that I was going to take advantage of the window in my contract that allowed me to, and I contacted Roger Ailes. I didn't even know who Fox News was, to tell you the truth. When I was at CNN, nobody paid attention to Fox or MSNBC. They launched in July and October of 1996, and they were so inconsequential. We didn't even get the ratings from them, we didn't care about them.
- Greta V.S: [17:46](#) Anyway, I thought, "Well, I'll go back to practicing law. Maybe I'll see what Roger Ailes at Fox, what they have." I had never even watched Fox at this point. I called Roger and he said, "Come see me," and so I got on a plane, and with my husband. We were on the runway at National Reagan Airport on September 11th, about 9:00 in the morning or 8:30 in the morning. Naturally, our plane never took off. They held us, and for obvious reasons, because first the plane hit one of the World Trade Center buildings. Then they hit another. My husband and I then, the plane was brought back to the terminal.

- Greta V.S: [18:16](#) We got off, and we went to our car, on the roof of National Airport. We always park on the roof so we don't lose our cars, because otherwise, you forget where you park when you're in and out of the parking lot, and we're in and out of the airport so often. The space had been dead silent because they had stopped all the air traffic. All of a sudden, we heard a plane, and it was like ... I looked up in the air, which is where you look for a plane, and didn't see anything.
- Greta V.S: [18:42](#) Then I heard an engine roar, and then I heard a horrible explosion. All of a sudden, a black plume of smoke comes out of the Pentagon, which is only about five blocks away, and you can ... It was right over the top of two buildings, was the Pentagon. We knew it was the Pentagon, but we thought it'd been a bomb.
- Greta V.S: [18:58](#) This huge black cloud went straight up, and we didn't know if we were about to get bombed or not, but it was the weirdest thing. Because it was a bright, sunny day, but the bright cloud had this weird glitter in it, like this sparkling glitter. It was so bizarre. What I've come to learn later is that the tiny pieces of the airplane skin were in this black cloud, the sun was catching it, but it looked like a cloud of ... a black cloud with a bunch of sparkle and glitter in it.
- Greta V.S: [19:23](#) Anyway, so I returned to CNN, and it wasn't until sometime in December, when things had somewhat quieted down in the news business. We'd gone through a lot of other things. We'd gone through 911, anthrax, a bombing in Afghanistan. It was still all ongoing stories on the anthrax, of course, being delivered to news organizations ... when I went back up to see Roger Ailes, and he seemed like a nice enough guy. I mean, I didn't know him.
- Greta V.S: [19:48](#) He asked me to join Fox at a lesser amount, but what I appreciated was the fact that it seemed that the place was not in total chaos, and CNN was in total chaos, which naturally, so this is not so unusual. If you've gone through any corporate reorganization, you know what I mean, and so I went to Fox. I had never seen Fox. I don't think I'd ever watched Fox when I decided to go there.
- Tod Pritchard: [20:12](#) Well, you were there for 14 years, and you had a really —
- Greta V.S: [20:14](#) Fourteen and a half.
- Tod Pritchard: [20:14](#) Fourteen and a half, and you had such a unique program, because you did everything. You did financial news, politics. You

interviewed conservatives and liberals, which of course, for Fox they have, obviously, a reputation of being a more conservative outlook, but your program was pretty straight forward.

- Greta V.S: [20:32](#) I like to think of it as very Midwestern, very Wisconsin. I was in Washington, the headquarters is in New York, and nobody ever told me at Fox, not once, what to say or do. If you didn't like my show, you got to blame me 100 percent. For 14 and a half years, I traveled the world. I went to North Korea three times, all over Africa, Sudan, Middle East. Went to Afghanistan, went to Iraq. I mean, I went everywhere. All over Western Europe, everywhere. I got to report the news. I spent a lot of time down in New Orleans during Katrina. I mean, it really was an extraordinary experience.
- Greta V.S: [21:05](#) Let me just jump ahead, is that when in July of 2016 when Fox blew up, it was shocking. Not just to me, but to everybody else, is that most of us, like we had no idea. I read stories about how people at Fox were told what to say or do. I'm willing to accept that, but it just never happened to me. I had an hour, and I had a budget, and a great staff.
- Greta V.S: [21:31](#) I had an exciting time. When Fox blew up, I had a peculiar situation, in that I had 60 days in my contract to leave, that's all. Because under my contract it said if there's a CEO that left, I had 60 days to decide whether to stay or not. I had that in my contract, because I'd gone through that hell when AOL came in and bought ... AOL bought CNN and was firing all my friends. It was terrible to watch my friends, some leaving in tears. I didn't want to go through that again.
- Greta V.S: [22:04](#) Now I'm at Fox. I have 60 days to make a decision or not. I'd had 14 and a half wonderful years, but was it going to be hell, with the turnover? I had nothing ... I mean Roger Ailes, I had lunch with Roger Ailes once a year, so my involvement with, 14 and half years, was minimal. He never bothered me, never bothered my show. Anyway, I elected to leave, so on the like three days before the 60 days expired, I gave notice, and I left.
- Tod Pritchard: [22:33](#) You never really had any —
- Greta V.S: [22:36](#) By the way, by the way —
- Tod Pritchard: [22:37](#) Go ahead.
- Greta V.S: [22:39](#) Under the 60 days, I was also obliged to stay another 60 days, which I expected to do, which I expected would enable me to say goodbye to the viewers. Fox got mad at me, and wouldn't

let me say goodbye to the viewers, and took me off the air immediately, so I never got to say goodbye to the viewers, which I always felt bad about.

- Tod Pritchard: [22:56](#) Yeah. Because you had such a loyal following. That is sad that you were not able to do that.
- Greta V.S: [23:03](#) Yeah, but anyway, I had a great time there. My experience is just so much different than what I hear others.
- Tod Pritchard: [23:08](#) Yes. Some of our listeners may understand. Roger Ailes had a lot of allegations thrown at him, and by a lot of Fox employees, and so the wheels really came —
- Greta V.S: [23:20](#) They were electrifying. I remember being at the Republican Convention, because we cover the conventions. First we go to the Republican one, and then the Democrat. Much of this was unfolding while we were at the Republican Convention, that 60-day period. We would stand around, a group of ... because the media was in one collected area. You'd have the Fox area, the CNN area, *New York Times* area. We'd sit there in the Fox area, and we'd all stand around the computer terminal reading these stories about Fox, and it's like, it was shocking to all of us, or at least to many of us.
- Tod Pritchard: [23:51](#) You left Fox.
- Greta V.S: [23:53](#) Right.
- Tod Pritchard: [23:54](#) Now you're on to some really great adventures, right? You're a contributor for the Voice of America. You have a program called *Plugged in with Greta Van Susteren*. Tell me a little bit about that, what that's been like for you.
- Greta V.S: [24:06](#) First I did six months at MSNBC, and I will say this, is that my ratings were going up. No one said I lied, no one said I sexually harassed, nobody said I got facts wrong. Everybody said I did a good job, but they fired me in less than six months. I'll leave it at that. When I left MSNBC or got fired from MSNBC, I needed to figure out what to do. I got a phone call, immediately, from someone who was part of the Annenberg School at USC, wanted me to be a fellow out there. It was something like a day later or something, and I said I didn't know but, "I'll meet you," and we met. We happened to be in the same town, so we met.
- Greta V.S: [24:46](#) He told me about Voice of America, which I hadn't paid much attention to over my life. I knew about it, but I'd been very much involved in domestic news gathering. He said, "You'd like

the person who's the director. Why don't you go have lunch with her? You've got plenty of time." You certainly have a lot, plenty of time. When you're fired, you got a lot of time.

Greta V.S: [25:06](#) I went over and had lunch with her, and I found Amanda Bennett fascinating. She's a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. She's the director of the VOA. She'd lived in China for a number of years. We got to talking, and I offered to, if they would like, to volunteer. Because I didn't want to ... I wasn't looking for a job at that point. I didn't want to work for the government.

Greta V.S: [25:28](#) When you get fired, your life gets turned upside down. You aren't sure what you want to do. I volunteered to do a weekly show called *Plugged In*, which I've been doing for well over a year. It broadcasts all around the world. It's translated into Farsi and broadcast in Tehran. It's translated into Korean, into Russian. It's all over Africa. Under the VOA charter, dating back —

Greta V.S: [25:54](#) VOA started back in the, I think, the '40s, as a way to get behind the Iron Curtain. It was radio and short-wave. Over the years, it expanded, but in about 1997 or something, when Congress was taking a look at it, and when it was getting into TV as part of a charter, it said that it couldn't broadcast inside the United States. The United States government administration, whether Republican or Democrat, couldn't tell VOA what to say or do, giving it complete independence because it's paid for by the taxpayers, and there's always, you don't want state-sponsored news.

Greta V.S: [26:27](#) Now, of course, on the flip side, commercial news has got its problems as well, because they're interested in the bottom line sometimes, which poisons some news organizations. Anyway, so my show is once a week, broadcast outside the United States, but it is brought into, it's brought into VOA website by streaming. You can watch the whole show on www.VOANews.com. It is translated, I guess, into something like, I don't know, 45 languages. I mean, it's broadcast all over the world, all over the globe, so it's a fascinating experience for me.

Greta V.S: [27:04](#) I've been to, I went to Singapore and interviewed President Trump on North Korea, during the first summit. I went to Argentina for the G20 and interviewed President Trump. Probably, the thing that I really enjoy about Voice of America, besides the fact that the journalists are from all over the world, so I meet the most fascinating people you can imagine. Meet people who used to work in Russia, but their spouse got

murdered, so now they live here in the United States. I mean, just these incredible stories. These journalists, they're very deep experiences.

- Greta V.S: [27:37](#) I did a documentary with Voice of America on the Rohingya. That is the Muslim group that has, the Myanmar military has pushed them out of Myanmar and into Bangladesh, and they've done it with ethnic cleansing and genocide. They have pushed them into Bangladesh. There are so many stories about the Myanmar military ripping children out of mothers' arms and throwing them into fires in front of them as they were doing this. Of course, the world said after the Holocaust is that, "Never again." Well, it's happening again during our lifetime, and the world is largely ignoring it.
- Greta V.S: [28:12](#) I've been there now twice, and I did a documentary, which is called *Displaced*, by VOA, which is on YouTube. What we do is we put the spotlight on this crisis. Thank you to the Holocaust Museum here, who has condemned this as genocide. Thank you to the United Nations, who has condemned this as genocide. To the House of Representatives, to the Senate that's imposed sanctions. There are a lot of people, but it's very slow to try to fix a crisis that's happening in our lifetime as we talk.
- Greta V.S: [28:43](#) As far as VOA, what I'm extremely proud about is being part of this organization that is putting the spotlight on this genocide. I dare say, I regret that with the exception of someone like Nick Kristof at the *New York Times*, there's not much of a spotlight put on this genocide.
- Tod Pritchard: [29:00](#) Yeah, that's awful.
- Greta V.S: [29:02](#) Yes.
- Tod Pritchard: [29:03](#) Congratulations to you, by the way. You have a new gig on top of your Voice of America duties, which is the new chief national political analyst for Gray Television. They own stations all around the country, including here in Wisconsin and in Madison, Eau Claire, Green Bay, and Wausau. Tell us about what that role is going to be like.
- Greta V.S: [29:15](#) Well, yeah, I have to appreciate the fact that one of them is WBAY in Green Bay, which, that's the station I grew up on, so that's really fun. It's actually, if you look a little deeper into the press release, it's sort of buried in the press release, is besides being their national political — chief national political analyst — is I'm going to have two syndicated shows with them, to be

announced. That's sort of a big secret, and that will be announced in April, which is really sort of the fun thing.

Greta V.S: [29:50](#) Because Gray TV owns 145 stations, having merged with Raycom, across the United States. They have them, not just in Wisconsin, but they have them in Alaska, Hawaii, South Carolina, Florida, New England, all over the Midwest. Here's the exciting thing. Think about this. Is that they have two stations in Iowa, I think, three or four in Wisconsin. Both huge political states for 2020, very important.

Greta V.S: [30:16](#) When Hillary Clinton ran for New York senator in 2000, one of the hardest things for us at CNN and Fox and MSNBC, was to get her as a guest. The reason why is that when you run for office, you want to reach out to the voters. The cables, while they have significant audiences, they're pretty much down the Eastern Seaboard. You're not going to find a lot of Iowa or Wisconsin voters, necessarily, with cable, and a lot of people have cut the cord too.

Greta V.S: [30:42](#) What these candidates want to do is they want to talk to the local media because that's where the voters are, and because everybody gets the local broadcast media, because it's free. The exciting thing for me is that with Gray, is that I'm going to be able to interview all these 2020 candidates. I think they're going to want to come to me more now that I'm at Gray, because they're going to reach the voters of Wisconsin, they're going to reach the voters of Iowa. This is perfect for me ... or the voters in South Carolina.

Greta V.S: [31:09](#) We're just sort of building this role. I got to tell you, the Gray people, first of all, the COO, Bob Smith, is from Madison. Every time I see him, we get to talk Packers, Badgers. This is just really fun for me.

Tod Pritchard: [31:26](#) That's awesome. Yeah, and that's, you're spot on with that assessment. I think you're right. That will be a great place to be for candidates to reach out to those local affiliates.

Greta V.S: [31:37](#) Plus one other thing is that, look, I had wonderful years at cable. I had a lot of interesting times. I do think something has changed in cable. I don't know if it's me getting older or if cable has somewhat gotten so partisan. I don't mind good, robust debates from either side, but it's got a tinge of nasty to it. At least, I think, not everybody, but there are some who have loud voices that could somehow poison it for the others. I just think that cable, and with the cost of cable, and everyone cutting the

cord and going to online is that, I just think the future is, obviously, more online and with broadcast, which is free.

Greta V.S: [32:24](#) This is an exciting adventure at Gray. I'm blown away at how complicated broadcast is compared to cable. Cable, we have one place to go, and it's broadcast the same time every place around the country. When you have broadcast, like think of Gray. They have 145 stations, and they've got different call numbers, different sizes, different anchors. It is, I mean, it's so complex to me, and it's a whole different business in so many ways, that it's an exciting adventure for me.

Tod Pritchard: [32:57](#) What do you think the future is for television news?

Greta V.S: [33:00](#) I think the American voters are getting pretty fed up with TV news. I'm a little bit worried that they're just going to turn us off, and so we have to earn a lot of the trust and respect and credibility. The best way to do that is by getting it right. When the president insults the media, I think it's better to rise above it and do a better job, and not take the bait and get in a fight with him. This is a very contentious time.

Tod Pritchard: [33:25](#) One final question for you, Greta. What does Wisconsin mean to you?

Greta V.S: [33:29](#) Well, kind of the best example is people say to me, I'm traveling someplace, "Where are you from?" I go, "Wisconsin," and I've been living here in Washington for over 40 years. I mean, I'm from Wisconsin. That's just the way I look at it. I have the obligatory cheesehead. Actually, I have two. I've got to cheer the Packers. I watch the Badgers. I love it when the Badgers beat the Terrapins, because my husband went to University of Maryland, is a Terrapin. I have this idea in my head, because I grew up among the most decent people in Appleton and Madison, is that it's a very decent place, and I really like that.

Greta V.S: [34:09](#) I think the university ... When I went to Wisconsin, I think my tuition for the semester, just tuition, not room and board was something like, it was less than \$300 a semester. That's because all the taxpayers in the state of Wisconsin were so proud of the university, and the university was so proud to keep the cost down. They wanted every kid in Wisconsin to have a chance to go to college. That's just sort — it spoke so highly. I realize that now it's more expensive. Times have changed, but I've always been proud of the University of Wisconsin. I'm a Badger.

Greta V.S: [34:46](#) I had, I actually spent more years at Georgetown. I had spent three years as a JD student and two years as an LM, that's five,

and I spent four at Wisconsin, but I consider myself a Badger and not a Hoya. I hope there are not Georgetown people listening to this. I love Madison, I love the university, and I'm proud of it. I do have a brother-in-law though, who sinfully went to Michigan, and one of my sister's children, sinfully, went to Michigan. My brother and I, my sister spent some time at Wisconsin. My brother and I graduated from there. I'm just proud of the University of Wisconsin. I'm proud to say I'm a Badger, which is, all these years later, that seems like an odd thing to say, but I'm proud of it.

- Tod Pritchard: [35:30](#) No, it's not odd at all. We're proud of you too, Greta. Thank you so much for joining us on this podcast today.
- Greta V.S: [35:35](#) Thank you.
- Speaker 1: [35:37](#) Thanks for listening to the *Thank You, 72* podcast. For more interviews with amazing UW alumni, visit ThankYou72.org. That's ThankYou72.org.