

INSIDE RADIO®

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“Personalities INSIDE RADIO”

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Bullish Broadcaster

by Mike Kinosian, Personality Editor

Despite being surrounded by a multitude of gnawing polarizing issues, a certain solace is found in one rudimentary fact of life: Nothing beats summer vacation.

There's an indissoluble bond and conduit forever formed to family, simpler times and your happiest memories.

For most the good old summertime meant stuffing the family vehicle Clark & Ellen Griswold-style (a.k.a. Chevy Chase & Beverly D'Angelo in vintage “National Lampoon” romps) and then unwinding after the road magically led to Cape Cod, Daytona Beach, Malibu or any one of a million other domestic locations in between.

Worries and tension yielded to peaceful tranquility. Mode of transportation and destination differences obviously abound in a “that was then/this is now” update.

What A Rush

With the calendar now reading July, it's once again time for Spanish Broadcasting System/Los Angeles VP/Market Manager [Peter Remington](#) to maintain a ritual he's adhered to this time each year since 1991. “I hop on a plane and go to Pamplona and run the bulls,” he matter-of-factly remarks. “I have dear friends from all over the world [who] now go there and I can't wait to see them for the eight days I'm there. When most guys go on vacation, they pound down 1,000 cocktails to get the stress out of their system.”

A considerably different and much more daunting agenda, however, awaits Remington, following his flight to Madrid and subsequent jaunt over to Pamplona. “The next morning, 13 animals weighing 1,500+ pounds are chasing me down the street,” he calmly comments. “Trust me – there is no stress in my body after that. It is quite the adrenalin rush.”

It would admittedly be “stupid” if Remington were to contend he didn't have any fear of the situation, which has been part of the Spanish culture since the 1600s and plays out again beginning this weekend (July 6 - 14). “Of course there's some fear but the worst [part about it] is the people.”

About 10% of the runners are veterans which means as many as 90% could be first-timers. “It's like cume and quarter-hour,” Remington reasons. “Not many people have a great degree

of time spent running. There are many people who want to say they ran with the bulls [whereas] the people I know really run with the bulls.”

Pick Your Poison

It's not uncommon on Saturday or Sunday to have 5,000 people on the street for this unique – if not bizarre activity.

Some participants however are up all night and collapse from exhaustion. “You're running down the street and the next thing you know – boom – you're down because you ran into a bunch of people [on the ground],” Remington notes. “I've torn ligaments in my left knee because I got caught up with a bunch of people. Bulls are herding animals so you know how they're going. There've been times I've jumped into doorways and watched a bull's horn go right past my belly.”

Witnessing such an attention-grabbing site doesn't dampen Remington's anticipation for doing it all over again the following year, even if it means having his sanity questioned. “I've been in radio 27 years - what do you want from me?,” he rhetorically quizzes. “It's not what everybody does. I think people [who] jump out of planes are nuts. What do you do when your parachute doesn't open? At least I can move out of the way.”

Empathetic Irishman

Prior to assuming day-to-day operation responsibilities of SBS Los Angeles properties KLAX and KXOL two months ago (May 2007), Remington spent the previous 30 months in a similar capacity at co-owned Regional Mexican KRZZ/San Francisco. “We have one Spanish-language station [KLAX – ‘La Raza’] and one English-language station [KXOL – ‘Latino 96.3’] that plays Latino music,” he explains of his Southern California cluster. “It's really for the third, fourth and fifth generation Latino in the marketplace [who] is fluent in English but `lives' and loves Latino music. KLAX is strictly a Regional Mexican station reaching out to true Mexicans in Los Angeles.”

Irishman Remington enjoys telling his Mexican clients while he has no Latin blood running through his veins, “I'm a Mexican turned inside out. I've just always had a huge passion for the Hispanic community.”

On the flipside clients and station personnel are open-minded and receptive to him mainly because Remington stresses, “I don't go in thinking I know what I'm doing. I'm here to help lead these stations but also listen to my

Program Directors. They may love an idea I give them and then tell me, 'now let's make it Mexican.' That's fine by me."

Genesis of Remington's infatuation with the Hispanic culture stems from another vacation, this one in Argentina (1984) enabled him to get in plenty of snow skiing. "I went off to a gaucho ranch, where they served every piece of meat from a cow you can possibly eat," he recalls. "Everyone is so friendly and family-oriented. Life is good."

An East Man

It wasn't until Stony Brook Long Island-raised Remington actually landed his first radio job when he realized he had an interest in the medium. "When I look back and [retrace] the steps that got me into this business [such as how] I listened to W-A-Beatles-C in New York, I can understand it," he comments.

One day while reveling in the good life as an Aspen ski bum Remington heard a local station doing Beatles trivia. "I called with all the correct answers and was invited to see the studios," he recounts. "I walked around and thought to myself radio was pretty cool [but] I still wasn't a radio guy."

An AE job at then John Fullam-run WRKI/Danbury, CT proved to be Remington's foray into the industry. "He's a very smart broadcaster," he quite aptly comments of Greater Media/Philadelphia's current Market Manager. "From there, I had [a goal] of getting to New York City."

Fascinated by the idea of working for a rep firm, he hooked on with Eastman Radio. "I became VP/New York and ran the New York office," recalls Remington, who relocated to San Francisco in November 1991 to become Director/Sales for Bedford Broadcasting's KFRC AM & FM. "[But] Bedford was sold to Alliance in 1993 and we all got fired."

Master Salesman

In much the same way Fullam mentored Remington, former 12-year Eastman Radio President Carl Butrum became a role model to Remington while they worked together at the rep firm.

Yet another noteworthy mentor entered Remington's

career when he landed at Regent Broadcasting's KSNE, KBGO and KFMS AM & FM/Las Vegas. "[Regent's Terry Jacobs] is probably the [nicest] gentleman in the industry," Remington proclaims of the company's former Chairman/CEO/Treasurer. "He's a wonderful guy and he's a broadcaster. One of Terry's favorite [sayings] is that he prefers to 'err [on the side of] caution.' I find myself using that line a lot. He liked to give his people chances and work with the folks he had. That was his makeup."

On-the-job experience gained in Atlanta as one of Lew Dickey's first hires at Cumulus proved to be extremely advantageous in Remington's long-term career. An eventual six-year stint would follow there.

While genial radio executive Remington possessed undergraduate business and psychology credits he never attained a degree. That minor detail did not detain him from receiving an MBA from the University of Georgia. "It's called life experience and a good sales job," he points out. "I told them I never went the distance to get my sheepskin and worked instead. I was overseeing 63 markets at Cumulus and doing budgeting processes for all these stations. When [Cumulus] first started, I helped look for stations [the company] could purchase."

The only University of Georgia MBA student without an undergraduate degree, Remington jests he became a "crash test dummy" for their program. "I was on-campus three weeks out of the 18 months," he remarks. "On Saturdays, I was at a satellite campus and we did some online work as well."

Industry Shortcoming

Targeting 18-44s approximately 18-month-old "Latino 96.3" ranked 13th this Winter (2.6, 12+) while KLAX (#5, 3.9) aims for 25-54s. "[Emmis rhythmic CHR KPWR - #6, 3.7] 'Power 106' has the brand in the market and [KXOL] would like to take it away from them," Remington declares.

Things are improving for Hispanic stations in Remington's assessment when it comes to dividing Los Angeles radio's more than one billion dollar annual billing pie. "It's changing slowly but it is changing. There are 5.5 million Hispanics – or

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45% of the population – in Los Angeles [but] we receive about 18% of the radio revenue. If there is a car dealer, furniture store or retailer crying the blues, they're missing out on 45% of the population by not marketing to the Hispanic [audience]."

Among the stations Remington represented while at Eastman was Miami Spanish Talk WQBA then managed by George Hyde. "He came in and gave his sales pitch and I thought to myself it was phenomenal," reflects Remington. "The wonderful thing about Spanish radio is you don't sell numbers. You're selling a lifestyle and a group of individuals [who] have disposable income like you wouldn't believe. They are pretty much debt-free and pay with cash. If you go to South America, you'll find 'mortgage' and 'debt' aren't big words in their lives – certainly not like they are here. In some ways, however, a car dealer may think a customer paying in cash is not a good thing because they don't get the re-fi."

Helping his SBS/Los Angeles salespeople succeed is easily one of Remington's primary motivations. "It gets me excited when one of our people sees the light bulb go on in their head. For the most part, [radio salespeople] are abused thoroughbreds. You have people with a lot of enthusiasm, intelligence and wherewithal but they don't get the training. That's always been a deficiency in our industry."

Golden Giver

Honduran born Renán Almendárez Coello is the unmistakable face/voice of KLAX and Remington declares his immense popularity is partly due to his generosity. "He has his own foundation [cucuy.org] where he raises money for children with diabetes. He also did the same for victims of the Indonesian tsunami as well as those in Honduras hit by a recent hurricane. He helps people find jobs, housing and immigration cards. The man has a heart of gold."

The first hour of El Cucuy de la Mañana's shift is voice-tracked but the rest of the iron man's 4-11am weekday program is live. "Tom Joyner was probably the hardest-working guy in radio [when he commuted each day between Dallas and Chicago] but Renan [is worthy of that title] today," Remington maintains.

On-air indecency isn't something Remington loses sleep over. "It's all image and the way we say things on-air," he explains. "It's theater-of-the-mind for our listeners. [SBS President/CEO] Raul Alarcon has a very strict policy about what gets said on our radio stations. Our GMs and major on-air personalities have been through indecency meetings with the FCC so we are very focused on what gets [aired]; it's a complete heads-up."

Terrain and other issues make San Francisco an especially tricky market in which to compete. "You have Santa Clara County, an embedded metro inside the San Francisco book," Remington points out. "They throw down twice as many diaries than they need to in San Jose so they can create a San Jose book. If you're a San Francisco station, you have to

blast down 45 miles to get into San Jose unless you have a Class A there [on which] you can simulcast. You have to get over Mt. Diablo to get into the valleys and north into Napa and Sonoma. All those different competitive things are going on. There are great signals in Los Angeles so, from that sense, you really [need] to have a person's attention here."

Many broadcasters are quick to extol the merits of high definition technology, although Remington is clearly a non-believer. "I think it's ridiculous," he succinctly states. "The last thing we need to do is give everyone another channel to listen to. Talk about dividing the attention of our listeners. Yes – everyone tells us it's like listening to a CD in your living room and how crystal clear it's going to be. But you should remember how much at-home listening there is compared to that in-car. Unless everyone is driving around in a Bentley or a Rolls Royce, the road noise alone will wipe out any clarity you're going to get from HD."

Simple Pleasures

Enjoyment and knowledge have been gained from each of Remington's past jobs. "In the rep industry, I learned a great deal from every client," he comments. "In various sales meetings, I began learning about all the different things you can do in radio across the nation. We carried the Eastman banner and you could actually make a difference. You have two rep firms today – Katz and Interep – and I think it's just a commodity sell."

Avid skier Remington still laces up the boots each winter and this weekend's Spain-bound bachelor firmly adheres to three basic objectives. "I want to keep working in Spanish radio; go skiing each winter; and run with the bulls. That's what I want to do."



WHO: Peter Remington
WHAT: VP/Market Manager
WHERE: Spanish Broadcasting System's
KLAX & KXOL/Los Angeles
WHEN: Since May 2007

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