

Peel Biography Bk Doering, Charles
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Radio veteran calls 'em as he sees 'em

Newsman's on-off air personas are bear-ly distinguishable

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By EDQ VAN BELKOM

Charles Doering's personality can best be described as that of a bear. On the air, he's like a grizzly, off the air he's more like a teddy.

The opinionated news commentator of CFRB has been living in Mississauga for 16 years and has been a part of Canada's largest radio station for 20.

On the air, Doering's news and comments have given him a reputation of being somewhat of a redneck, an identity he feels is unjust. "I'm tired of being known as a strong law-and-order right winger. I detest being labelled to the right of Attila the Hun. I'm not involved in politics, I've voted for all three parties and I call each story as I see it."

Off the air in the more personal atmosphere of an interview, Doering cracks a smile and slides easily into friendly conversation. "I'm really not like that at all, I'm much less serious off the air, I enjoy what I'm doing, if it wasn't enjoyable I wouldn't stay in it for a minute."

But doing the news injected with personal comments hasn't always been fun. Doering recalls the scariest moment of his life occurred a few years ago after he criticized a group of teachers for putting themselves ahead of the students during a strike.

"A teacher phoned me up and said, 'I know where you live, I know the names of your children and where they go to school. Watch them, they may not get back'; that really shook me," he said, still affected by the recollection of the ordeal.

There have been other incidents involving damage to material belongings but Doering says he accepts them as part of the job and has never considered changing his style.

Doering got his start in the radio business in typical fashion. After attending Ottawa's Carleton University in 1947-48 for mechanical engineering, he got a job at a small 250-watt radio station in Cornwall. He says he "no more wanted to be a mechanical

engineer than fly to the moon," so he began in radio, at the bottom. He was on air doing the odd station identification and filled in the hours doing everything else from filing to washing windows.

From that auspicious beginning in Cornwall, Doering then travelled to Sarnia and Brantford before joining CFRB as a reporter. He currently does three morning newscasts at 6:30, 7:30, and 8:30 and his second broadcast is most listened to with a 20 share of the market. The closest competition has an 11 share.

CFRB's program director, Ralph Lucas, commends Doering and his newscasts for giving the station six morning time slots with more than 200,000 listeners. But even though Lucas credits some of CFRB's success to Doering, that doesn't mean he always agrees with his opinions. "I'm comfortable listening to his style. He can be unnecessarily inflammatory at times but that makes good radio. I pay my news commentators to have opinions, not for the opinions they have," Lucas said.

Doering says the complexion of the news business has changed over the last 25 years, and it's not been for the better.

"It used to be that we waited for the news to happen and then we reported it. Then, because of competition and the immediacy of the electronic media, we reported it as it happens. Now we try and beat the news before it happens," he said, citing examples of government reports being leaked, reported and analyzed even before officially being made public.

He admits that he is guilty of trying to "beat the news," but says it has to be done because of the competition.

But what does set Charles Doering apart from other radio newsmen is the placing of his personal comments right into the newscast. He says this way of presenting the news makes his newscasts more interesting and entertaining.

"News in newspapers is a business. A reader can skim headlines until he finds what he wants. Radio news is still a business but a listener hears all the news so it's more of an entertainment business.

"Some people call me up and say I have no right to do that (comment). I tell them I have every right to express my opinion and then it's up to them to either agree or disagree with what I say."

Doering moved to Mississauga in 1970 because "it was new, progressive and there was good transportation in and out of the city." He now keeps house with his wife Shirley, daughter Tara 18, and twins Dawn and Todd 16.

Living in Mississauga and doing the morning newscasts in Toronto may seem a little hectic, but Doering says travel time has never been a problem. "One of the bonuses of getting up at 4 a.m. is that I can get from Cawthra and the QEW to our office at Yonge and St. Clair in 25 minutes."

At 59, he says he hasn't thought about retirement. "I don't want to out and out quit. I have had offers from other stations, but after 20 years at 1010, I might want to stay on a freelance basis."

And when asked if he knows of any other newsworthy people from Mississauga, he replies quickly with a smile and says, "My wife for putting up with me for all these years."