

Ze Van's outlook is sunny again

By Mary Doerr
special writer

Barry ZeVan, the Channel 4 (WDIV) TV weatherman, has had a professional career of highs and lows. And although he likes the highs better, he has found that it has been the lows that have made him stronger.

"Hardships can either destroy you or make you," he said. "I think the more adversity you face, the less frightening everything is. It toughens you."

"But it is not a voracious toughness, but a comical toughness."

Adversity is no stranger. When WDIV brass wanted to hire ZeVan last September as a weekend weatherman, their three-week search found him writing in Boston.

During the previous eight months of unemployment, ZeVan had been forced to give up his 14-room home in Southfield and put his furniture in storage while he crossed the country looking for work.

He was in Los Angeles for a time, working on a yet-to-be-released Burt Reynolds film, "Paternity," and was about to begin work on a "Love Boat" episode when the actors' strike began.

"It was one of the worst periods of my life," ZeVan said in a recent interview. "Being unemployed is terrifying because you think nobody cares."

THE MONTHS without regular employment were particularly hard for ZeVan because during his 35 years on radio and TV, he has worked seven days a week most of the time.

Also, like so many people, ZeVan was raised on the work ethic — that if you worked hard and did a good job, you just naturally got ahead.

People told him during those months to enjoy his unemployment and to look upon it as a vacation. "My reaction to that was, those people have missed the boat," said ZeVan.

Thumbing through his appointment book, he added, "You can see from the number of appointments, I worked harder when I was unemployed."

ZeVan has worked in numerous radio and TV stations across the country. He has enjoyed the nation's highest ratings for weathercasts and his income has been in the six figures. Other times he has been near bankruptcy. He has owned Rolls Royces and he has had to exist at times on diets of Cocoa Puffs and tuna fish.

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Channel 4 (WDIV) TV weather forecaster Barry ZeVan relaxes at home in front of photos of celebrities he has encountered in a colorful career. ZeVan, actor, skiler, columnist and prankster, at one time had the highest ratings in the country for a weather forecaster. He's also had eight months of unemployment.

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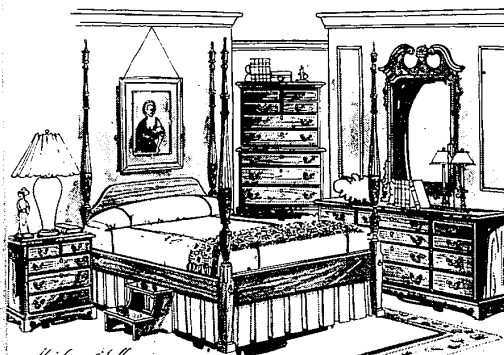
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