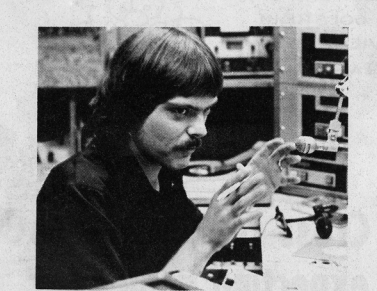


Bart Prater tells us an interview



Thanks to the WROV news department loaning me their cassette player and a tape, I am able to bring you, here or less, everything that was said in an hour-long interview with Bart Prater. However, in the interests of the reader, we have omitted parts of what was on the tape.

The Interview

CB: How long have you been in radio?

BP: Ten years, and two months.

CB: How did you get started?

BP: Well, I was in Marion, Va., in high school. It was in 1964, and the station WOLD burned down, and everything was a total loss. The manager put an ad in the paper wanting high school kids to come down and work on the burned equipment. So, I got to talking to him, and told him that I was interested in ham radio and electronics and might be able to fix some of that stuff. He gave me a switch, and told me that if I could fix it, he would give me a job. So, I became sort of a maintenance engineer. So, in the meantime, I picked up my third class radio license (that's what you need to be on the air) and one Saturday the regular guy couldn't show up, so the manager told me "You're going on" and that's sort of how it got started.

CB: WOLD, isn't that the station Harry Chapin wrote about?

BP: No, and the manager of the real WOLD raised hell about it, too. He tried to sue ELEKTRA Records and all that, I think he just saw it as an opportunity to make some bread. Never came to court.

CB: Is Bart Prater your real name?

BP: Yes, that's a pretty cloyby name, ya know. I don't say it much on the radio anymore, 'cause I was getting mail addressed to everybody from MARK RADER to BARF FRIEHTER so I just say "Big Bart!" or "BP." If I did change it, it would call myself "Buster Cherry."

CB: What do you think of today's music styles?

BP: That's a pretty heavy question. I think that music isn't really going anywhere. Like in '44 you had Frank Sinatra, in '54 you had Elvie. '64 you had the Beatles. Now you got nobody. There's no real hit name, no innovative force. I think that music is just kind of wandering around right now, the time is ripe for something new to happen.

CB: Do you have a particular favorite group or singer?

BP: I really like the Chuck Berry, and the Happy Goodman Family, no, really I like the Eagles and the Doobie Bros.

CB: Exactly what do you do, being the program director?

BP: A program director has all the responsibility and none of the authority for operation. I'm responsible for all of the guys on the air, the music format, seeing that everybody follows the rules, setting up the other's schedules, getting them remotes, etc. I guess I'm responsible for everything that goes on in this room (the control room), the newscroom, to an extent, everything that goes on in the newscroom, even though we have a news director.

CB: Is your great ambition to be the manager of WROV?

BP: Yeah, but I don't think our present one is gonna die any time soon.

CB: What was your reaction to the cancellation of the Heep-Quatro concert less than twenty-four hours before it was scheduled?

BP: Well, actually it was unprintable. I got pretty upset about it, like I held my breath for about ten minutes. I wanted to see SuzL. I craved her body, man! Yeah, I was disappointed. The only thing I'm glad about is that the Roanoke Valley has become mature enough to understand that it's not our fault when a concert cancels out. Used to be that the Roanoke Valley has become mature enough to understand that it's not our fault when a concert cancels out. Used to be that the Roanoke Valley has become mature enough to understand that it's not our fault when a concert cancels out. Used to be that the Roanoke Valley has become mature enough to understand that it's not our fault when a concert cancels out.

CB: Well, we thought that maybe it was because of low advance ticket sales.

BP: That has happened. I don't know this time.

Stage Wisdom

Bart's stage wisdom for the students of Cave Spring is "Don't put off 'til tomorrow what you can do today, because if it feels good today you can do it again tomorrow and the next day. Don't wait until Sunday night to do your homework. Do it Friday night, then go out Saturday and Sunday and chase women or something."

CB: Is radio a difficult field to break into?

BP: No, because you break in at low levels, like anything else. Low pay levels, like about a buck an hour. There are a lot of people that get into radio at that low level. Most anybody can. Not everybody progresses above the level, though. You can start well out in Marion, Virginia, playing records on the radio, for about \$125 a week, and there are a hell of a lot of guys doing that, too. It depends on how far you want to go. If you want

to advance, you really have to work at it.

CB: How do you decide which records to play?

BP: I have a sort of a format we follow. Of course, we get requests and if we get a lot of requests for the same record, we break the format and play a record before it should be played. We're only supposed to play a song every three hours or so.

Pickle Jar Lid

Bart says he has a talent, or lack of talent, for songwriting. Among his compositions are "Pickle Jar Lid," "The Night Roanoke Hippocupp" which is a take off on "The Night Chicago Died," and numerous weather songs. "I'm honest to God can't sing a note, but I've thought of writing a few ditties." God says, "I've written maybe forty or fifty songs. I could write some country songs because they're easy to sing. It's always two or three bars, My baby left me, I got drunk, beat the (expletive deleted) out of somebody, or something similar. So I think I could do some country songs and get some money out of it, too."

"I believe you have to be young on radio. A lot of guys try to put on an act. It's very much like when an artist draws a caricature, say, of Richard Nixon. They take his most outstanding feature, his nose and exaggerate it, so people will look and say 'Hey, that's Nixon.' It's the same way on radio. You have to take something and you amplify it on the air."

"I'm probably one of the crudest, grossest people ever. Really dirty, honest. I don't care. It's no doubt about that. I have no taste. I'm crude, gross, irreverent. I don't have much respect for anything. I'm a smart-aleck to the point that I get in trouble over it a lot. I'm childish. I like to play with myself. Seriously, I like to get down on the floor and play with toys. I was playing with one of those EVEL KNEVEL Stunt Cars. The other day I just take all of this and put it on the air." The interview went on:

CB: What is your opinion of Nixon receiving pardon from Ford?

BP: I'll leave that up to guys a lot more intelligent than me. It all bores me. I don't give a damn for the other. I just think that there are a lot more guys studying this than me, so I leave it up to them. I know my limitations and that's it. Politics bores me. The news bores me. I gotta be aware of what's going on so I can relate to it on the air, like the EVEL KNEVEL thing. I'll be hell out of that anyway, but even if it had been boring, I still would have tried to learn about it, it was impolitic to not know. You have to read a lot. I watch TV, I read the paper, TIME magazine, and NEWSWEEK and all of that stuff. I like to read, just read, read, read. And listen. And I talk to a lot of people, too.

CB: What is your marital status?

BP: I'm married. Well, when I'm at home I am! I have one and a half kids.

CB: Is one on the way?

BP: No, this one came out with three arms. No, I got a kid, then I found out what was causing them so I quit. I've been married for six years, so the kid's all legal. He's live. His name is Jack, which is kind of silly. My wife's name is Reese, and my name is Bart. I really didn't really care about Jack. He probably means more to me than

anything else in the world. My wife, too. I really love my wife, when I'm home, and when I'm not home I love other women. I love women in general, but she knows that.

CB: Now for some weird questions: Who is your hair stylist?

BP: I freeze it and break it off. I cut my own hair, a lot, or my wife does it for me. PG: It was really long for a while, wasn't it?

BP: No. I really don't like shoulder-length hair. I really don't. I swear to God, man. I was riding down Williamson Road one day when I first came to Roanoke and my hair was longer and two guys tried to pick me up. They thought I was a girl, which I had my head turned away from them, and my hair was blowing and everything, and when I turned around it was apparent I wasn't a girl, so

and record the music to it. A dirty musical. I've gone so far as to make up the basis to it. I have it all worked out in my head. They would never be a radio station that I could play it on, though. I would really like it if they came up with some sort of a scrambler that would take an unscrambler for you to be able to detect it. You could say anything and do anything, and the general public couldn't tune across it and hear it and be offended. You would have to pay money and get one of these unscramblers and hook it up to the radio so you could hear it, and you could get away with a lot of stuff. I believe in dirt! Dirt! Filth! I love it! People dig it. Ninety per cent of the people in the audience would really dig it if I told a really good dirty joke on the air, but that other stuff, you would have to see how you. Have you ever seen how

they quit honking and dropped off.

PG: It seemed like when you were on the RADACC television a few years ago that I do a lot of things like that; I try to lose these little bars over the heads of the people it would offend and hit the open-minded people with them which wouldn't do anything anyway. I do that a lot, coming out of a record, giving something like the time, and doing my dirty real fast and then doing something else right on the end of it. Lots of people just don't notice them. I have gotten in trouble over it, though.

PG: Did the station manager have a talk with you?

BP: Heh, I've had lots of talks with the station manager. He gets all glassy-eyed, Wolfman Jack can get away with that, but we couldn't do some of the things he does. I'm a very hobby-oriented person. Among his hobbies is flying, both model and real planes. As mentioned before he also likes many kinds of music, and ham radio. He spends at least three hours just day on his hobbies.

BP: Bart turned on the microphone and said his quoted line "Good-night, America", then got up to make room for Rob O'Brady whose show immediately follows.

Bart's. He took me around the station and then we talked. He told me about hiding under his secretary's desk, in the place where you put your feet, and grabbing her knee after she sat down again. We saw newsmen Mark Frieberg, which is referred to around the station as Fla-bag.

So, call him BP, Big Bart, The Green-Eyed Boy of the Air, Big The Boogie Man (expletive deleted), or the guy that comes on before Rob O'Brady. He'll always be loved and remembered by the thousands who listened to him as ... BARF FRIEHTER!!

CB: I see humor in things. I really do. Again I'm a little bit irreverent. I don't want to make Murphy's mad, but I've made a lot of people mad. It was poor judgment, saying some of these things, but they were always funny as hell!!

CB: What did you do?

BP: I usually went to the people and said I was sorry and that I wouldn't ever say anything like it anymore. Bert Levine, the station's manager, would call me into his office and say "You're done it again!"

CB: Is Bert Levine related to David Levine?

BP: Yes, and that's probably how David got his job here! PG: Do you still color the comics in the Roanoke Times when you're on the air?

BP: No, I never do. It isn't really that boring around here, if they look out the phones, I think I'd have become a radio talk to people. And, boy you get some crazy calls, too!

X-Rated Radio

One of my life-long ambitions is to write a ... You know about Dick? don't you, well, I'd like to write the exact same thing, only make it purely audio. Something you could put on the radio, if you had an x-rated radio station. I'd like to do that