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The Same, Only Different

One man's view of life and radio on both sides of the border

Despite our historically friendly ties and geographic proximity, the vast majority of Americans and Canadians are not all that familiar with each other's countries. CFRB/Toronto GM Pat Holiday is an exception. Born and raised in the U.S., Holiday has spent many years living and working in Canada. He has looked at life from both sides of the border for the better part of three decades.

From his early days as a jock at CKLW (The Big 8)/Windsor, ON to his current job as GM for a trio of Standard Radio stations in Toronto, including News/Talk CFRB, Holiday's cross-border experience has given him an enlightened perspective on both Americans and Canadians.

In recent months relations between the U.S. and Canada have been strained by our governments' differing views on the war in Iraq. With combat and rhetoric on all sides winding down a bit, it seems like a good time to talk with Holiday about some of the differences and similarities between radio, and life, in America and Canada.

R&R: First, can you give us an update on the SARS situation in Toronto?
PH: Interestingly, the impression

I got watching reports about the outbreak on CNN and some of the other cable news channels vs. what was really going on here was remarkably different. I watched a reporter doing a stand-up from a local mall. There were maybe three people walking down this long corridor behind her, and I'm thinking, "Did she do this before the mall opened?" Because I went to the same mall over the weekend, and it was packed. And you never see anybody walking around with a mask on. Maybe you'll see one yahoo in the middle of 15,000 people. But on TV it looked like everyone was wearing them, and that is just not the case.

R&R: So no real sense of panic about it there?
PH: No, not panic. But it's defi-

nitely a little scary, because, from what we know, 10% of those who contract SARS will die. One out of 10 is a pretty hefty number. But it was contained very quickly, and things here are nothing like the way they were portrayed in the world media. It's an example of how things can go bad quickly if the media turns on you or paints you in the wrong light. The repercussions can be heavy. Economically speaking, I think it could take this city a couple

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of years to get back to full strength after all this.

R&R: I assume this has been a dominant topic on CFRB.

PH: Yes. A lot of it was getting information out there to listeners about how to protect themselves. For example, we let people know that if they were going to go out and buy a mask, there is only one kind that works, and it's only good for four hours. All the rest of them are worthless.

We aired the various press conferences live so that people could hear things firsthand and judge for themselves, which is the way we always try to present things on the station. We took the approach that we were in this like everybody else, things were literally changing by the hour, and here's what you can do to keep this thing from spreading.

R&R: So news is a major component of CFRB's programming.

PH: It's a huge part of what we do. We have a 24/7 radio newsroom with a staff of more than 20 people. We could be a News station if we wanted. The talk on the station gen-

2003 National Day Of Remembrance

This Memorial Day the White House Commission on the National Day of Remembrance and R&R are asking stations to encourage listeners across America to pause and participate in this timely and well deserved salute to those who have died in pursuit of our country's freedoms.

Stations are being asked to promote the "Moment of Remembrance" at 3pm local time on May 26. There are many other ways to participate, including airing a special song written for this national event by Charles Strouse, noted composer of such Broadway hits as *Annie* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. You can download the song for free and get more ideas on how your station can be a part of this very special tribute at www.remember.gov.

Please join Americans across the country this Memorial Day in this special tribute to America's military heroes.

erally comes out of the news reported, because here in Canada we can't really lean on politics the way a lot of U.S. News/Talk stations do. Both parts of our product, news and talk, are really very seamless.

R&R: Is there much difference between working in radio there vs. here in the U.S.?

PH: When I came here as a jock there were a lot of different rules about Canadian-music content that I had to get used to. But today, as a GM, there really aren't as many differences as you might think. One big difference is that consolidation is just beginning to take hold here, from a management point of view. Canadian broadcasters are just learning about something that's been happening in the U.S. radio business since the mid-'90s.

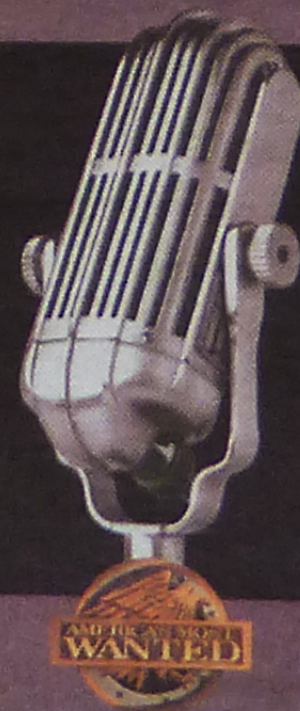
R&R: What's something strikingly different between Canadians and Americans?

PH: People in Canada have a different view of the world. Americans assume that people in every other country see them the same way that

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they see themselves. That's not the case, because the United States looks different to people who are looking into it than it does to those looking out. It's hard to explain, and it took me half a dozen years or so of living in Canada to understand what people meant when they told me that.

R&R: *Some would suggest that Canadians have an inferiority complex when it comes to the U.S. Do you find that to be true?*

PH: I think that was true to some extent when I first came here 20 years ago, but that's not the case anymore. People in Canada adhere to a somewhat different view of the world than Americans do. It's a very multicultural society, and that is particularly true in Toronto.

From my perspective, it seems that if you are an immigrant in the U.S., you become an Italian American, a Greek American, a Mexican American and so on. But immigrants who come to Canada remain Italians, Greeks, Mexicans, etc. You would never hear someone call themselves an Italian Canadian or a Sikh Canadian. People's ethnic roots are not as easily assimilated into the Canadian way of life as they are in America. Somehow that whole process seems to be speeded up in the U.S.

R&R: *The perception of differences between the two countries has probably never been greater than during the re-*

cent buildup to military action in Iraq. Can you give us the Canadian perspective on that issue?

PH: On CFRB you heard from several groups — those who did not believe in the war at all and those who did not agree with the war but did support U.S. soldiers over there. Then there were others who were totally in support of it and thought that Canada should have actively jumped in with the Americans and the British.

Polls here showed people to be about 70% against the war and 30% for it, but as it became clear that it was going to be over relatively quickly and hundreds of thousands of people were not going to die, that began to change pretty quickly. By the end feelings ran about even on both sides.

I also think that a key difference is something that seems very basic to the American personality. People in other countries assume that when you are going to invade another country, that means you are going in to take over and occupy it. But I know from growing up in the U.S. that that really doesn't seem to be part of the American personality.

It seems to me that the most awful thing you could do to an American would be to take away his freedom. So the American attitude is, "OK, we're coming over there to set you free. When we're done you'll be good to go; then we'll go back home. I hope you like us when we leave." The idea of occupying another coun-

try doesn't seem to be, at least to me, something that is an option in the American psyche. Having grown up there, I believe it's something that's really at the core of the average American.

R&R: *What's the corresponding attitude in Canada?*

PH: A lot of people in Canada are proud — and they should be — of being peacekeepers in the world. If you want someone to go in and be unbiased and help maintain the post-war peace in a situation like Iraq and you want a country that nobody has any axe to grind with, Canada's the one. People here are proud of that, and God knows there's a need for it in a million places around the world today. But, again, it's an example of that different view of the world I was talking about earlier.

R&R: *Could "hot" talk shows like Deminski & Doyle or Opie & Anthony play in Canada?*

PH: Possibly. Blue stuff can certainly fly here, but if you were to cross some of the lines I've heard American radio hosts cross, everybody from citizens' groups to the government would really come down on the station.

R&R: *How does the role of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission differ from that of the FCC?*

PH: My impression of the FCC at the moment is that it has taken a hands-off, let-the-marketplace-handle-it-on-its-own approach, although recently it does seem that it's becoming a little more actively involved in some content issues.

Here, the CRTC has an agenda that it would like the broadcast system to fulfill regarding cultural issues throughout the country. In other words, it has things it wants to accomplish, and although there are a certain amount of free-market forces in the broadcasting industry, the CRTC has a hand in moving — or

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pushing — those free-market forces where it deems they should go. There are mandates, and it seems the CRTC uses its power to make sure that they're fulfilled more than the FCC does in the U.S.

R&R: *Is the CRTC directly involved in a station's content?*

PH: There are definitely some rules here that don't exist in the U.S., but you quickly get used to them. On music stations you have to play 35% Canadian content. That means that about every third song has to be Canadian, and it can't be all Celine Dion. If Celine cuts a CD with David Foster in Los Angeles and is singing a Diane Warren song, that would not be Canadian content, so it wouldn't count.

On the Talk radio side, the CRTC sets the line — and by that I mean the line for things like taste, slamming women, slandering somebody or slandering an ethnic group — higher than it seems to be set in the U.S. As a result, we try very hard here to let hosts know where the line is. They're good enough broadcasters to learn how to effectively do what they do and still work within the parameters.

R&R: *Listening to talk talent in America, the attitude expressed toward management is often very confrontational. Is that common with Canadian talent too?*

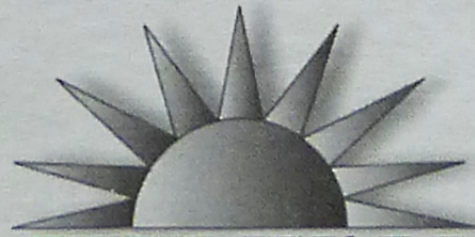
PH: Speaking for our stations, I don't think so. People here are paid well, they're treated well, and they have the backing of management. They know we're behind them, so they tend to be fearless when they go on the air; they know that nobody's going to be on their back. We're a programming-oriented company that sees talent as valuable. If you lose your talent, you will lose your station. It's really that simple.

R&R: *As someone who has lived and worked on both sides of the border, is there anything you wish Americans understood better about Canadians and vice versa?*

PH: I wish people on both sides of the border could live in the other country for at least a year or two. I think that would be a huge eye-opener for everyone. I also wish that both sides better understood that the people and the politics of a country can sometimes be totally different.

After years of programming and managing across this country and the U.S., I have concluded that Americans and Canadians are more the same than they are different. People are people, no matter where you go. They all have desires and fears that are, more often than not, identical. But politics is a big issue that will always have a lot of influence in defining both countries in each other's eyes.

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