

RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS

KRTN's 'This, That & The Other' brings Raton together

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Hot, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance) near signed and framed stars' photographs (Michael Martin Murphey, Arlo Guthrie, Steve Martin.)

At the DJ desk, Billy D works two computer screens, one displaying news, the other last night's lottery numbers. Asked during a commercial how long he's been at KRTN, he replies, "All morning." He's been associated with the station almost long enough to remember when the "This, That & The Other" morning show was born, under a different name initially, back when KRTN was located in the downtown space now occupied by the Raton Museum. "That was in the 1950s. The Ropers owned the station and Sonny Bernard bought the time and started the program," Billy recalls.

Billy D - actually Bill Donati - first came to work at KRTN as a Raton High School freshman in 1969. He continued though his graduation in 1972 and deeper into the 70s, then left to work for various race tracks and for Bill Fegan Productions. In 1989, he returned to KRTN permanently. Eventually, he bought the

station from Jim Roper, closing the deal four years ago Monday, June 1.

"We have the same philosophy about local radio that Jim had," Billy says, underscoring the station's commitment to serving its community. "We cover a wide area and we rely on our listeners to keep us informed. That's why 'This That & The Other' is so popular - it's a monster," he says of the show.

Another guest is waiting

outside, but he's such a regular that he let's the next guest go ahead of him. Raton City Commissioner Chuck Henry chats with Adrean Slocum - "Receptionist and Traffic Control" - until Ed Buerkle finishes talking on the air with Billy and Buddy about another vacation bible school, this one at the Calvary Baptist Church.

"You can find out more about what's going on around our area by coming to KRTN than anything else you can

do," Henry insists. He visits "This, That & The Other" before and after every city commission meeting. "Elected officials should be accessible to the people. That's part of the reason we got elected - to make decisions and explain why." After ten minutes on the air explaining why, he gives his home and cell phone numbers for constituents to call, then says goodbye.

He has to walk through three doors to get outside. The

walls throughout the labyrinthine building are filled with endless shelves of recordings of all kinds and all media. There are early record "albums" - thick collections of 78 rpm recordings - including "Songs of the Smoky Mountains" by Roy Acuff, "All-Time Hits by Frankie Yankovic and His Yanks", "To Mother - Songs by Eddy Arnold", and "El Bingo - Latin American Favorites by Bing Crosby."

There are countless thousands of 45s, each holding two songs; at least 2000 LPs ("Long

Playing" 33 rpm vinyl records, each of which carry little more than 30 minutes of music); reel-to-reel, 8-track, and cassette tapes; and hundreds of CDs. Beside the bathroom where a portable radio broadcasts KRTN-FM 93.9, a file cabinet has grown beyond capacity, topped with three 12" stacks of papers labeled "Daily Log Summary", rubber-banded into inch-thick packets by month. The top packet covers September, 2007.

From the bathroom radio, Billy's voice is again bantering with Buddy's. Bill Cavell started in radio 20 years ago; when told he needed an "air name", he quickly named himself after his dog, Buddy Springer. Now even his wife calls him Buddy; his five grandchildren know him as Grandpa Buddy.

He's asking Billy, "Are we ready?"

"Ready for what?" Billy inquires. "For today's trivia," Buddy replies. "No," Billy says, "we still have some more announcements."

A rodeo king and queen competition is approaching. Raton Main Street is sponsoring a downtown street fair and dance June 6. ("How others see us is determined greatly by the appearance of our downtown," Billy reads aloud.) The Raton Car Show arrives June 12-13 with a Friday "Cruise Night" and dance, along with a special showing of "Grease" at the El Raton theater.

Somehow Buddy swings the conversation to visiting batting cages to hit a few balls. An emergency radio scanner can be heard coming from the front office. Now Billy's ready to play trivia. Buddy answers the first question before it's fully stated; it turns out, they have shelves full of trivia books and games, and Buddy used the same question on a show last night.

"What U.S. state was the first to offer a \$1 million dollar lottery prize, in 1970?"

Buddy knows, "New York," and even adds, "John Blackwell won that."

"What was Barbie's kid sister's name?" Billy asks Buddy. "Kara?" guesses Buddy. "No: Skipper!"

Buddy responds, "I knew that!" Then he adds, "Gilligan."

"What brand of drums did Ringo Starr play on the Ed Sullivan Show?"

"Ludwig."
The two have honed their camaraderie for years. It's well past 9 a.m. They're nearing the end of the show. They move on to "This Date in History." In 1936, the Queen Mary departed England for America. In 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge opened to pedestrian traffic. The next day, it opened to vehicles. Buddy quips, "They wanted to test it: 'Here, you go first.'"

We learn that today is National Grape Popsicle Day, among other things. The Word of the Day is "Jocund", an adjective. We learn of over a dozen celebrities that have birthdays today. An even longer list follows, birthdays of people who live in KRTN's listener area, then a list of anniversaries being celebrated by couples throughout the region.

At 9:25 a.m., Billy proclaims an end to today's installment of "This, That & The Other." The last guest leaves, passing the sign "This, That & The Other SIGN IN - All Guests Please Sign In with Full Name and Subject Matter." Leafing through weeks, months, and years of sign-in sheets, Raton's history passes one page at a time. The book and sign remain in place on the front desk, ready for tomorrow morning.



Photos by Tim Keller

Left: Raton City Commissioner Chuck Henry waits his turn as Adrean Slocum, "Receptionist and Traffic Control", takes a call. Center: Buddy Springer tells him it is, or isn't. Right: KRTN's Billy D enjoys co-host Buddy Springer's banter.

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