Seattle Metro Chamber – Under Construction with John Cook

Marilyn: [00:00:04] Welcome to Under Construction. I'm your host Marilyn Strickland, CEO of the Seattle Metro Chamber. In each episode, we take you behind the scenes with the people and companies shaping our evolving region. Today we meet John Cook, co-founder of GeekWire. John, thanks for being with us today.

John: [00:00:26] Glad to be here.

Marilyn: [00:00:27] So, GeekWire is a national tech news site with strong roots in Seattle. And you also have a global following. In addition to publishing regularly online, you actually have events, you do lists. So talk a bit about the origins of GeekWire, and what was the idea behind it when you started it?

John: [00:00:45] Well, the origins actually trace back many, many years even though GeekWire is about eight years old. It was started in part because Todd Bishop and myself were two longtime technology journalists based here in Seattle, working for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, which was a printed newspaper that used to get delivered to people's doorsteps. Imagine that. And so Todd and I were technology reporters and we really saw an opportunity to create a digital-first, digital-only online news source that really covered what was going on inside the technology community in Seattle and beyond. We thought Seattle was a really interesting tech market that was undercovered compared to other areas. And so our readers were very much pushing us to be at the forefront of the changes in journalism. In terms of consuming information and news on a digital-first platform. And we really believed in that. We were a bit hamstrung by the physical newspaper which wasn't quite moving at the same speed or the direction in which we thought things were going as it relates to media. And that's why we ended up leaving and eventually starting GeekWire.

Marilyn: [00:01:51] When did you realize, when you were at the P.I., that there was really an audience for tech stories and coverage about things tech?

John: [00:01:57] Well I've been covering the tech community for over 20 years now in the Seattle market. And so really it stretches back to my first job in the Northwest, which was at the Eastside Journal, which was a newspaper in Bellevue. I have a history of going to newspapers and then they close down after I'm there. So I leave a trail of dust in my wake. But I was at the Eastside Journal and I kind of got thrown in kicking and screaming onto the technology beat. And that was a smaller newspaper and I wasn't sure I wanted to do it. And I was a bit hesitant about taking it on, in part because as a small paper, it was hard to carve territory and make inroads and headway on the beat. And Microsoft was in our backyard there. And so the conclusion that I came to was if I really want to make some inroads, I think there's some pretty interesting stuff happening with startups and venture capital in this emerging world of technology and business here in the Northwest, which really wasn't getting covered at that time. And there was a real niche there in terms of a hunger for that sort information, because no one was really covering it and people really did want to know who the next generation of companies and entrepreneurs were.

Marilyn: [00:03:05] Yes, you were actually covering startups before they were a thing.

John: [00:03:08] Yeah I guess you could say that. Yeah it was, they used to be, it was cool at the time.

Marilyn: [00:03:13] Absolutely. So let's go back a bit to your personal history. So I know that you're from Wooster, Ohio.

John: [00:03:18] That's right. Go Generals.

Marilyn: [00:03:19] Go Generals. For people who don't know, tell us exactly where Wooster is.

John: [00:03:23] Wooster is the county seat of Wayne County. It's about 30 minutes outside of Akron, about an hour south of Cleveland. So it sits between Cleveland and Columbus, in the heart of the Rust Belt. And an interesting community because it was both industrial and agricultural sits right there in the heartland.

Marilyn: [00:03:44] Excellent. So we do have a special guest in the studio. We have John's father Roger Cook, who is here observing and listening.

John: [00:03:51] That's right.

Marilyn: [00:03:51] So let's go back a bit. Tell us about your childhood. Your education and what actually led you into journalism. Was it a linear path or did you do some other things before you decided to become a journalist?

John: [00:04:01] Yeah that that is a great question. And I do really trace things back to my parents in a lot of ways in terms of finding the path that I got on to. Interestingly enough, my mom was a newspaper reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal and she covered Wayne County, which was the fifth most important of the five counties that they covered. And so no one wanted to drive out to Wayne County or Wooster to cover stories from the main Bureau in the big city of Akron. And so my mom kind of developed her own turf if you will and really became the go-to source in the community and worked out of the home. And so I grew up around stories of journalism and the intrigue that arises from that sort of career. It was really fun around the dinner table to talk about the stories of the day, when we were around the dinner table, because I should say the often heard line from my mom around 5:30 p.m. was, 'I'm on deadline, you're on your own for dinner.'

John: [00:05:00] And so, you know, she was always chasing stories and I thought that was really kind of cool that somebody could be in a role and have some sway and power to tell stories and keep the community moving and keep them on on task. And it was really cool to see that evolve and develop. From my mom who, you know, really excelled in that role. And it's really kind of the strategy that we've employed at GeekWire. Is being the voice of the community and covering what was happening and what was going on. So really, my mom being a newspaper reporter and growing up around that. When I was in high school, my mom was overloaded with work, as most journalists always are. And she decided, well John's not doing anything, I'm gonna throw some work his way. And so my first real job in high school was, she assigned me with the task of calling the funeral homes each day to ask who died. And I would compile the list of information on who died that day and send that into the newspaper and it would run as a list in the newspaper. So I got a little bit of a taste of journalism very early on helping my mom doing the funeral home calls. And also helping on elections and other stories she was working on. So she kind of fed me things.

John: [00:06:15] So that was that my mom's half, but since my dad's here, I'll give a shout-out to him too. And he doesn't often hear this side of the story because my mom's connection to me and my path in journalism is just so obvious. I mean she's a journalist, I'm a journalist. Now the interesting thing is that my dad ran a small business and was an entrepreneur. And ended up running the family business, which was a car and truck dealership in Wooster. And so I have memories of him, you know, working Saturdays and working at a pace of an entrepreneur. I think that was really important for me to see that, you know, he would be watching the Ohio State football game, but he'd have documents spread around him and he'd be doing something and I don't know what he was. Payroll or something at the time. And that sort of work-life kind of resonated with me, because the

nice side of that was family vacations or being at soccer games or whatever it was for us. He was there. And I so it was a cool lifestyle to be able to see my mom, who was kind of her own entity, and managed, managed her own turf really successfully. And my dad who is an entrepreneur, who was able to live the life of an entrepreneur, which you know the famous adage is, you can decide whatever 80 hours a week you want to work. You know. So that's very much the lifestyle that that I live now.

Marilyn: [00:07:36] And it's interesting too because you talk about, you know, your mother's career and your father's career and in many ways it's kind of merged, so that you were kind of, you were kind of raised to do what you're doing now. Because you're doing something that's very entrepreneurial but it's based in journalism. And the fact that you were checking obits means that, what? You were all about fact checking. Which is really important and what's the one thing you don't want to get wrong when you're calling the funeral homes and you're chronicling somebody's death? You don't want to get their name wrong.

John: [00:08:01] Yeah. You've got to make sure you give the accurate spelling on the names.

Marilyn: [00:08:06] So you've been in journalism for a while in Seattle. Talk about how GeekWire has been shaped by the evolution that you see happening in Seattle.

John: [00:08:14] Wow. Well you know, we have seen so much in terms of the transformation of this community, really driven by tech in the last 20 years, and really an acceleration in the last five. So GeekWire being eight years old. We've kind of seen that hockey stick style growth of this community. Which has really just accelerated a pace that we certainly didn't imagine.

Marilyn: [00:08:38] That's a pace that most people did not imagine.

John: [00:08:42] And a lot of that is tied obviously to Amazon's success and growth in the community. We were just driving here from Fremont through the downtown. I was showing my dad like, oh yeah, here's an Amazon building, this is South Lake Union you know. And it's just amazing, that sort of growth that they have had and at GeekWire, we sit at the middle of covering that story. And not only the success that Amazon has had as a business and the products that they're launching to try to conquer new markets, but some of the challenges that have come along with that type of hyper-growth and the displacement of people in our community as a result.

John: [00:09:18] And so we cover that full-cycle. We're a media entity that is here to to tell the stories of what's going on. The good, the bad and the ugly. Going back to my roots in the Rust Belt, there's certainly a lot to be proud of and thankful for that we've had this sort of growth in Seattle. That we have these types of jobs. I know there's a lot of argument and debate right now that technology and the technology industry, really in the last two years, has gotten a really bad name. And that's unfortunate I think, because I think at its heart to us, technology is not only new software programs that are going to help us communicate more efficiently with people, but it's it's advancements in science and biotechnology and medical devices that are going to help save our lives.

Marilyn: [00:10:02] So I want to ask you a question, because, you know, you cover tech. You're Seattle based, but you also cover tech nationally and internationally. So what do you think are the key differences between Silicon Valley tech and and Seattle centric tech? If there are any.

John: [00:10:16] Yeah, I think there are a few things. I think in part because Seattle is isolated in the Northwest and doesn't sit in a big media hub, that a lot of the innovations and creations that you've seen come out of Seattle are what you would maybe call a bit more boring now. So there's a

reason why enterprise software and cloud computing has grown up here. This is the nitty gritty infrastructure of what makes everything work. Now it's extremely important. There's a ton of money in it and there are some amazingly valuable companies that are growing up in this area. And I think Seattle historically has been able to develop hard technologies in hard and complex areas. And that's a real benefit. The other thing with Seattle historically, and I think this is changing, as we've seen the arrival of all the Silicon Valley tech giants and really changing dynamic. But historically, Seattle and the employees and workers that were at these companies weren't in it for the quick flip.

John: [00:11:21] So I think of companies like Tableau Software, which took very little venture capital and has built a very successful company over many many years. Or Concur which was purchased by SAP a couple of years ago for eight billion dollars after 20 years and a lot of ups and downs. And it's cool for us to see those types of stories, but they're not the sexiest stories out there. We've had a number of those. We punch way above our weight in Seattle in terms of the number of successful acquisitions and IPOs compared to the Valley. Now on a more negative side of that, I would say Silicon Valley is absolutely still the epicenter of venture capital and funding. And a lot of our entrepreneurs here in the Northwest have to go to the Silicon Valley in order to raise money. And personally I would like to see more homegrown capital in Seattle supporting the entrepreneurial ecosystem here. I've often said what Seattle needs in order to spark this next generation of capital and investing is, that we do need a more, a home-run that hits really quickly. Like an Instagram for the community, where 20 or 30 angels are invested in it and they make a crap-ton of money really, really quickly and then everybody starts. Yeah this angel investing thing, it really does work and you can really make a lot of money on it. A lot of the money that's been invested in Seattle, it's like those Concurs or Tableaus where it takes a long time to see the success and get the money out of it.

Marilyn: [00:12:52] Excellent. So covering tech, what do you think is the most underreported story in the tech industry?

John: [00:12:58] I think this is covered fairly well, but I think GeekWire needs to cover it in a much much bigger way, is privacy and security. It's going to be just such a hot topic going forward. And I do think it ties into this changing impression of the technology industry. And the technology companies I was talking about earlier. And I think that is going to be a real hot-button issue that will only continue to accelerate.

John: [00:13:28] So that's one. Kind of getting outside the box of the traditional folks that always get the news headlines and coverage. And so there is a lot of interesting entrepreneurial stories from different corners of the world. Whether it's from underrepresented minorities that might be doing something really interesting or just underrepresented areas of technology that don't get the buzz or attention, that may actually really change people's lives.

John: [00:13:57] So one thing we're doing is we're investing much more heavily in covering the intersection of health sciences and software. And so, you know, what we call health tech and lifestyle. So, you know, that's an area that I think is just going to accelerate. And I think Seattle is actually really interestingly positioned for that with Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, the cloud computing is going to power the intelligence behind the ability for these researchers to be able to do what they need to do in order to make the the medicines or the cures that they want to go after. And I see that transformation really happening in a big way and Seattle being positioned very well for that, with the scientific health research with UW, Fred Hutch and then the computing horsepower from Amazon, Microsoft and others. So that's a real interesting intersection.

John: [00:14:49] But I could keep going on and in other areas that need more coverage.

Marilyn: [00:14:52] So, you know, we talk a lot about Seattle. But, you know, this is the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber. So it means we cover the entire Metro region. I often say the three county region that kind of is a sound transit service area. And so, you know, we know that everything is very Seattle-centric. But you actually have a series of GeekWire called 'On the Road,' and you went to Renton recently.

John: [00:15:11] And I want to get down to your city of Tacoma.

Marilyn: [00:15:14] And I want you to come down there. You have to meet the folks at Startup 253 and all this really cool stuff that's happening. But talk about why you came up with 'On the Road,' what you found in Renton and maybe what, you know, would you want to see in Tacoma.

John: [00:15:25] Yeah. You know this is an interesting project for it. It actually spawned from this idea earlier this year. We went to Pittsburgh and we set up a temporary headquarters in Pittsburgh. It was what we called GeekWire HQ 2. We actually had 10 cities apply for GeekWire to come set up for a month and cover what was going on in that community. And we chose Pittsburgh. Well they put together just a great proposal.

Marilyn: [00:15:49] Pittsburgh's a great city. I'm a fan of Pittsburgh.

John: [00:15:50] And it is just such a cool place. And we were welcomed with open arms and had just a fantastic time there. But no, we actually delivered on that. We had a few dozen stories that we did while we were there. We met with the Mayor for an hour and a half.

Marilyn: [00:16:07] Mayor Peduto?

John: [00:16:08] Mayor Peduto, who entertained us. And just really got to know that community. And it was a really great experience for us because we were able to get out of our bubble of Seattle. We were able to go to another community, interact with folks, bring the GeekWire brand where some people were actually a little hesitant that we were coming in. But by the end of it, we had won so many fans and it spoke to us. Because it's like, wow, we can go into these other communities and do real impactful journalism and shine some light on from a bit of an outsider's take on what's really going on and focusing on some of the cool and innovative things, but also pointing out some of the challenges and problems in these cities as we see it. And so really, I'm going way back to your question when we got back to Seattle. We said, you know, there are parts of our own region that we don't know that well and people we're not connecting with in our own backyard. We said, why don't we just go out and experiment a little bit?

John: [00:17:03] And see if there is interest in some of these places, to go and parachute in for a week and set up a similar temporary GeekWire headquarters. And see what the lay of the land is in places like Renton and hopefully Tacoma. Renton's an interesting case because it's close to the airport. It's close to Bellevue and Seattle. And sits on the lake and is, you know, historically obviously a big Boeing town. But is going through a massive transformation and the question for a place like that is, when does the growth hit a breaking point in places like Bellevue and Seattle, that things do start to slide out to the outskirts?

Marilyn: [00:17:42] And I think when we talk about equity, we typically think about equity in terms of who's being hired. You know, if we look at this region, geographic equity is just as important. Because, you know, what you don't want is all the high-paying jobs just in the city center. And then in the outlying cities, those are where the wages aren't as high. And so how do you think about geographic equity as Seattle continues to grow. There's less space to build. And again,

people having to come in from outer communities to come into downtown Seattle. Which puts such a strain, as I know, on the transportation system.

John: [00:18:13] Yeah and we got to get this right. We've got to get this right. I think it was Redfin that did a study on neighborhoods in Seattle from a few years ago. And I'm sure this has changed, but it was, the headline was something along the lines of a firefighter, a school teacher and a software developer live on the same block. What city in America is that likely to be? And it was Seattle at the time. And that's something we should strive for and be proud of. And I think we are losing that. And we need to make sure that we continue to fight to to preserve that and accelerate it. That everybody can benefit from the prosperity that the tech industry has brought. You know, as it relates to this topic, one of the bigger issues. I mean, you're, we're thinking about it now very much as a regional bucket. As you're thinking about Seattle and Renton and Everett and Edmunds or what have you. But when you really think about it in terms of the country, and thinking of my hometown and my home state of Ohio, then it is a real big talking point in the tech industry right now. And you're starting to see some of the discussion around this, as you see, on the coast these very, very prosperous companies in Seattle and San Francisco largely. And they're not doing enough to be connected back to places like Ohio. And so there's a real disenfranchisement between geography there that people are not being brought up by the prosperity in a place like like Seattle. And the New York Times did this great analysis. I think it was earlier this year. Where they looked at the auto industry and the tire and spoke effect of being around Detroit and places. That went into our home state of Ohio like Toledo, and other places like in the supply chain, was so important to fuel the Detroit engine and manufacturing engine. That there was all this ancillary benefit in a big, big region around that. And in tech you don't have that.

Marilyn: [00:20:14] Yeah. And it's interesting. Because like, when you look at big manufacturing it is typically, you know, large companies that have such a huge supply chain that they employ a lot of small businesses and a lot of people.

Marilyn: [00:20:24] And I think sometimes, you know, we think about, oh it's a big company. And there's often this narrative like, you know large company bad, small company good, and people kind of forget there's a very interdependent ecosystem. And so your example in Ohio with, you know, I mean, when you talk to a lot of people who are Seattleites and you say Rust Belt, there's a certain image that comes to mind. And I just, you know, you think about the political ramifications. You think about what it means for people, and how do we think about geographic equity when we talk about prosperity and how do we share it?

John: [00:20:51] Yeah. And you know the interesting thing that's going on, and I think this ties into the Apple announcement here recently. Where they said they were going to be expanding to Austin as well as Seattle, San Diego, some other cities. And the Amazon HQ 2 announcement where they picked suburban D.C. and Queens and New York.

Marilyn: [00:21:08] And Nashville.

John: [00:21:09] And Nashville. Nashville's maybe a bit of an outlier. But they're kind of going against this narrative of this idea that the tech industry can, the rising tide lifts all boats across the country. Because you, if you would have done that, you would've picked a place like Columbus or Pittsburgh or Indianapolis in order to have a little bit more geographic diversity. But they chose the coasts and very urban centers. And there's been a lot written, including by GeekWire here recently, about this dilemma that the centers of business and prosperity and innovation are really centering on the coasts.

Marilyn: [00:21:49] And I think part of that is, you know, this is about a fight for talent. And so

they choose markets based on the type of people who want to live. You know, their employees are going to choose where they want to live, what kind of community is it. And there was, so at your GeekWire event, Steve Ballmer was on the stage recording the podcast. And I think someone jokingly said like, when are you going to bring the Clippers to Seattle? And he said, young men in the NBA want to live in L.A.

John: [00:22:12] Yeah. That's right.

Marilyn: [00:22:14] So it's interesting when you think about where your talent wants to live. And so you're going to choose certain markets with certain characteristics and attributes because that's where the talent is going to be attracted.

John: [00:22:22] Yeah. That's a perfect. That is a perfect example. You're absolutely on the mark with that. Yeah.

Marilyn: [00:25:55] So, when you think about the things that the business community can improve upon in the Metropolitan Seattle area, you know. We talked about geographic equity as far as, you know, just distribution of high wage jobs. You know, we've talked about trying to make sure that you know underrepresented communities are part of leadership and are employed. What are some things that you think the business community can do better? And I mean, not just a business, I mean the employer community, because it's not just business. There are a lot of employers who are members of the Chamber as well.

John: [00:26:23] Yeah. This is one where I do think the business community in Seattle specifically needs to step up and be a bigger player. You know, as an observer and a journalist who's covered the community, and as the community has changed and being a resident of it, I am disappointed both with the response by the business community as I see it, and I looked at things mainly through the lens of the technology community. And I'm disappointed with the political leadership.

John: [00:26:52] And I think that problem needs to be solved and somebody needs to step into that void. And it really is about leadership. I think the business and tech community needs to step to the table and do more. And I think the political establishment needs to come closer to the business community and do more as well. And so, we're at this impasse, where no it seems that no one can really talk and get things done in the way that it needs to get done. And so anything we can do to build more bridges to make that happen. Where there's a dialogue. I mean, there's a great thing going here in Seattle. I mean, we have a lot of problems certainly, and we need to solve those.

John: [00:27:27] But, boy, these are problems that we can solve if we get our community rallied together to solve them. And one of the challenges in Seattle is I think we have a lot of different turfs. And not everyone always works together to come together, to to solve the problems. And as a result not as much happens. So we'll see. I know we've got, you know, an important election coming up. And hopefully there's a movement towards progress and what Seattle is going to become in the next five or 10 years. Not trying to think about preserving where we were or holding onto old turf battles. I mean that ship has sailed as well. And so I think it's just time to think about what we want the city to become because we can do it, if we put our minds together. There's enough money here, there's enough intellectual firepower to make it happen. And this is a great place, so why wouldn't people want to invest in making that happen?

Marilyn: [00:28:26] No, I think you're absolutely right. And I think it's absolutely possible, if the will is there.

Marilyn: [00:28:45] But I think to your point, you know, it's that time. Because the challenges that

we're facing from all of this growth are too great for us to be so divided. That's not going to solve a problem down the road. So I completely agree with you John. OK. So you are raising a family here in Seattle. So would you say that Seattle is family- and child-friendly, or not?

John: [00:29:04] My mind has shifted a little bit on this. I think historically yes. And I would say for the first few years of my son's life, the answer would've been yes. But I've soured a little bit on this and maybe it's just me and I'm getting grumpy and old. But you know, we've got needles in our backyard. You know, in our, in the alley of our backyard, I don't even trust my dog or my son to walk out through our back gate into the back alley. That's, I mean, I and I know these are. I live in a city and I have to take some of that, but that wasn't there five or 10 years ago. It really wasn't. I mean I've lived in that house for 15 years. It was not there.

John: [00:29:47] And so those problems have encroached to the point where I have started to really think about whether it is the best environment. And what that is signaling. Now I grew up in idyllic small-town America. And so I come from a place where I think I have my own view on the way it could be. But, and I know there's benefit of being in a city with access to all of the amenities that we have. And all of the different cultures and ability to see so many different things. And so in that regard it is really positive. But a bit mixed right now on that in terms of raising our son here.

Marilyn: [00:30:26] Interesting. So John, you know, you shared a lot about journalism, GeekWire, your opinions about the tech community. But let's talk a little bit about you. So as a reporter, you're usually the one asking questions. So how does it feel to be on the other side of it? Getting the questions and answering them.

John: [00:30:43] I love it. I mean, I love talking about Seattle. It's a community that I'm certainly invested in. I love talking about the technology community here. I love talking about media. So I love it. Thanks for asking all the questions.

Marilyn: [00:30:56] OK. So I'll ask you this one that I ask all my guests. And I know that this can vary day to day, and week to week, so what's on your playlist right now?

John: [00:31:03] I love The Daily, which is a podcast by the New York Times. And since I'm listening to podcasts, I'm also listening to Numbers Geek, which is GeekWire's new podcast. With Steve Ballmer. Which is a great podcast that Todd Bishop, my co-founder is is working on. So I have been listening to that. Music. Those are my two main podcasts that I would say I'm into right now.

Marilyn: [00:31:26] What about music.

John: [00:31:27] Yeah. I've historically had a bit of an eclectic taste on music and I've gotten back into some of my, you know, 90s era music that I'm into. I've been listening to the Flaming Lips a lot right now. The Soft Bulletin, which is just a fantastic album. I've been listening to Sebadoh. I've been listening to Stone Roses. I've been, you know, I got a lot of, a lot of mix there, I really like, more modern Bon Iver. Gosh. Those are some of the top music ones. But I'll go like old-school David Bowie. I like Fela Kuti a lot. I'm all over the map on music. Just put something good on that has a groove. I like to dance, so something that has a little bit of a movement to it's usually pretty good.

Marilyn: [00:32:20] Very cool. I always ask this question about music because I think it gives people an idea of your personality. And, you know, what I just heard you say was, it's like you're not really tied to a genre. You just like good musicians who do good music.

John: [00:32:31] Well one of my great friends joked with me, because at one point I had this quote where I said, I like most music. And he thought, he's kind of a music, kind of a music snob. He just thought, oh God, most music sucks, you know. And I was like well, I kind of like most music. I can find a groove in most stuff.

Marilyn: [00:32:47] Exactly. So, when we were doing research on you, it says, his interests include hiking, bicycling, microbreweries and watching English Premier League. So talk a bit about beer and football.

John: [00:32:59] Beer and football. Well I, including English Premier League, I am a diehard Sounders fan. So that is my. I do like sports and as I shared, we loved our Seahawks experience. But my main sport growing up and through high school and college was soccer. And I still, still playing soccer. I still hack around with the old-timers. We have a GeekWire FC over-40 men's league if you ever want to see some real hot action out there.

Marilyn: [00:33:27] What's the injury rate there?

John: [00:33:28] Very high. Very high. We had one of our wingers break his back. Which was not a fun experience, but I'm still plugging away. My main goal is not get injured and do one creative thing during the game. So I do love. I do love soccer. I love watching it. It's taught me a lot. I think sports are just so critical to teaching you especially when you have your own company and you're an entrepreneur in terms of running, running an organization, being part of a team. People pulling their weight and different, you know, pulling somebody up when they've had a bad game or bad experience. And working together, and knowing how to lose, it's critical. Not every day is gonna be a great day. You're gonna have some losses. Certainly if you're starting your own business.

Marilyn: [00:34:12] I mean, that's the one thing about, you know, I mean I am a fan of kids growing up with sports. Not because you want your kid to win every championship, but just the values that come with participating in team efforts. And so, and also too, there are studies that show that kids that participate in sports actually do better academically.

John: [00:34:27] Big supporter. Yep, I'm out there on the soccer pitch basketball court all, all summer, fall, winter.

Marilyn: [00:34:34] Yeah. All right. So what is your guilty pleasure?

John: [00:34:39] Oh, well, you mentioned microbreweries. So I do live within a few blocks of Chuck's Hop Shop. And so that oftentimes gets referred to as GeekWire HQ 2 or the board room, because I do like to go and enjoy a hazy IPA or hit one of our favorite microbreweries in Ballard.

Marilyn: [00:35:00] Excellent.

John: [00:35:00] I would say it would have to be a nice refreshing Seattle-brewed beer.

Marilyn: [00:35:06] Excellent. We love, we love local.

John: [00:35:07] Yes.

Marilyn: [00:35:07] So my last question I typically ask on this podcast is, when you watch baseball and batters come up to bat, they usually have like, a walkup song. And so when you're coming up to bat, what is your walkup song?

John: [00:35:22] Something that actually would probably fire me up. Probably something by the Stone Roses which is this British era. Oh gosh. Probably Fool's Gold or maybe, I Want to be Adored.

Marilyn: [00:35:35] I like to ask this question because I'm hoping that when our listeners hear about your music choices, that they're going to, you know, go look it up and take a listen. And as they think about the person we're interviewing, and they associate music, I think that's kind of a fun thing to do.

John: [00:35:47] Absolutely. I think music is therapeutic. Hopefully I've given folks a few suggestions of what I'm listening to.

Marilyn: [00:35:54] Now, this has been a great interview. So, you know, native of Ohio, here in Seattle, had a career in journalism and still does. But now runs an organization called GeekWire.

Marilyn: [00:36:04] I love the Pittsburgh story, On the Road, and as a person who lives in Tacoma, I am hopeful that you will come down and do an On the Road series and visit Tacoma and see what's going on down there with the startup community.

John: [00:36:16] Absolutely. We want to get out there and hear all of your stories whether in Tacoma or Renton, Seattle, wherever. We want to hear your stories of what's happening.

Marilyn: [00:36:27] This is Marilyn Strickland. And you've been listening to Under Construction. Thank you so much for being with us. And please join us again. To learn more about the podcast, visit SeattleChamber.com/UnderConstruction.