

Sloughed socks and abominal abdominals: Wilkes students work on audio book

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**Aimee Dilger | Times Leader
Nicholas Filipek, Luke Modrovsky and Aaron Poochigian
discuss the audio book they were working on at Wilkes
University on Wednesday.**

WILKES-BARRE — Nicholas Filipek gushed about how great it felt to help produce an audio book at Wilkes University. “This is a dream come true!” the junior beamed beneath a bushy beard. “It’s exactly what I want to do!”

An audio-book junkie who hopes to make a living by recording other people reading books? Did his parents read to him as a youngster?

“No,” he answered quickly, with a figurative light bulb going on above his head. “Maybe that’s it!” he mused. “All of a sudden there’s a click. Maybe that’s why I like it so much.”

So how did a 27-year-old former cabinetry maker from Wyoming come to team with fellow Wilkes junior Luke Modrovsky, 21, of Mountain Top, to produce the recording of a book by 44-year-old author Aaron Poochigian from Fresno, Calif.? Strap in, it’s a roller coaster narrative.

Start with Poochigian, sporting a wry smile, a master of warm-up exercises from Edith Skinner’s “Speak with distinction.” “Mini-baby-buggy bumper, red leather yellow leather, abominable abdominals,” he enunciated clearly. “I can go on.”

Poochigian said he spent eight years, from around 2008 to 2016, writing his debut novel-in-verse, “Mr. Either/Or.”

“It took a long time to figure out how to write a narrative poem that wouldn’t alienate people as poetry often does,” he conceded matter-of-factly, “but rather to welcome them in and excite them.”

While he did not write intent to morph it into an audible book, he did readings of it and was told he should make a recording. “I hadn’t had the resources until Wilkes generously offered to make a project between this unit (the university radio station) and Etruscan Press” housed at Wilkes.

Wilkes radio station (WCLH) manager Kristen Rock — yes, that’s her real and really apt name — asked members of the staff if they wanted to participate. Filipek and Modrovsky pounced.

“I knew on day one I wanted to do it when we did a phone interview that aired on the station,” said Modrovsky, a double-major in sports management and communications. “Once I heard just the way he carried out his interview, I knew this was going to be good.” So good that they finished recording the last pages early Wednesday afternoon, a full day ahead of schedule.

“I was listening to it as if it’s already a book. I’d just sit there and expect that the next chapter is coming up,” Filipek recounted. “Then I’d think, ‘wait, I have to set up the next chapter!’ It sounded professional without us even touching it.”

“He made it very easy for us. Yes, there are going to be edits,” Modrovsky added, “but he made it a very smooth-going process.” Both students expect post-production will involve minor cuts, places where Poochigian paused a bit too long, his breath audible on the soundtrack. Odds are, they added, that after listening to the whole thing they will find one or two passages that could benefit from a second take. And of course, they plan to put in appropriate incidental sounds and background music.

And that’s the end of this story. Here’s the epilogue:

Filipek, the guy who absolutely loved producing this audio book, prefers to call himself a “returning student,” having come here from New Jersey “to kind of restart my life” after abandoning a career in cabinetry.

“Producing audio books is better than putting drawers together,” he smiled. “If you need a drawer, it’s a five-piece puzzle. I gotcha.”