

Kevinandbeanarchive.com interview with Bean Baxter 11-18-08

Question- You were born in England- how long did you live there and what brought you to the United States?

Answer- I moved to America when I was 15. My dad (the “chief!”) was in the navy and we lived all over the world until coming here. he met my mom, a Brit, while stationed in London and they were married 45 years until she passed away about 5 years back.

You attended the University of Maryland- what did you study? What was your career goal in college?

I became a mighty Terrapin because a) it was my state school and I could afford it, and b) because they had a pretty well-known radio and TV department. Jim Henson and Connie Chung are two of the more famous media alums and dozens of popular radio and TV folks in the D.C. area. They also had (and still have, I think) a pretty good college radio station, WMUC. That was where I spent almost all my time, ditching many classes, and eventually dropping out after two years. I never graduated. I knew what I wanted to do for a living and couldn't reconcile passing up on a chance to do it full-time so I could continue to take classes that wouldn't help me at all with the career goal I had.

What jobs other than radio have you held, if any?

I've had lots of jobs. Most of the non-radio ones were in retail. Records stores for about seven years, for instance. Heard a lot of great records in those years!

You have worked at several stations in several markets with several formats-KIX-106, WPGC, WAVA, KZZP, X-100. What was memorable about any of these jobs/radio stations and why?

I've worked at some great stations where I made memories for life and some crappy stations that I barely remember. My favorite memories are the early stations, the tiny AM stations where I started out: WINX in Rockville, Maryland, WOHN in Herndon, Virginia, and WYRE in Annapolis, MD. 2 of those were daytimers only, by-the-way. Just really long hours and paying my dues come to mind. Live broadcasts from a muffler shop in 25 degree weather, six hours on one station, driving like a crazy man to the next one to do six hours on that one. Working lots of overnights and lots of holidays. Plus I have fond memories of some of the older deejays and program directors who helped me and taught me how to do stuff.

How did you come up with the name Flash Phillips? What nicknames did you have at other stations?

Flash Phillips was given to me by my boss at WAVA in Arlington, VA. About 45 minutes before I went on the air to do my first shift he informed me that Gene Baxter was not cool sounding enough and he came up with Flash on the spot. I did not have a choice in the matter and had to be Flash for 3 years. I have not used anything but Bean or my real name other than that. Oh, wait, I lied. I had an off-air job in San Francisco for a couple of years and occasionally would do part time air work for fun and used the name “Todd Fisher” after a radio pal of mine from KZZP, Phoenix.

Was it at KZZP in Phoenix where you met Kevin Ryder, Mr Weatherbee and Jimmy Kimmel (and even Mark "Richard Cheese" Davis)? Was there any foreshadowing of what might come to be someday?

Mr. Weatherbee was already gone by time I got there....I think he was at KMEL in San Francisco by then. Jimmy Kimmel was gone too – maybe to Seattle and KZOK by then, I'm not sure about that one.

That is where I met Kevin Ryder and Mark Davis and Doug the Slug too. Kevin and I did a few Saturday night shows together for fun and it was always a blast. It was much later, when I was in San Francisco that we started talking about putting a morning show together. That seemed like the best shift with the chance to travel and interview cool people and make more money. We put together a demo from a middle of the night shift in San Francisco and sent it to a few friends. It was Todd Fisher, who was in Milwaukee by this time, who sent the tape to his friend Andy Schuon who was the new program director of KROQ then. Andy is the one who flew us in and offered us the job. Coincidence department: one of Andy's childhood friends was Bryan Suits, who worked on our show very briefly in the early 90s (remember Squishy the Clown?) and has been one of my best friends ever since. He lived in Seattle until earlier this year when he came down to L.A. to do the night shift on KFI. His radio partner is the former Kevin and Bean intern Kennedy. Small world, right?

How was it decided that Kevin's name would go first in the show title?

I have no idea about that one.

What is your favorite part about being at KROQ?

Hmmm. Tough one. I don't know. Being able to see a hottie on TV and then have someone else get her on the phone for me to talk to comes pretty close.

Least favorite?

Playing music in the morning. Our show could be so much better with more time. Every single break is a race to get it done in time.

Who have been some of your favorite guests on the show? How about some of your least favorite?

I enjoy the classics: Adam West, William Shatner, Regis Philbin, that ilk. Least favorite? The ones who are boring or too serious. That is many of them, as you know.

How were you able to swing keeping your job while moving to Seattle?

I decided I was going to move and told KROQ that it was already a done deal. I offered to try the long-distance thing if they wanted but let them know I was going to find work in Seattle if they didn't want to. Since we already had 9-1/2 years at the station they thought it would be worth trying. If it had not worked pretty quickly we would have just gone our separate ways and I would have been fine with that. It was more important for me to get out of the bad place then to keep the job. Now I have been in Seattle for as long again as I was in L.A.!

How much time typically goes into preparing for a show? What is usually involved? How are the various tasks divided up?

How much time is show prep?? All. Every thing that happens it content or potential content. Every TV show or walk to the mailbox or dinner out you have to keep your eyes open in case anything interesting happens. Some of the best stories and phone topics come out of what seems like nothing. Like Ralph being the eVite Nazi last week. Real life is funny. We divvy stuff up as we go on who wants to do what. We split up the TV shows. We bring in audio from and switch off on looking at books and DVDs and stuff. By now it runs pretty smoothly although I can't say enough good things about the support team we have. The amount of material that Omar and Mike bring to the show is fantastic. Dave, Lisa, Alex and Miss Cleo are all keeping their eyes open for us, too.

What else do you do behind the scenes?

Not sure. I do the show opens and Friday closes. We all write stuff for kroq.com sometimes.

Obviously, I try, as we all do, to brainstorm a lot on current events and stay informed.

How is it decided who covers what TV show for highlights, etc? How much time does it take to get clips pulled from a TV show for recap segment? Are you able to get an east coast feed for prime time shows or do you have to be up late watching/editing for the next day's show?

I am super lucky to have some east coast feeds because one could get them in the early days of Direct TV. We all have taped stuff and just gotten up extra early to get audio from it the next morning too though. If you know the exact clip you want it only takes a few minutes but going through an hour long show can take more than an hour.

What is the biggest misconception people have about you? How about any misconceptions about the show or others on the show?

Lots of people don't think I really live in Seattle. Not sure why they think we would fake that but maybe they just can't picture it because radio announcers on TV are all in the same room at the same time. People do and always will get us all mixed up too. Which one has kids? Which guy does voices? Who's the 'high school musical fan,' etc?

Name some things you feel have been the most successful on the show- bits, events, etc.

I'm happy about 'Let's talk about Megan Fox' going over so well this year. The Afro Line has been a goldmine over the years too. I love that. Everyone loves Ralph's Showbiz Beat. The "Don't Bogart" song has become a real fan favorite. There seems to be more interest in the Miss Double December competition each year, too, which is awesome.

Name some things that were dismal failures or embarrassments (that don't involve things that start with "J" and end in "erry Lewis", or that start with "U" and end in "nsolved Mysteries"). (I don't have to include that last part in the question)!

The question is fine. And funny. I can't think of any right now though but will ponder that one for a while. You named the two biggest. Obviously, there have been thousands of less-than-successful breaks and ideas that we just try to put aside and move on from. More goes wrong than right on most days in terms of the show meeting our expectations.

What has taken the most amount of work for the least amount of payoff?

I'm sure there are some but nothing comes to mind! Maybe this interview?

What has taken the least amount of work for the most payoff?

Well, all the hard work done by others that Kevin and Bean get the credit for. Ralph's one million impressions, Omar's hilarious production pieces, Psycho Mike's many, many parody songs and voice bits too. Those guys deserve as much credit as we do for the success of the show.

What do you do with your spare time?

I used to blog every day and really miss that. I go record shopping at least two days every week. I watch TV and movies. The rest of the time I try to get my wife to not leave me and try to manage the thirteen pets we have at home. We lost three this year but gained three, too, so we are back at 13. I hear that is a lucky number.

How many foreign countries have you been to? State parks? Atypical museums?

Many of all three, fortunately. I love to travel. Last year in Kansas I saw the "world's largest collection of the world's smallest replicas of the world's largest things." That was pretty memorable.

How did you meet your wife?

At the old KROQ studio in Burbank. Her little brother was a fan and Donna called in asking if we would give her a tape of something he wanted a copy of. When she walked in one morning to pick it up, I just knew. I even told the guys after she left that day that I was going to marry her. I did, five months later and that was more than seventeen years ago.

List 10 desert island CDs.

How about just three?

Pet Sounds (Beach Boys)

Frampton Come Alive (Peter Frampton)

The River (Bruce Springsteen)

List 10 desert island movies.

How about just three?

It's A Wonderful Life

Apocalypse Now

Star Wars

Do you ever see yourself outgrowing all of this silliness?

They will probably ask me to leave because I will be too old to appeal to the younger demo [graphic]. But I don't think I will feel that old. I can't see not being interested in the now. And I hope I will always see the humor in it.

What would you do after the Kevin & Bean show ends? Simply retire and do the things you love doing? Still work in radio?

I would love to do nothing if I could afford it which is unlikely. Maybe I'll end up back on WINX in Rockville, Maryland, although, I'm not sure they are still on the air...

Is your brother as really as aloof as the Thanksgiving-left-his-girlfriend-waiting-in-the-car-story suggests he is?

Yes he is and that is 100% a true story. He is very quiet and hard to talk to, but a bright boy nonetheless.

THANK YOU!

No, thank you and the many Kevin and Bean fans, especially the Superfans. You guys are the best. I don't understand you but am grateful for you.