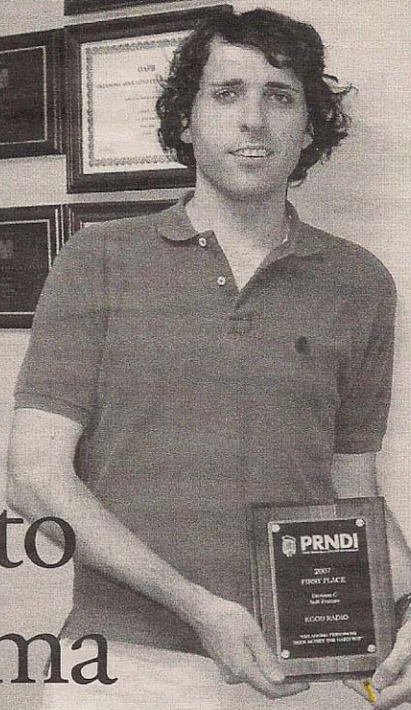


Passage to Oklahoma



Award-winning KGOU reporter Scott Gurian fished out some of the best news stories in Oklahoma and put them over National Public Radio's airwaves. But now, the New Jersey native heads back East.

BY BEN FENWICK

KGOU news director Scott Gurian remembers the first story he did when he joined the Oklahoma public radio station back 2004 — it was a comparison piece between his native New Jersey and his soon-to-be-new home.

He asked New Yorkers for advice.

"I spent an afternoon walking around Times Square and telling people 'Hey, I'm moving. Do you have any advice for me?'" Gurian said. "We did some word association, like 'What do you think when I say, California? Massachusetts? OK, Oklahoma?' Someone actually said 'The Wizard of Oz.' I edited it together and played it back for Hardy Watkins, who at that time was the director of tourism. He got a kick out of it, hearing what people in Times Square thought of Oklahoma."

Mostly, what the hardcore Easterners had to say about Gurian's journey to a "flyover" state was "What?"

But, after four years in Oklahoma, Gurian prepares to head back East.

"I will be sad to leave. I will miss being here," Gurian said. "I don't regret for one minute. People back East say, 'Oklahoma? Why would you go to Oklahoma?' I really have enjoyed my time here."

Come Friday, Gurian will have his last day at KGOU, then pack up and move back to Jersey. He is stepping down as news director following a death in the family, with estate affairs he must return to settle. ("It was the only way to do it," he said).

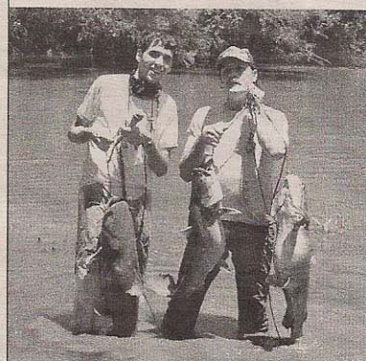
above Scott Gurian, KGOU news director, is moving back to his native New Jersey.

Gurian said he came to Oklahoma as more or less the luck of the draw, and found out he had, as the state song says, "plenty of room" for a National Public Radio correspondent, and "plenty of hope" to get a lot of air time.

"I had been producing a daily national news magazine show in D.C., and that kind of fizzled out. I needed a job. I applied for every radio news job from Bethel, Alaska to Dili, East Timor, and I ended up in Norman, Okla.," Gurian said. "There are only a few public radio reporters in this whole state. By coming to a place like Oklahoma, you get to be a big fish in a small pond. I'm 'the one' that NPR calls at 6 in the morning when there's been a tornado. I'm 'the one' in D.C. whose name they have in the Rolodex, you know? I'm the only person they have in Oklahoma. I've been able to do a fair amount of national reporting and get my name out there."

And, Gurian did get his name out. In 2008 alone, Gurian won at least 10 first-place awards, both regional and national, for his reporting. He said that these days, he occasionally hands his credit card to someone in the metro area and they recognize the name. He's also gotten to know the state and its residents have gotten to know him.

"Catfish noodling was very fascinat-



From noodling to the Chisholm Trail to interviewing Mary Fallin, Scott Gurian made the rounds.

ing," he said. "I like covering the real local things ... I went to Mangum and went to the rattlesnake festival down there. When I go back East, I'll tell people about that and they'll say, 'That's really fascinating. We don't really do that here.' I've really enjoyed the stories where I got a sense of the local flavor ... going to a cattle auction at the stockyards. I went to the Selman bat caves and saw where millions of bats nest every summer. That was cool."

And now that he's going, what does a Jersey transplant think of the state he's called home for over four years? Gurian said there's a lot he's going to miss — calling Oklahoma a state on its way up.

"I feel like things are really starting to happen, especially in the Oklahoma City area," Gurian said. "It seems like there is a burgeoning arts scene. There's the (Gazette's Ghouls Gone Wild) Halloween parade now, there's momentum in the big art show every year. There are lots of little restaurants and bars and clubs that have opened up. There's a professional basketball team come in. There's the Core to Shore planning. I've seen the diagrams of the huge downtown city park. There's the riverfront. It's really exciting." **OKG**