

RADIO FLIER

The Story Behind NPR's Earthquake Coverage

By Karen Everhart

Current newspaper

It was purely by chance that a team of veteran NPR journalists was working in Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan province, on May 12 when a 7.9-magnitude earthquake, its epicenter just 50 miles away, killed some 70,000 people and left millions homeless.

"You never want to feel you're lucky to be somewhere when a huge disaster strikes," said *All Things Considered* producer Andrea Hsu. She was one of four NPR journalists in Chengdu preparing for a week of special broadcasts. When the earthquake struck, the tiny news operation she had set up in a Sheraton hotel became the only Western broadcast news source for coverage of the disaster, giving listeners emotionally wrenching firsthand accounts of the devastation and human grief wrought by the disaster.

The quake struck while *ATC* co-host Melissa Block and Hsu were in a seminary interviewing a pastor for a piece on religious life in modern China.



All Things Considered co-host Melissa Block experienced and then reported on the 7.9-magnitude earthquake that struck China in May. (2008 NPR photo by Andrea Hsu)

They were checking sound levels when the glass in the window frames started rattling.

Their recording of the quake, later streamed in its entirety on NPR.org, captured what Block later described as a surreal moment: a loud rumbling, a tense pause and Block wondering aloud, "What's going on? The whole building is

shaking." The segment left an indelible impression of sudden disruption and Block's dawning recognition.

"Oh, my goodness! We're in the middle of an earthquake," she said.

The pastor's assistant stood up with a startled look on his face and ran from the room, and the pastor ran after him,

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NPR Correspondent Examines the Media



NPR reporter David Folkenflik

David Folkenflik covers the world of media, particularly the news media, for *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, and *Day to Day*. He also writes the Media Circus column for NPR.org. Before coming to NPR in November 2004, Folkenflik was a reporter for *The Baltimore Sun*, where he spent more than a decade.

Q: What sparked your interest in journalism?

A: When I first went to college, I found the campus pretty overwhelming. A friend suggested I try writing columns for the undergraduate newspaper, *The Cornell Daily Sun*, because, as he put it, "you're pretty mouthy." I enjoyed that – but I was quickly dragged onto the reporting staff.

It was a revelation. A reporter's notebook served as a passport to realms of campus life that would other-

wise have been hidden to me. Professors of Asian studies, volleyball players, student activists, labor organizers, university administrators. Almost uniformly, people were willing to take my questions patiently and explain why they did what they did.

Over the next four years, that's how I gained a kind of mastery over campus life – and it's why I've loved journalism ever since.

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Meet VPR's Melody Bodette

As *Morning Edition* producer, Melody Bodette helps prepare newscasts and edits and produces interviews and news stories for VPR – all before most of us are even awake!



Melody joined VPR in 2005 as a part-time production assistant for *Switchboard* and then *Vermont Edition* before taking over as *Morning Edition* producer in 2007. Before coming to VPR, she worked in the editorial and news departments at *The Burlington Free Press* as a freelance writer, and in public relations. She says the staff is the best part about working at VPR.

“Everyone is very friendly and caring. And I can’t say enough good things about the news department here. There’s so much institutional memory and experience, mixed in with a lot of young energy. The exchange of ideas is just great.”

Melody grew up in West Addison but left Vermont to attend Skidmore College and to teach high school for a year in Normandy, France. “I had a great time over there and got to travel to many other countries. But knew I wanted to come back to Vermont.”

Melody now lives in Vergennes. She says she loves being near her large French-Canadian family, which reaches across most of Addison County. Like any Vermonter, Melody tries to make the most of any season. Right now, you’ll find swimming and gardening in her spare time. In the winter, you’ll find her reading, or exploring on her snowshoes. Cooking is a year-round hobby. Although she’s lived in Vermont for most of her life, Melody says the state still surprises her.

“You can live here all your life and see it all, but then you end up in a town you’ve never been to before, and I’m always surprised by something when I get there.”



On Saturday, May 3, VPR staff joined the residents of Perkinsville to help out on Green Up Day. Perkinsville won VPR’s Town Challenge during the March membership drive.

You're Invited to the VPR Listener Picnic



This year's listener picnic is set for Sat. Sept. 20 at the University of Vermont Morgan Horse Farm in Weybridge. The picnic will feature gypsy swing music by VPR Commentator Mike Martin, food, free horse demonstrations and barn tours.

We'll also host a special NPR guest.

Stay tuned for details, and visit VPR.net.

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- 89.5 FM Windsor

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- 94.7 FM Bolton*
- 90.9 FM Burlington / Plattsburgh
- 103.9 FM Hanover*
- 106.9 FM Manchester*
- 99.5 FM Middlebury*
- 99.5 FM Newbury*
- 88.1 FM Norwich
- 93.3 FM Rupert*
- 94.5 FM Shelburne*
- 95.1 FM Sunderland / Manchester
- 106.9 FM Woodstock*

* = low-power translator

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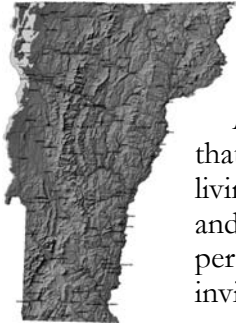
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Radio Flier (USPS 468) newsletter is published tri-annually by VPR with second class postage paid at Burlington, VT, and additional mailing offices. Radio Flier is available to all VPR supporters.



Dispatches from My Vermont

My Vermont is a multi-part VPR news project that focused on what Vermonters value about living here, as well as the challenges we face now and in the future. Below are just two of the many personal essays listeners shared with VPR. We invite you to explore the dozens of comments,

questions, observations, and broadcasts from the *My Vermont Project*. There's still time to join the discussion, too. Post your comments online at VPR.net, or call 1-800-258-1619 to record a message. We'll broadcast new essays occasionally in the coming months.

Hospitality Alive and Well in the Green Mountains

By Jim Woodard

VPR Listener

On the morning of my 33rd birthday in December 2004, I awoke with uncharacteristic morning clarity, thinking: "This is the year I move to Vermont."

I landed in the woods of Underhill in the fall with my dogs and cats, having otherwise shed my life in Boston: a home, a network of friends, a job, a partner. I lay sleepless in my bed those first few weeks, each growl from my dog convincing me that a crazed woodsman would chop through my window screen with an axe – certain overkill, in hindsight – and ridiculously I imagined a legendary story emerging

about the urban ex-pat who thought it okay to sleep with his windows open.

But no woodsman came chopping, and I bought my own chainsaw.

How quickly my Vermont rewarded me: with neighbors eager to meet me, showing up with home-baked cookies; with the first of many breathtaking full moons over my snowy meadow, turning the night-world luminously blue; with the rigors of mud season, and the gentle ribbings from my new neighbor-friends who mocked my brownie-batter driveway, but then showed up on a tractor to grade it for me; with summers of cycling with my buddy Dave, whose home-brewed beer rewards us follow-

ing rides up through Canada via Morse's Line; or the local breakfast spot where Deb doesn't ask, but simply says, "Firehouse? French toast? Over medium?"; or the owl in my woods I've unimaginatively dubbed "Hootie"; and yeah, even those kids who nailed my mailbox with a giant pumpkin last year. Nice shot, guys.

Honestly, it's challenging to live anywhere, isn't it? Every place has its own inherent strengths and disappointing drawbacks. The key is how we, as a community, choose to respond to either. And that's the thing about my Vermont: it's not really mine. It's our Vermont, of which I feel blessed and grateful to be a part. So thanks, Vermont. Thanks for welcoming me in."



I landed in the woods of Underhill in the fall with my dogs and cats, having otherwise shed my life in Boston...



It is becoming a hardship to be an active member of the community, due to time and personal energy constraints.

Hometown Concerns About Fairness for All

By Kate Cadreact

VPR Listener

I have lived in Milton, Vermont my entire life. I grew up on a farm in the 50s and 60s, and married a farmer after graduating from college. I'm currently a registered nurse. Most of the people I work with find it amusing that I still live in the same town where I grew up. Yet my concern is for the broader community of Vermont.

When I see home prices soaring, I worry about how the average Vermont family will afford housing. I contemplate what these families will do in the wake of high fuel prices, rising food prices and the ever increasing taxes.

Today we hear a lot about build-

ing community. But it is becoming a hardship to be an active member of the community, due to time and personal energy constraints.

When I was growing up, my parents belonged to the Grange, were 4-H leaders, schoolboard members, among other things. They were building community, and they were working in their community.

Today, I struggle to participate in my community. I drive out of town to go to work. I don't know my neighbors as well as I might. And I may not know if they are in crisis and need help, until perhaps it is too late.

My overriding concern is that only the highly paid and wealthy individuals will have adequate housing, heat, nutritional food and the

privilege of serving the community. Their children will attend private schools, while public schools suffer budget defeats. Their children will attend college, while it will become more and more difficult for the average Vermont student to pay for college. The average working Vermonter will not be at the table of plenty as the cost of living here escalates. We will become more and more marginalized. People who have money to spare will continue to come into Vermont and buy once-working farms, creating mini-estates and thus contributing to the decline of community and vibrant living. In my Vermont, vibrant living should include everyone.

David Folkenflik Watches the Media

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Q: Why were you drawn to public radio?

A: I've always been around it. My parents and their friends and my friends' parents tended to listen in the car or around the kitchen. I found it a resource that helped me make sense of what was happening in the world and a place to hear stories that made me want just to stop and listen. When I finally got my own car, I often tuned to public radio stations for music and for news.

But as a longtime print reporter, it never occurred to me that I could work here – until after Joan Kroc made her very generous donation to NPR. I wrote about that for my paper, *The Baltimore Sun*. The gift enabled NPR to create a series of new reporter slots, and a job for a media correspondent was one of them. It was a thrilling idea – that I could work at a place that I felt set the standard for presenting and contextualizing the news for its listeners. And as newspapers struggled, I liked the idea of joining a place that was interested in investing in its journalism and

strengthening its news reports instead of making deep cuts.

Q: What do you believe public radio offers the listener?

A: When it comes to news, I think public radio doesn't treat it as a commodity, to milk every last drop of drama out of it – and hence every last ratings point. Instead, it's handled as a necessary part of civic life that still should avoid being a chore. At its best, NPR offers reports and shows that prod, provoke, engage and entertain listeners.

Q: What was the most interesting assignment you've been on?

A: I did a piece back in 2005 about a small paper in Lawrence, Kansas, and how what they were doing to build a multi-media approach to the news far exceeded anything done by papers 20 times their size or larger. The ownership was plowing much of its profits back into the paper and its new online enterprises – and these guys were figuring out ways to supplement traditional reporting. So, for example, when a new basketball arena opened at Kansas University, staffers took pictures from

every seat in the arena, so readers could figure out what the view would look like when they bought tickets. Every single band based in town – and almost all that came through town – would give the paper's web site a few songs. The paper had built up a free library of thousands of songs. All of this and a lot more was there, and at no cost, available at the click of a mouse.

That said, I also really enjoyed doing a story on the stock-picking, chair-tossing, rant-venting CNBC host Jim Cramer. It was great fun – and I think it was good radio, too.

Q: What's it like to be casting a critical eye on the media – from inside the media itself?

A: Well, there's no other way to do it if you're a reporter. You have to set aside, as best you can, the fact that these are your friends or peers or competitors and simply report on them. I've found some journalists prove to be just as thin-skinned or defensive as anyone else. Others turn out to be capable of great grace and determination in pursuit of a worthy story.

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VPR Goes to Fenway Park!

Last month, Mitch Wertlieb and a group of baseball and VPR fans traveled to Fenway Park to see the Boston Red Sox take on the Baltimore Orioles. The Sox won the game 12-1, and Kevin Youkilis hit his first career grand slam! VPR listeners Doug Bither and Zowie and Paige Tuttle, of Colchester, were among the VPR fans at Fenway Park.

(Photo by Mark Vogelzang)

NPR Reporters Capture China's Aftershocks

Continued from page 1

Hsu recalled. “They didn’t say anything, which was odd. A split second after, I realized it was a quake.” Hsu and Block quickly left the building, rolling tape as Block described what she saw.

“The top of the church is shaking... The ground is undulating under my feet,” Block says, her voice rising to a slightly higher pitch than usual.

“I was in shock, but I knew that I needed to capture it on tape,” Block recalled. “It was a natural impulse, since we were rolling, to describe what I was hearing and seeing and feeling. It lasted a long time.”

Hsu felt “stunned and actually quite scared,” she recalled nearly a month later. “Melissa and I were standing quite close together because we had the mikes going. I thought, ‘Wow — she’s narrating this.’”

The quake lasted about three minutes, without apparent damage to the seminary building, so Block and Hsu said goodbye to the pastor, gathered their gear and began walking back to their hotel. As soon as they got a cell phone line, they phoned the story to NPR’s news-cast unit. Later they found Robert Siegel, *ATC* co-host — who fled down 27 flights of hotel stairs during the quake — producer Art Silverman and translator Xiaoyu Xie in a stadium near the hotel.

“We all knew what we needed to do,” said Chris Turpin, *ATC* executive producer. “We had to try to get out and record and find out what had happened and how many people were likely to be affected.”

Flight cancellations delayed reporters from other Western news organizations from getting to the quake zone. CNN and ABC aired Block’s narration of the earthquake and subsequent reporting. Siegel described

his experiences in interviews with NBC and PBS. Photographs by Hsu provided visuals for the TV reports. A May 22 *Washington Post* story on NPR’s China coverage began: “For more than a week, some of the most compelling news coverage on TV has been radio news coverage.”

“Everywhere you went, there was a story to be told,” Hsu said. On May 14, a young Chinese couple invited Hsu and Block to join them during a recovery operation at their collapsed apartment building, where they hoped their toddler son and his grandparents would be found alive under the rubble. The desperate parents, Wang Wei and Fu Guanyu, clung to excavation machinery that was blocking a road in Dujiangyan. Hsu got out of the car and spoke with them. She recalled, “They spoke very quickly and then said, ‘Come with us.’”

During the daylong recovery work, “they seemed very willing to have us there,” Hsu said. At one point, police and military officials arrived on the scene and advised the couple, “Don’t trust the foreign media,” Hsu said. Translator Philip He defused the tension.

“I was amazed that the officials didn’t ask us to leave,” Hsu said. “The family could have asked us to leave at any time.”

But they didn’t. Throughout the day, Hsu, Block and the translator recorded key moments in the long recovery effort.



NPR reporter Melissa Block and producer Brendan Banaszak survey the earthquake rubble in May. (2008 NPR Photo by Andrea Hsu)

When the couple cried after receiving news that their family members had been found and they were all dead, Block didn’t try to hide the raw emotion of the moment. “You can hear it in my voice that I was broken up,” she said.

The *ATC* team has returned home, back to their regular lives, but the Chinese people they met are still in their minds. Block thinks “all the time” about the couple who lost their toddler and their parents.

Hsu can’t shake the memory of arriving at a middle school where the parents waited for word about their kids, she said. “It was probably the most horrible thing I’ve ever seen.”

Turpin recalled a visit to the village of Red Flag, which Siegel visited twice to report on its recovery. When NPR’s team arrived for the second time, a village woman held an umbrella over Turpin’s head, shielding him from the blistering sun.

“We were incredibly moved by the openness and generosity of the people we met during the time that we were there,” Turpin said. “It was so remarkable that, when everyone had every right to not be thinking about anyone else’s welfare, they were so solicitous of visitors who had come to ask them about their tragedy.”

To explore NPR’s coverage of the China earthquake, please visit NPR.org.

Excerpted with permission from Current, the national newspaper about public television and radio. The complete article is online at www.current.org.



All Things Considered host Robert Siegel interviews earthquake victims. (2008 NPR Photo by Art Silverman)

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Vermont Public Radio is proud to acknowledge those who have made a planned gift to help ensure that future generations have access to public radio programming in our community. The Phillips Legacy Society honors the philanthropic leadership and vision of such individuals.

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VPR donors Brendan and Kathy Keleher with VPR Classical host Walter Parker and artist Sabra Field at a VPR reception at the Shelburne Museum celebrating the new Mary Cassatt exhibit.

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Join VPR's Willem Lange on a Journey to Patagonia



Willem Lange

Dear Friends,

I think we've outdone ourselves this year. After trips to Alaska, Iceland and northern Europe, we're now headed south, about as far south as anyone can go without being in Antarctica. We're headed for Chile, Patagonia and the Straits of Magellan!

We'll take a couple of days to explore ancient Santiago, Chile before flying even farther south to the shores of the straits. From that point on, we're in the land of legends. We'll take a day trip to the Torres del Paine, some of the world's most spectacular peaks, formed by a combination of tectonic clashes and subsequent glaciations. Then we'll get a look at the Milodon Cave National Monument, where remains were once found of a

Pleistocene mammal extinct for more than 5,000 years.

I don't know about you, but I've dreamed for at least 60 years of someday sailing in the wake of Magellan. We'll spend four nights on the cruise ship *Cruceros Australis*, on which we'll sail past Tierra del Fuego, the Land of Fire, named after the natives' campfires that early explorers spotted at night.

We're not going to round Cape Horn in a square-rigger, but, weather permitting, we'll at least get a look at it. And all the time, we'll watch for exotic wildlife, including Magellanic woodpeckers, penguins and guanacos.

Next, it's off to Buenos Aires with a local guide to cathedrals, art museums and palaces. This may be the trip of a lifetime, and I hope you'll join me.

Willem

For more information, please visit vpr.net/support or call 1-800-639-2192 to request a tour brochure.

Dear VPR...

REACTIONLINE

I really appreciate Jane Lindholm's interview style and the high level of preparation and understanding that she brings to each guest/interview/issue. I am constantly impressed with how thoroughly she seems to be educated about any given topic or guest. And I can NEVER figure out how she personally feels about a political or controversial issue. I also very much appreciate that she does not shy away from posing difficult or uncomfortable questions to her guests if it helps to clarify an issue – she does it very professionally and with graciousness. Her work is enjoyed and her effort is noticed!

Ann Parker, Walden

Last year I emailed to voice my concern over the change in programming and the loss of classical music in our listening area. Shortly after I emailed, I received a very nice, helpful message from a VPR staff member. I have been so busy over the past year, I never returned the call. Recently I purchased a Sangean HD tuner for our stereo system. I really enjoy the VPR Classical station! It took some time to get used to the new format. Change is difficult for some, like me. VPR Classical is great though. Thank you so much.

Michael Gibbard, Mendon

I am compelled to tell you that *The Story* is my favorite program. I have been listening to public radio since college and your program is my all-time favorite! I just feel so good, sad, excited, touched, sensitive, emotional, worried, uplifted, educated, opened...well, you get the idea! Thank you for having a show that focuses on people- individual and collective - and real, down-to-earth experiences.

Katie Falconer, Morristown

We all know that you can not please all of the people all the time, but I am so tired of this senseless chatter. The news is repeated incessantly, ad infinitum again and again, sometimes with a different accent, but the same old news. I urge you to go back to the old layout, and add all music classical for those who don't want the mix. Maybe I am the only one who is disappointed, but why not have a clear, simple survey to get our collective opinion.

Jim Walker, Arlington

I cannot impress enough how valuable VPR is. I so enjoy the programming on 89.5. You have the best ever of radio, TV and any other media anywhere in the USA, and the world, as far as that goes. But for Vermont, it is priceless. Thank you, VPR!

Fred Patterson, Windsor

I've been listening to VPR Classical more the past week. The programming seems pretty dull. Same old same old. Beethoven symphonies, Brandenburgs, Vivaldi, etc. Seems like everything is something I've heard a hundred times before. Please give the classical top 100 a rest and give us more variety, yes even challenge.

Stephen Campbell, Lyme, NH

I still am not in favor of the talk/music split, but as VPR has decided to go that route, thank you much for including the BBC on the classical station! I have rather lost confidence and interest in NPR news, so I am grateful for the BBC at 5 a.m. on the talk station and the hourly updates.

Karen Stewart, Barnard

Please consider [rebroadcasting *Vermont Edition* at 7 p.m.]. I am one of the working folks who cannot tune in throughout the day; but only when I get home. I have anguished over the loss of *Switchboard* and frustrated to not hear the information and discussions *Switchboard* had provided.

Irene Barna, Middlebury

I came over to New England in March with a group of friends to ski in Killington. On the days I couldn't ski I listened exclusively to VPR or NHPR all day. It was total bliss. It was like listening to BBC Radio 4 but with a community element attached and a gentle sense of humour which was enchanting. I am convinced that your services are essential to the public of your states and so, even as a Brit, I feel it my duty to support public radio in Vermont. I now go to sleep at night listening to VPR over the internet and remain thankful to you all for providing the service.

Gerald Welsby, Manchester, UK

I'm still reeling over the loss of 107.9 to essentially BBC talk radio. I used to cruise the length of the state listening and felt perfectly comfortable with the previous balance of music and talk. Now, I cannot rely to any degree on my beloved classical music. I am disappointed that VPR seemed to enter this new project without due consideration to this problem.

Bruce Wilder, Morrisville

Program Director Jody Evans Heads to Public Radio in Austin, Texas

Vermont Public Radio says goodbye this month to VPR Program Director Jody Evans, who leaves to become program director at public radio station KUT in Austin, Texas. Jody joined VPR in 1998 as a producer and was named Director of Programming in 1999. Her oversight of VPR's multiple program schedules, marketing, on-air fundraising and broadcast services has helped VPR become one of the most listened-to public radio networks in the country.

Jody's many accomplishments at VPR

include the development of VPR Classical, which culminated in VPR's evolution into two distinct services last year.

Jody currently serves as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Public Radio Program Directors Association and is a regular advisor to national programs from NPR, American Public Media and Public Radio International.

Jody's experience, talent and vision have helped make VPR a leader in public radio, and she will be missed.





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VPR Program Schedule		MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
6 AM		BBC World Update (5 to 6 AM)	BBC World Service	
7 AM		Morning Edition	Only a Game	Speaking of Faith
8 AM			Weekend Edition	Weekend Edition
9 AM		BBC Newshour	Car Talk	On the Media
10 AM		On Point	Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me!	A Prairie Home Companion
11 AM			World Café	All The Traditions with Robert Resnik
Noon		Vermont Edition	This American Life	All The Traditions with Robert Resnik
1 PM		The Story	The Splendid Table	
2 PM		Day to Day	Marketplace Money	Studio 360
3 PM		Fresh Air	All Things Considered	
4 PM		All Things Considered	A Prairie Home Companion	Specials
5 PM			Marketplace	My Place
6 PM		The World	American Routes	Selected Shorts
7 PM		Jazz with George Thomas		Friday Piano Jazz
8 PM		BBC World Service	Hearts of Space	BBC World Service
9 PM			Friday Jazz	
10 PM				
11 PM				
Midnight				

BBC World Service overnight

VPR Classical Program Schedule		MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY - SUNDAY
6 AM		Classical Music	Harmonia
7 AM			Sunday Bach
8 AM		Classical Music with Cheryl Willoughby <i>Fridays at 8:06 - Classics for Kids</i>	Classical Music with Gillian Martin
9 AM			
10 AM		Classical Music with Walter Parker	Classical Music with Gillian Martin
11 AM			
Noon		Performance Today with Fred Child	Interlude
1 PM		Classical Music with Joseph Goetz <i>Fridays at 4:06 - Classics for Kids</i>	Saturday Afternoon at the Opera
2 PM			
3 PM		Exploring Music with Bill McClaughlin	Classical Music with Mindy Ratner
4 PM			
5 PM		In Concert	Classical with Mindy Ratner
6 PM			
7 PM		Classical Music with Bob Christiansen (Mon, Tue, Fri) with Alison Young (Wed & Thur)	From the Top
8 PM			
9 PM		Classical with Bob Christiansen	Classical Music with Bob Christiansen
10 PM			
11 PM		Classical with Scott Blankenship (Overnight midnight to 6 AM)	Pipedreams
Midnight			

Classical with Ward Jacobson (M, W-F) (2-6 am)
Classical with Scott Blankenship (Tues)