

NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

Interview with John Lanigan Lanigan In The Morning My Life In Radio

Cleveland radio and television personality, John Lanigan has been a media fixture in the Cleveland area for a total of 47 years. He retired from radio in 2014. He continues to do The Spew with Mike Trivisanno on WTAM 1100 from his home in Florida. Discussing his recent book, "Lanigan In The Morning, My Life In Radio" (Gray Publishers, Cleveland) John has a wealth of stories and Cleveland memories that readers will enjoy.

"I had no intentions of writing a book," said John. "Author, Pete Jedick contacted me and asked if I would consider writing a book. I had been approached before and turned down the offers. I didn't think I was worth a book. Pete persuaded

me to talk with him for a while which I agreed so it was him that nagged me into writing the book."

One of the highlights of John's career was interviewing Hollywood actor, Clint Eastwood on the set of "The Outlaw Josey Wales" in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1976. "I didn't think of him as a big star. I didn't look at it that way because I had a job to do," explains John. "My thought was I have to make him look good and ourselves. You do get a little nervous but you work past it. Clint Eastwood was very easy going. After the interview we went horseback riding."

John shares memorable stories in his book. His assortment of experiences

have brought laughs, scars, nausea and everything in between. John was asked one year to go parasailing to open the Cleveland Air Show. It was a memorable experience but not a pleasant one. "They almost killed me," said John. "The guy driving the boat didn't know what he was doing. I was headed right for the break wall at high speed. He was going back and forth with the boat. I wondered what he was doing. I hit the water hard and seriously injured my knee. When I got out of the water, no one said a word. I somehow made it back to my car and drove home and my wife took me to the hospital. I had to wear a cast and was in a wheelchair for a while. I never heard from the people who had asked me to go parasailing."

Another experience was flying with the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and U.S. Navy Blue Angels. The Blue Angels gave John a tougher way to go as he thought they were coming in for a landing when they shot back up into the air again at a 90-degree angle. "I thought I was going to be sick but you can't throw up because you're wearing a helmet and then you'll have more problems," remembers John. "They were messing with me probably because I had flown with the Thunderbirds first. I was glad when it was over."

"After the book was published I had thought of a few stories that should have been included," said John. One such story is his interview with actor and comedian, Jerry Lewis. Jerry had been known to be a cantankerous interview subject. "Jerry was appearing in Akron. We had set up an interview with him by phone. We knew he had the reputation of being notoriously tough. He had been a bad interview for everyone I had encountered," explains John. "When we interviewed him he was in a limo that was bringing him back to Cleveland. We spoke for at least 30 minutes. He seemed to be having a good time. We were having a good time. After the interview was over, I thanked him and told him I was big fan of his and Dean (Martin). Then we went back to our regular programming. Ten to fifteen minutes later, Jerry Lewis shows up at our



studio! He had told the limo driver that he had fun talking to us and wanted to know if they were near the station. The driver brought Jerry to the studio, he walked in and asked for "Lanigan" and did another 30 to 40 minutes with us on the air. Jerry said he had so much fun he thought he would stop by and talk some more. Everyone said that was highly unusual because that wasn't Jerry's style."

Radio was in its glory days when John Lanigan was at the mic. Times have definitely changed. "Radio is much different now than when I was starting. I don't think radio personalities are doing the kinds of activities we used to do. There are only a few stations, which are owned by one company. If something costs money or if there is any liability there isn't any interest to be involved."

John was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2013. "I did not expect to be doing radio this long. My mom kept telling me that I needed to find another career as back up because I might lose my voice. (laughs) Thankfully it's been a career that has worked well."

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