

For October 7, 2009

By Doc Heide

It's official. Lee Becker and I are now major media stars.

Well, maybe more like minor media space debris. We've been interviewed on Wisconsin Public Radio's Larry Meiller Show.

We think of this as the Wisconsin equivalent of David Letterman. But where he will have Brad Pitt or President Obama as guests, Larry usually has some guy telling you how to keep fungus off your tomatoes.

Drive to be Live

It all went down on September 23, or actually the night before. The Meiller folks preferred to have us live in the studio, so Lee and I hopped in my Pathfinder after performing in AFT's hit comedy "Guys & Does" at Ephraim and headed south.

There was a major storm that night. We momentarily hydroplaned past Dyckesville, then had to drive like snails on 151 due to fog. But we stayed awake reveling in the shocking success of our show, which has sold out every night, often days in advance.

It was 2 AM by the time we crawled into Madison. I didn't sleep well. My intestines were negotiating with the stupendous bag of popcorn I'd scarfed to stay awake on the long drive. So I was a tad groggy when we arrived on the 7th floor of Vilas Hall where WPR broadcasts.

It didn't matter. Larry greeted us warmly and invited us in.

Now, talking live on statewide radio could give you a serious case of the willies. But Larry's studio is as comfy as your uncle's family room. There's a microphone the size of a banana in front of your face, and all you need to do is

stay 6 inches from it. The only technical thing is you wear headphones so you can all hear each other and the folks who call in.

Casual Conversation

Larry is remarkably down-to-earth for the guy who has the longest-running talk show in American public radio. We were surprised to learn that the only thing he does for WPR is this program. The rest of the time he teaches broadcasting at UW, which he appears to love.

Before the show we chatted amiably about the pronunciation of our last names. Mine is German, so you emphasize the “i”. His is French, so you emphasize the “e”. Lee’s is hard to mess up.

On air, he asked solid questions, listened admirably, and let us wax poetic about AFT. It helped that he and his family are longtime fans. We were pleased to be able to credit Fred Alley, Dave Peterson, and many others who give it life.

The folks who called in were all AFT enthusiasts. One inquired how to audition for us. Another asked if she could catch “Guys & Does” in central Iowa. We had to say “not yet”, but we are looking into moving it to a Wisconsin city this winter.

Our 40 minutes of fame flew by faster than a buck can leap in front of your car. True, it wasn’t Letterman. But Larry’s low-key style was the perfect match for our low-key theatre. And frankly, I’m just as happy being on a show that treats tomato fungus seriously.

“Guys & Does”, by Frederick Heide, Lee Becker, and Paul Libman is on stage at Ephraim Village Hall, Monday through Saturday at 7:30 pm and Saturday matinees at 4:30 pm through October 24. Advance reserved tickets are strongly recommended and are available at www.folkloretreatre.com, at 854-6117, at the AFT office in the Green Gables Shops in North Ephraim, or at the box office at the theatre 45 minutes prior to each show.

