

# INSIDE RADIO

Monday, June 1, 2009

“Personalities INSIDE RADIO”

Sponsored by  ASCAP

## NEVER A LANGUAGE BARRIER

by Mike Kinoshian, Special Features Editor

It's a pure privilege to hear vocabulary eloquently employed in such a scintillating way it virtually sings and positively commands one's attention.

Powerfully compelling, yet in charming and wonderfully simultaneous contrast, rich in folksy down home idioms is an apt description of the graceful on-air style of Barry Farber - quite succinctly a Talk radio icon.

Whether one subscribes to his conservative ideals is immaterial since this gifted broadcaster embodies an exchange of ideas rather than presenting chest-pounding viewpoints.

### Back In Action

Generally associated with Ronald Reagan, “Great Communicator” is also extremely apropos for Farber, who 16 months ago (1-14-2008) underwent a 12-hour surgery to remove a benign sinus tumor.

Three specialists performed the procedure which resulted in Farber remaining flat on his back for five weeks. “I had four previous operations and it just grew back – faster and bigger,” he comments of the tumor. “The sinus is like the body's Middle East [because] a war there is very dangerous. It's too close to the brain and [the operation] took me out-of-action for a long time.”

Notwithstanding his exemplary and burgeoning vitae, Farber wasn't bombarded with job offers but CRN Digital Talk Radio President Mike Horn knew of this authentic Talk radio trailblazer's potential, manifested via a series of highly successful WABC/New York fill-ins. “I thought the [audience] I had in the 1960s and 1970s was long gone but [it still exists],” proclaims Farber whose articles have graced The New York Times, Saturday Review and The Washington Post. “Every single call was, ‘God bless you – it's great to hear your voice again.’ I figured I would rather burn out than rust out. Mike has a mix of cable systems, satellite, internet and terrestrial radio stations. It is a rare, unexpected opportunity.”

### Time Passages

In addition to its own daily 5-6pm (PT) “Barry Farber Show,” CRN Digital Talk Radio also carries Saturday's Talk Radio Network-produced “Insight with Barry Farber” (1-2pm, PT). “I saw this

woman in 1969 and wanted to marry her on the spot,” recalls Farber who however hastens to add, “We got along like a slow waiter and a poor tipper - she didn't want the job and didn't smile.”

The two ran into each other about a year later and Farber discovered she was a New York City television reporter.

Again though, there was a pronounced lack of reciprocal chemistry. “Thirty-nine years later, I saw her name on an email copied to a mutual friend. I quickly emailed my friend and asked if it was the same person who worked at [WNEW-TV/New York].” It was and he [forwarded my email to her].”

Back-and-forth electronic correspondence ensued and, as unlikely as it seems, reporter Sara Pentz and Farber were married this past September 3<sup>rd</sup>. “She lived in Newport Beach, CA and when I was out there, I decided to call [Los Angeles-based] Mike Horn,” Farber explains. “[Even though I'd been a guest on Mike's show], I'd never met him. We decided to do [a daily CRN show] and Sara and I got married the next day.”

### Filler Digested

During World War II, Baltimore-born/Greensboro-raised Farber developed an intense interest in frontline reports. “There was no television; radio was up-to-the minute and gave [the war] a sense of immediacy,” he explains. “I was not, by any means, a radio freak. I never volunteered to work without pay at a local station.”

Masterful storytelling is a definitive trademark for this eight-year newsmag.com columnist who contends, “If you couldn't be a football player or afford your own convertible that was [another] way you could attract female attention. I wasn't big enough to play football or rich enough [to buy a car] so [this is what I chose].”

In the back of Farber's eighth-grade English class was a bookshelf which his teacher - Miss Henderson – stocked with nearly every Reader's Digest issue. “If you finished your writing assignment in time, you could go back and read a Reader's Digest article,” Farber gleefully notes. “I made a point of hurrying as quickly as I could because I loved those articles, especially the filler.”

Another fascination would develop in his junior year in high school. That's when Farber discovered he could wrestle those

within his weight class. “I was too skinny and light for football but being able to fight people in my weight was like a blessing from above,” states Farber who became team captain. “I only weighed 135 pounds but had very long arms and legs. I was called ‘the spider’ because I’d surround my opponents. Amateur wrestling has to be the dumbest sport in the world [but] I loved it.”

### Wins His Own Show

When tourists were first allowed in the then Soviet Union in 1956, Farber and a North Carolina journalism friend were positioned to be the first freelancers to enter in July of that year. “I did a few articles but it didn’t amount to a job,” he points out.

By the following year Farber became TV Guide Magazine’s Promotion Manager but laments, “That was as far from journalism as lightning is from the lightning bug. I remember buying a New York Times to see where I could sleep for free – or almost free. I found a [\$13-a-week] room in what used to be a convent on West 98<sup>th</sup> Street. I went looking for a job but it was very discouraging because I didn’t have the desired, traditional background.”

No employment agency would even take his case. “I hitchhiked across Europe and helped refugees but didn’t graduate from college, work for my hometown newspaper or a wire service,” Farber notes. “At the age of 27, I had a colorful but non-substantial background.”

Through a bizarre happenstance on New York City’s Madison Avenue, Farber ran into a University of North Carolina wrestling teammate. “He suggested I call Charlie Norton, who was NBC’s Unit Manager,” explains Farber. “I only had a fleeting acquaintance with [Norton] but my buddy told me to call anyway. It proved there is such a thing as the old-school tie.”

Another chain of unlikely –yet quite fortuitous - events led Farber to William Safire who took favorable notice of precisely what turned off the employment agencies. “He pointed to Tex McCrary’s door and said his job was to keep people out,” Farber recounts of his meeting with Safire. “He said he usually sent in one person a year and I was the one that year. Tex hired me right away as his

radio producer. I didn’t have any experience but the job wasn’t that daunting. I’d find guests for his radio show. I didn’t have a life and became the most visible member of his team. When Tex moved from WRCA [now CBS Radio’s WFAN] to WOR, he could only take four of his 12-person staff and he put me in charge of the whole operation.”

According to Farber, McCrary was losing interest in broadcasting and occasionally wouldn’t do the program so in 1958 the journalist/public relations specialist bought his protégé an AFTRA membership. “He wanted me to be able to step in and do the show for him,” Farber notes. “Tex resigned the following year and I started my own talk show [‘Barry Farber’s Open Mike’] on WINS [the only spoken-word offering on the then Top 40 – now all-News operation]. It began [slowly but] gradually picked up. Two years later, I was [hired] by [New York City’s] real Talk leader, the great WOR. I went on from 8:15-9pm and 11:15pm-5am. I was on for more than 25% of WOR’s whole schedule and kept more people up at night than Mexican food. I stayed there for 15 very happy years.”

### Local Lowdown

Even so, Farber began getting restless and envisioned an oncoming political revolution. “New York’s conservative party invited me to be its [mayoral] candidate,” he points out. “Democrats would traditionally attract 15% of its eligible voters in the primary and always voted for the left-most candidate. We figured if I could get the Republican nomination and Bella Abzug got the Democratic nomination, I could easily [be elected but] I didn’t win the Republican primary and she didn’t get the nomination.”

After the election, Farber joined WMCA for what would become an 11-year stint. “It made a lot of good print when, at the stroke of midnight, Barry Gray and I – two Jewish broadcasters – handed the keys to the new owners [Salem] whose mission statement is to promote the Christian religion.”

An early venture into syndication presented itself when Farber – along with liberal/progressive talker Alan Colmes and Mike Castello - founded Daynet. “We thought we could find a niche and gave birth to a monster,” Farber asserts. “[Alan] was absolutely

• Nearly 75% of all inductees in the Songwriters Hall of Fame are ASCAP Members.

• ASCAP Members Wrote 8 of Top 10 Hot 100 Songs\*

• ASCAP Members Wrote 8 of Top 10 Mainstream Rock Tracks\*

• Home to America's Greatest Songwriters & Composers.

• Radio's Most Performed Repertory.

• ASCAP Members Wrote 8 of Top 10 Modern Rock Tracks\*

\*Billboard 2005 Year-End Charts

**We Create Music**

**ASCAP**  
www.ascap.com

delightful – he’s such a nice guy. Oh, we had our fights about politics but it was never violent. There couldn’t be a nicer gentleman.”

Similar sincere bon mots are reserved for Colmes’ former partner on Fox News Channel’s now defunct “Hannity & Colmes” – Sean Hannity. “That show wasn’t broken but I’m still bewildered that [Fox] wanted to ‘fix’ it anyhow,” comments Farber, who occasionally fills in for Hannity (on radio) as well as for Laura Ingraham and Michael Savage. “Tex McCrary gave me birth and Sean Hannity has kept me alive. He credits me with turning him to broadcasting. I can’t claim pride of father-ship [for Rush Limbaugh who] was on the west coast [at Sacramento’s KFBK]. Even though I’d like to think so, believe me, I was not the source for all inspiration.”

Not only is Farber disinterested in doing local Talk radio he maintains, “The word ‘local’ puts my feet asleep to the hips. Every once-in-a-while to make it look good, I’d take a stab at doing a strictly local story like a highly-contested state senate race. There was a whole galaxy of local hosts [including] Studs Terkel in Chicago; Larry King in Miami; and Jerry Williams in Boston. You can admire things you don’t necessarily want to be part of. I could never see the point of being local if you had a chance of being more. Some people though insisted they were local and wanted to stay that way.”

As little as “ten minutes” is one retort Farber provides regarding the amount of time it takes to prepare his radio broadcast – the other is “a whole lifetime” because he declares, “I’ve been studying the world which includes world trade and natural resources all my life.”

### Perfect Harmony

Downgrading his mood about the nation’s state from “terror” to “acute skepticism,” Farber enjoys mixing things up with his progressive counterparts although he maintains his only regret at the moment is, “I can’t find those I’d most like to fight with. Everyone is mellowed-in to the center. Tex taught me the best show in the world is two scorpions in a brandy glass. Many Republicans knew what was coming and how bad things are. No one would be able to cope with it. [In the 2008 presidential contest some Republicans thought] the smartest thing to do was to hand it over to [Barack] Obama. Let it be ‘his’ disaster and hope there’s still a nation four years later.”

As adroit and nimble as Farber is in massaging English, he’s mastering about two-dozen other languages. “I grew up thinking the most fascinating thing in the world would be foreign languages,” he states. “I was a little [disappointed] that my first foreign language in public school was Latin because you can’t go to a place called ‘Latania.’”

Nothing but word-study constituted the first day’s curriculum and Farber acknowledges being a star with that. “I could remember ‘Agricola’ meant farmer. By the fifth day, we were into grammar which was as deadly-dull as arithmetic. I thought it would be over soon and we’d go back to words but we weren’t. We sank deeper and deeper into grammar. I limped through and never really got it.”

Toward the end of the year, the principal met with Farber to inform him a “D” would be the highest grade the student would achieve in Latin. “My mother was going to Baltimore and asked me what I wanted her to bring back,” he vividly remembers. “I said any book in a foreign language. I didn’t care so long as it had funny-looking writing on the cover. Fortunately, she made the right choice and brought me a book in Chinese. I was a rebel with a cause and devoured it. That summer, I went to a Greensboro bookstore and saw ‘Hugo’s Italian Simplified.’ I could almost hear mood music because Italian was nothing but Latin with all the difficulty removed. It was like filleting bone from a fish.”

Among the languages in which Farber feels most comfortable are Albanian, Chinese, Finnish, French, Hungarian, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish; however he stresses English is the lone language he speaks. “I’m a student of [about 24 others]. Some you date – others you marry. I date about half [where] I only learn phrases so you can talk to cab drivers and people at convenience stores. Most conversations never get beyond the superficial level anyhow. The ones you speak well are your favorites.”

It is Farber’s goal to find an audience for good-natured right-wing Talk radio and adamantly insists, “I don’t want it to be ‘sink your fangs into the egg-sucking dogs.’ That’s not my style. I want to discuss issues calmly, tell good stories and bring back harmonic recollections from the past that fit today’s headlines. I don’t have any dreams of glory. I just want to find that niche. My high hope with CRN is to pick up stations here and there. I’d like to think the heated, angry right-wing radio of 1994 is calming down. The election of Barack Obama proved something has changed.”



**WHO:** Barry Farber

**WHAT:** “The Barry Farber Show”

**WHERE:** CRN Digital Talk Radio

**WHEN:** Weekdays, 5-6pm (PT)

**WHAT:** “Insight with Barry Farber”

**WHERE:** Talk Radio Network & CRN Digital Talk Radio

**WHEN:** Saturdays, 1-2pm (PT)