



The WordchipperSM

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Radio, my way!

When Jason Spiess, producer of KFGO's *Mike McFeely Show*, called and asked if I would like to "guest host" Mike's show on February 22, it took me about two seconds to say "YES!" and I quickly added in pure *Fargo*-ese: "YOU BETCHA!" I mean, given my love of talking and somebody wants to give me a microphone and let me talk into it for three hours—wow! How could I resist? Couldn't.

Although I have lots of opinions on local, state and national issues, politics in general, I have long felt there's a place for interesting information, entertainment and a bit of nostalgia on AM radio. And even though I listen to today's talk shows and have been a guest on a number of them defending or advocating various positions, I had never "hosted" such a program. So, just to be different, I took along a number of audio files and other items in hopes that Jason and Mike would allow me to depart a bit from their news and issues format. They did, and I went down the path less traveled.

For me, it was a blast! But I must confess: I was totally exhausted after three hours of hosting that program on not one but three radio stations: KFJR in Bismarck, KCJB in Minot, and, of course, the "Mighty 790" in Fargo. These talk show guys and gals WORK! Unlike me, they have the operational duties down to a routine: handling bulletins brought in from KFGO's outstanding newsroom, airing road reports from listeners, and fielding various pieces that weren't planned. Thank goodness Mike has such an excellent producer in Jason. He juggled those controls with ease and handled the program's regular stuff while bringing up all those audio files I brought along. A "producer" was *not* a luxury I enjoyed the first time I worked for KFGO as a top-forty, more accurately, a "fab-fifty" disc jockey, while attending NDSU. Programming was far less complex in those days; how hard was it to put a 45-r.p.m record—the kind with the humongous hole—on a turntable and switch on the network news at the top of each hour?

But that was then and, during that time, when North Dakota television trailblazer, John Boler, owned the station, it went by the call letters KXGO. This fit into his family of two Fargo TV properties, KXJB-TV and KXGO-TV, the original call sign for what is now KVLV-TV, channel 11. To provide some bona fides on my KFGO heritage (I had also worked for KXJB from 1961-1963; for WDAY back in the early and late 1960s, up until 1975), I brought along a well-preserved copy of KXGO'S "Fabulous Fifty" folder, a flyer the station produced each week which listed the top fifty songs as determined by local record sales and air-play on the station.

Above, is a reproduction of the cover of that 49-year-old document, and if you're old enough, you might remember some of the names from the station's roster of on-air personalities: **Jim Rud** was the head DJ with the top-rated drive-time show; **Ron Clark** was program director and did an air shift; **Denny Paul** (his real last name was Johnson and he was the son of long-time WCCO, Minneapolis-St. Paul, newsman **Arv Johnson**); I'm the fellow pictured as **Larry Dean**, which KXGO/KXJB-TV called me during my salad days at age 19. That last name is not my middle name, it's totally a figment of my imagination. And then there's **Lem Hawkins**, a Fargo radio legend I was privileged to know for my brief time at KXGO. He sold his own commercials, which funded the programming time he bought from the station. He was known for a jingle he sang for a local car dealership that is still remembered by many of us: "There's a car for you and a truck there too at W.W. Wallwork!" Lem was one of a kind, and anyone who was a student of broadcasting, as I was, learned from him.

Next week, I'll write about one of the guests on the program and the cause he's fighting for. All-in-all, it was a wonderful experience for me to reprise my days behind the KFGO microphone and visit with listeners and some of my friends from around the country (thanks to Internet streaming).

In closing, best wishes to KFGO's **Joel Heitkamp** and **Don Roberts**. Joel reported he is being treated for a brain tumor through drug therapy and watchfulness, and Don, the station's all-night man and host of the popular Saturday morning "memories" show, is away on sick leave. Both of you guys are in our thoughts and prayers.

