

On Life and Meaning

MARK PERES

Episode 11 – Michael Goldfarb – All Along the Watchtower

The Voices of NPR

And now a personal word,

Michael Goldfarb has the voice of a journalist who has witnessed important events. He speaks with weariness and authority. His voice evokes a chorus of NPR announcers who report from near and distant places.

Writer Dierdre Mask noted in an article in the *Atlantic* magazine, “We can’t see NPR reporters, so we have to picture them. And because they are with us in our most private moments—alone in the car, half-asleep in bed—we start to think we know them.”

And we do think we know them. Their voices are iconic: distinct, informative, comforting, familiar. Their voices are the sounds of our better selves when we are bright and learned and engaged in the affairs of the world. No matter the day’s events, they give us hope that in a crazy world, sense and sensibility will prevail.

Here are a few names I grew up with: Susan Stamberg, Bob Edwards, Carl Kasell, Noah Adams, Linda Wertheimer, Robert Siegel, Scott Simon, Cokie Roberts, and Bob Mondello.

Each name evokes a voice, a style, a beat, that is the news soundtrack of our lives and shared imagination. We hear their stories as they report from bureaus from foreign capitals: Eleanor Beardsley, Paris; Rob Gifford, London; Ofiebea Quist-Arcton, Dakar; and, of course, Sylvia Poggioli, Rome.

We hear war correspondents in the thick of battle: Michael Goldfarb in Northern Ireland and Bosnia; Kelly McEvers in the midst of death and kidnapping in the Arab Spring, Tom Bowman among the fire and mortars of Helmand Province, and David Gilkey ambushed and killed by the Taliban.

We admire them for the work they do: sharing what they see and hear so we might better understand, alert for the dangers and tripwires of this world, standing all along the watchtower.

They keep the powers of the world honest. They are in the game devoting themselves to reporting the first drafts of history.

And on a much lighter note, we love NPR reporters for their wonderful, instantly recognizable names: Lourdes Garcia Navarro, Dina Temple-Raston, Charlayne Hunter-Gault, and Korva Coleman.

If we had a litter of kittens, we would name them after NPR reporters. Our Persian cats would be Neda Ulaby and Soraya Sarhaddi-Nelson, our Bengal cat would be Lakshmi Singh, and our American short-hair cat would be Renee Montaigne. And our favorite cats, of course, the one closest to our hearts, would be Ari Shapiro and Yuki Noguchi.

Ari and Yuki curl up beside my wife and me every night as we fall asleep to familiar voices on the radio.

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