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Comm 260W

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa- John Backderf gave his presentation on Tuesday about his process for making his graphic novels “My Friend Dahmer” and “Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio.”

John Backderf, an American cartoonist, were invited to speak on Zoom about 60 people, as a part of the Journalism Speakers Form hosted by the Bellisario College of Communications.

Backderf shared his book “My Friend Dahmer,” a graphic novel about his teenage lifetime with his friend Jeffery Dahmer, which was a serial killer by murdering a lot of people.

“We were real friends from age 12 until age 18,” Backderf said. “Right up until the moment he killed his first victim and became a monster.”

Backderf spent 21 years in finishing this book from 1991-2012. He took his research by using FBI materials, photos with Dahmer, and high school’s floor plan.

“There weren’t a lot of photos in this crappy little small town in Ohio,” Backderf said. “I still taking photo for my research in my hometown Cleveland, Oh.”

There is a picture about Dahmer came across a mutilated dog head, which used as an example for making a good research from photographs, he narrowed the timeline and got the color shot for learning this photograph.

This non-fiction book moved into a movie which released in 2017, according to Backderf. The film was shot in his hometown and used Dahmer’s house as a film set.

Backderf showed his second non-fiction novel “Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio,” a story about massacre at a student protest for Vietnam War on May 4, 1970.

“It never been done visually before,” Backderf said. “It’s the biggest book I have ever done.”

The challenge was he does not have intimate knowledge, according to Backderd. He was a little kid and he never been to Kent State during 1970s.

Backderf took the research for two years, he wrote and drew the book for another two years.

This book supposed to released in April, 2020, according to Backderf, he took the interview in first three months. However, because the COVID-19 problem, the release date has delayed until in August, 2020.

According to Backderf, he advice the journalist students kept one step ahead of the changes.

Backderf mentioned a sad fact people would not take their career in several decades, you are lucky if you can get four or five years out of a job.

“You can’t have any loyalty to a particular career,” Backderf said. “You have to be cold-eye about it because you don’t want to be dying in this area that is no fun.”