

Radio's morning crew rocks to get its listeners rolling



George Baier of Beverly Hills is the voice of Dick the Bruiser, Rocky, Bullwinkle, Popeye and other characters Monday through Saturday mornings on WRIF.

Albion choir tours

Catherine Bennett, a junior from Farmington Hills, performed with the Albion College Choir on their annual spring tour March 5 to 12.

The group, under the direction of Melvin S. Larimer, chairman and associate professor of the music department, traveled to 13 cities in Michigan and Illinois.

The choir, including a woman's chorus and men's glee club, performed selections by Nysted, Christiansen, Bach, Graun, Randall Thompson, Schubert,

Ralph Vaughn Williams, Brian Kelly and Brahms, among others.

They also sang spirituals arranged by Burleigh and William Dawson.

Larimer, a 1952 Albion graduate, is also director of high school choirs at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan.

Bennett, a 1977 Farmington High School graduate, is the daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Gerald L. Bennett, 21265 Robinwood.

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Who'd have guessed cartoons would go over big on radio?

A generation that grew up watching Popeye, and Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons, along with Dick the Bruiser wrestling bouts, is now listening to those characters Monday through Saturday mornings on WRIF-FM, Southfield.

Recent Arbitron ratings for the 18- to 49-year-old age group put Jim (J.J.) Johnson and his sidekick, George Baier, on top of the heap in the heavy competition from 6-10 a.m. In the overall ratings, WRIF ranks fourth behind WJR's J.P. McCarthy, WWJ-AM's all-news format and CKLW's morning funny man Dick Purtan with a 7.4 share of the market.

The WRIF morning crew, which sounds like a carload of characters, actually is comprised of Jim (J.J.) Johnson, 27, of Pleasant Ridge and George Baier, 23, of Beverly Hills. Baier is the voice of most of the morning crew, including Dick the Bruiser, Rocky, Bullwinkle, Popeye, Jackie Stewart, who does the traffic report, Detroit Tiger announcer George Swell, who does the "Tiger Cool-down," and Mayor Coleslaw Young, "from the thity of Detroit."

"The only other 'real' characters are news person Jane Burton, who is referred to as 'Miss Information' and Eli Zaret, who does the sports show."

REAL SPORTSCASTER George Kell and wrestler Dick the Bruiser reportedly are aware of Baier's audio caricature of them and don't seem to mind. In fact, Richard Atlas, who wrestles professionally as Dick the Bruiser, has even agreed to do a current radio commercial, with voice-over by Baier, promoting the station.

"His (Dick the Bruiser's) voice is actually different than the one I do," Baier admits. "But it's as I remember it — the old wrestler who'd grab the microphone from the ring announcer."

One might think King Features, which syndicates Popeye comics and Jay Ward Productions, of Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoons, would claim copyright infringement after learning their cartoon characters are reading risque public service announcements about venereal disease over the airwaves of a rock station.

But no one's complained yet, says Baier. He figures its fair game, comparing his use of the voices to that of any mimic impersonating famous voices.

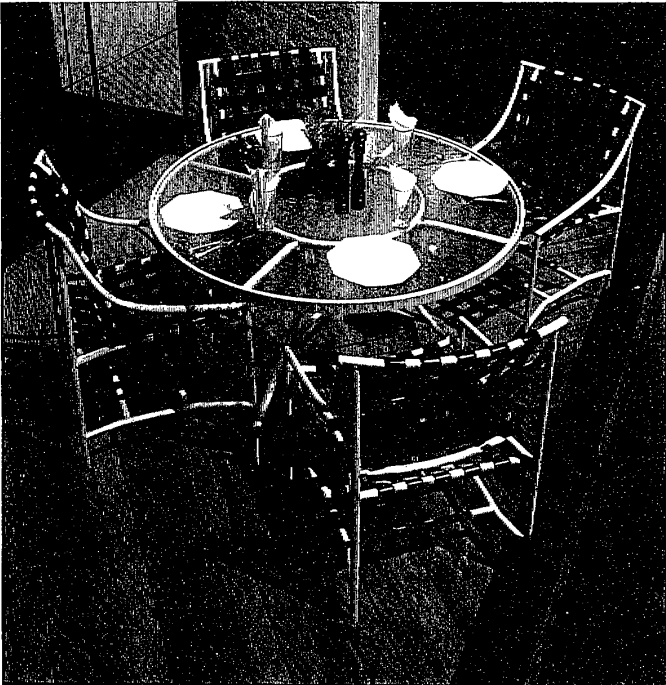
"As long as the voices are a spoof," says WRIF director of promotions Ruth Whitmore, "we're on solid legal ground."

Copyright problems would come up only if WRIF produced cartoons with the name "Rocky and Bullwinkle" or "Popeye." And there's little chance of a radio station showing cartoons over the air.

The only flack they've gotten is over a recent bit where Dick the Bruiser smokes marijuana to relieve his glaucoma condition. Some callers thought the bit encouraged illegal activity among young listeners, said Baier.

(Continued on Page 11A)

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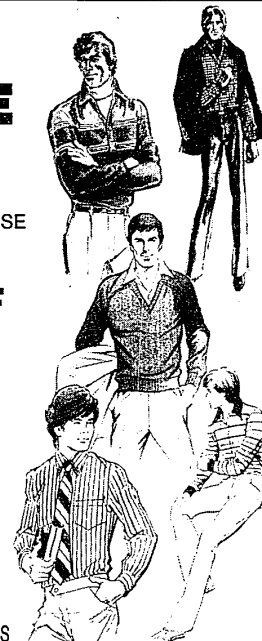
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