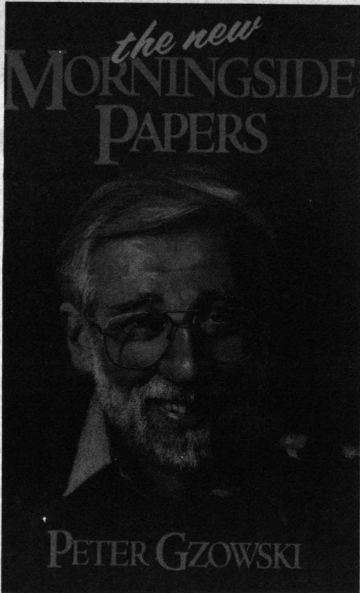


# Peter Gzowski: A man of letters

"Good morning, I'm Peter Gzowski. This is Morningside!" The voice is a national institution. Three hundred thousand listeners tune into "Morningside" each weekday, making it the most popular radio program in the country.



"A bulletin board for the nation."

The attraction is Gzowski, a 57 year old workaholic, with a warm, intimate personality that inspires affection and deep trust in both his audience and guests. "I'm not comfortable bullying people," he says during his latest trip out West to promote *The New Morningside Papers*. "For my purposes I get more (by) being polite. At times I'm nicer than I want to be. I suffer fools and hypocrites more than other people would."

"Morningside," according to its host, acts as "a village bulletin board for the nation." It plays a real part in the lives of his audience. "A lot of them will talk about how it keeps them in touch with the outside world. Or they'll tell you how it keeps them sane — I've never figured that out," he says chuckling. Within a single month, his guests can include anyone from Brian Mulroney to a truck driver, from Margaret Atwood to dancing pensioners. All interviews are handled with an 'aw shucks' informality that is characteristic of his easy-going manner.

Gzowski generates more correspondence than any other program host on the CBC network. When possible, each letter receives a personal reply: "I try my damndest to answer everything," he says. "People sit down and spend four or five hours writing a letter to me. The least they should get is an acknowledgement that I've read it, and a thank you. This is a public network. Those people who write to me are the shareholders; they deserve an

"Newspapers are distant. Radio is a medium that plugs right into the person you're talking to."

answer."

In 1985 Gzowski compiled his mail into *The Morningside Papers* which sold an astounding 50,000 copies. That book was put together because there "was a lot of good stuff that deserved a longer life than being read once on the radio," says Gzowski. After the success of *The Morningside Papers*, his mail began to increase. People, he says with a laugh, began writing in the hopes of being published: "By and large that doesn't work. The letters that work in the book are genuine expressions. If it isn't real it shows through in the writing." Last summer he put together the newly released second volume.

Morningside has brought much recognition to the 36 year veteran journalist. He has won three ACTRA awards, received three honorary degrees, and the Order of Canada, all for his contribution to radio journalism. But celebrity status has its price. Gzowski's alarm clock is set

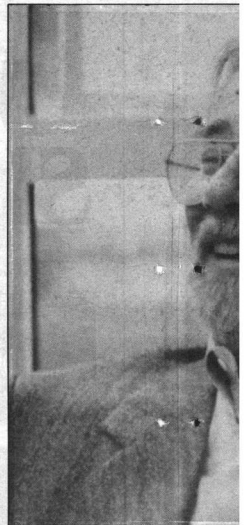
at 4:14 am. An hour later he arrives at CF studio, where he will spend the next two broadcasting and organizing Morningside home, he still has reading to do for the r seldom getting to bed before 11:00 pm.

Where does the energy come from? "I Cigarettes," he says deadpan. "Most of t doing I would do in my time off. So for r real line between work and play."

"But I'm afraid the burden will get too still early in my sixth season, but before I this book, I had interviewed forty major heavy book to read every night as well a stuff. Publisher Jack McClelland has said is the most important single medium for of books in Canada.

Gzowski's career in journalism began selling ads for the Timmor's Daily Press; wryly, "I eventually worked my way dow reporter." At the Daily Press he realized enjoyed journalism. But always the perfc could see his limitations, and decided th the job well he needed to continue his e Enrolling at the University of Toronto, h the editor of *The Varsity*, a position he c in 1957 to become editor of the *Loose*. A year later, while he was still only 28, h him as an assistant editor. At Maclean's t every executive position they had to off to join *The Toronto Star* and then the *Ill The Star Weekly*. In 1969 he joined CBC next twelve years he jumped back and f radio and print — finally settling for Mo

Gzowski is honest about his career. H couldn't rise to the top so quickly today



Media magnate, Peter Gzowski.

Interview by Rod Campbell