

# Broadcaster likes driving guests crazy

By Shirlee Iden  
staff writer

Most people like it when their jobs go smoothly, routinely. Howard Kenig likes it when people go berserk.

"People go manic on my radio show. Things just slip out," says the automotive broadcaster.

His idea of success is to ask a question that will unleash an animated tirade from an auto executive, government official, or some other interview subject.

Kenig does a live broadcast every Sunday for several hours. He does interviews, receives phone calls and presents features. As long as it's about cars, it keeps him in his element.

His broadcasts in this market are through the ABC network at WXYZ in Southfield. But he eats, sleeps and works in a small Southfield apartment that doubles as a broadcast site.

An integral part of the furnishings is the sophisticated equipment, consisting of converted tape recorder, special telephones and microphones that can put him on the airwaves right from home.

It may not be the "Today" show but "The Auto Show" is as important to Kenig as the NBC news show is to Jane Pauley or Tom Brokaw.

Kenig calls himself a "psycho-engineer," one interested in the way people relate to cars. He contends this differs from area to area in this country.

His weekly show is done live. "I won't tape things because people need to interact," he says. "People are terrified to come on my show for that reason, but they always want to come back."

BY THE TIME was 17 he already thought he wanted to be an engineer.

"I escaped from Philadelphia and came to Detroit thinking I could get to design cars," he says. "And I did get a job at Chevy engineering. I applied as a specifications writer and I was hired."

During the two years he worked for GM, he went to school at night at Henry Ford Community College and Lawrence Institute of Technology. "But I wasn't finding what I wanted in school."

Kenig held a string of jobs, from working in research at Swedish Crucible Steel, to writing auto repair manuals, to designing a wide range of products for motorcycles and for do-it-yourselfers. He even wrote a book called "The Talking Car Book."

## people

"Everywhere I went I found interesting perspectives on the way people deal with cars," he says. "If there's any reason I'm not terribly mainstream, it's because I see things in stick and ball terms, very simply."

Kenig contends that because people relate to cars differently, ultimately, the American automobile companies will have to regionalize.

"We're sitting in Southfield 20 miles from the east side and there are differences," he says.

"The auto companies are defensive about the incursion of foreign cars and that only involves an area 100 miles inland on the east and west coasts."

**"IN MY RADIO** program I try to get quality information that focuses on local needs.

"Like the car industry bellyaches about business, yet the dealerships close five nights a week, Saturdays and Sundays. That's incredible."

Kenig's broadcasts go to five cities regularly and he does "drop-ins" occasionally to others. He develops material for particular cities and dispenses it through the network.

Most days, he is test driving different cars so that he can prepare commentary for his program.

"I drive each car five or six days to report on it for my audience," he explains.

In his own garage, there's a 1969 MX, a classic, but he doesn't get much chance to drive it.

Several years ago, while working for a Philadelphia dealership and running seminars for them, he wrote a script that a radio station heard about. They asked me to be a guest and within two weeks I had my own show," he says.

Kenig took to the radio business and with his executive producer, Cliff Carroll, is actively trying to add car-related outlets for his program.

He also does some television, including appearances on Channel 7's "Kelly and Company" and also on shows in other cities.

**"WHAT'S GREAT** is I get to play at my work. I live where I work and I work when I want. I get to travel everywhere in the country or anywhere there's an automotive story breaking."

Kenig says he broke a national story recently on unflexible cars that caused a tremor in the automotive business.



Howard Kenig holds forth in his Southfield apartment/studio. Cars are his favorite topics of conversation.

MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

"You can't always simulate a real working performance in the lab and that's where problems come in," he says.

As for TLC, he said consumers have to recognize there's a element of "ignorability" with domestic cars, but a Japanese car is finely honed and must be properly maintained according to the owner's manual.

"And there's a risk in any technology, he says."

Kenig tries to present a cross-section of ideas.

"My angle isn't talking about statistics or disasters. I want the people angle," he insists.

And in his "stick and ball" terms, he adds: "I'm not objective, I'm out to debunk things."

**"The auto companies are defensive about the incursion of foreign cars, and that only involves an area 100 miles inland on the east and west coasts."**

— Howard Kenig



## INSIDE ANGLES

STEWART MERRITT and his stalwart crew have left Waterton Provincial Park in Alberta for a 3,000-mile trek along the Continental Divide to Mexico, reports Stewart's brother, Steve.

The Farmington Hills brothers are trying to raise \$250,000 to help cure blindness in Nepal. Steve stayed home to garner pledges.

Both brothers are volunteers for the Society for Epidemiology and Voluntary Assistance. SEVA has joined with the Nepal Health Ministry to prevent blindness caused by malnutrition and trachoma in Nepal, a small Himalayan country between India and Tibet.

IN 1969 William Osgood was dubbed the class clown when he graduated from North Farmington High School. This spring he graduated again but this time he was voted most likely to succeed.

Osgood, who graduated on June 19 from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., won the Richard Keating Award as most likely to succeed. He also received the Waldorf Astoria Award for highest scholastic achievement in his class.

Osgood, son of Anne and Dick Osgood of Farmington Hills, has joined Host International, which is opening a chain of restaurants on the east coast.

**OK, SENIORS** get out your golf clubs and start swinging. The first of two senior citizen golf tournaments at White Lake Oaks Golf Course in Pontiac is scheduled for July 10. Women retirees over 55 and men retirees over 58 are invited to participate in the annual Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission Senior Citizen Tournament. Tee-off time will be 7 a.m. for the nine-hole competition. First- and second-place Calloway System trophies will be awarded in each age category. The cost will be \$2 a person for both Oakland County and non-county residents. On July 24, White Lake Oaks will host the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association Senior Citizen Tournament for golfers from around the state.

White Lake Oaks is at 991 S. Williams Lake Road in Pontiac. For more information, call 699-2700.

**IT'S THAT TIME** again. The 13th Annual Farmington Founders Festival Softball Tournament, sponsored by the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, is planned for July 24-26.

The tourney is open to teams that play in the Farmington Hills parks men's adult softball leagues or a team comprised of 75 percent employees or residents of the Farmington area. No all-star teams are permitted.

Teams may register at the parks office, 31555 11 Mile, Monday through Friday until 4:30 p.m., through July 17. A team fee of \$85 is payable with

registration. Call the parks office at 474-6115 for more information.

**RECORD COLLECTORS**, now there's a convention just for you. It's planned for Sunday, July 12, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Southfield VFW Hall, 24222 W. Nine Mile, a block west of Telegraph.

New and used records, tapes, posters, buttons, magazines, books and T-shirts will be available for sale or trade. General admission is \$1. Dealer tables are available for \$15. For more information, call Mike at 355-2898 or 348-3049.

**FREEDOM FROM SMOKING**, a 20-day quitting plan available from the American Lung Association, has been announced to coincide with the celebration of America's freedom on July 4. While the nation celebrates its independence, millions of Americans can preserve their independence from a habit harmful to health, safety and bank accounts.

The association manual, "A Lifetime of Freedom from Smoking," teaches recent smokers to become non-smokers by spending 20 minutes a day in a series of activities and self-rewards designed to maintain the non-smoking habit. It helps individuals anticipate situations likely to produce strong cravings for a cigarette.

Information about the self-help non-smoking manual and the 20-day freedom from smoking quitting plan is available from the association at 963-3029.

**INCREDIBLE INSECTS**, including the pest variety, will be the subject of a Detroit Science Center workshop scheduled for July 21-23, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Students will learn about arthropods and insects.

Each class will be three hours long. A lab fee of \$20 is charged to cover supplies and field trips. Class size is limited to 15 students.

On July 21, students will learn to distinguish between insects and arthropods, orders of insects and techniques of relaxing and mounting. July 22, concealing coloration, field trip to Proud Lake Recreation Area; July 23, specimens will be gathered, identified and mounted.

**ALL BREED** dog obedience training registration will be taken on July 6. Registration will be at 7 p.m. for both classes and a health certificate from a licensed vet showing up to date shots is necessary. There are classes for beginners and advanced.

Classes are held at 31775 Grand River. For more information, call Thelma Gothan at 935-4225.

Our softly tucked blouse by Voila...a top with many talents

You won't tuck this one away. This is the kind of blouse you'll wear with everything in your wardrobe, everywhere you go this summer. It has a casual appeal with push-up sleeves, squared neck and back-elastic waist. And a dressy look with tucks and soft-shirred shoulders, in silky polyester crepe de chine. It's everything from suit shirt to evening blouse, and it's yours for \$37. Select cream, sand, violet or red in sizes 6 to 14. In Hudson's New Reflections.

hudson's

