

Finking on Finkleman

by Don Truckey

The Danny Finkleman Show CBC national radio program led by 34 year old Danny Finkleman, featuring Canadian music, visits from Finkleman's past acquaintances and interviews with intriguing people from across Canada.

Last week Finkleman was in Edmonton to produce an installment for his radio show. Gateway singled an interview. Here's what went:

"Mr. Finkleman? My name's ..."

"From the Journal?"

"Uh, no ..."

"The Albertan?"

"Not really. The, uh, away. From the university."

The Gateway. From the university. Yes of course! You've come to do the interview?"

"Yes ... the interview. Well, of. Actually, no," I say, slipping past Finkleman into the floor room at the Chateau.

Better to get inside before who I am. Or who I'm not. Finkleman follows as though perfectly normal to allow me mumbled into his room at 10 in the morning.

"Actually, I'm the photographer," I say with a trained nonchalance. I throw my chair at a chair and miss.

"The interviewer can't make it," I say. "Slept through the interview. But I'll do the interview. I've done interviews before."

Lie.

"Alright," Danny says, sitting and looking outside wistfully -20 outside.

"So you want to hear about the show," he says.

"Uh, I suppose," I say. "Actually I've never listened to the show."

A cringe passes between us. "Don't say 'uh' so much, I admonish myself. Radio people never say 'uh.'"

"Never listened to the show," Danny says. "Uh ... well ... can you pardon me a second while I make a few calls?"

"Sure," I say magnanimously, desperately wondering how to interview an interviewer.

He calls. Something about

interviewing a 275 lb. woman for his program. "Tasteful item" Finkleman assures the person on the phone. She used to weigh 350.

"So how did you get started in radio?" I ask when he's off the phone.

Danny smiles, acknowledging the gambit.

"In Winnipeg," he says. "I did some radio work for a friend of mine. She liked it and encouraged me to try a few programs on my own. I used to call all over North America. Something's happening, you phone up, ask about it. Talked to Muhammad Ali for an hour once."

"Then you went to Toronto," I say, recalling a gushing press release: *Danny Finkleman's lively 90 minute program originating from Toronto...*

"Was Toronto necessary to make it in radio?"

Finkleman hedges here. "I've got a lot of respect for local radio and TV people. Production people, on-air people. They're doing what they want to do. But listen, I got into the business, like it, and I got hungry. So I went to Toronto."

"But it wasn't a knock-em-dead kind of conversion. I wanted more possibilities and they happened to be in Toronto. I started contributing to Peter Gzowski's show *This Country in the Morning*. Haven't heard that one either? And I worked on a program called *Matinee*. One called *Music Machine*. *Double Up* with Hart Pomerantz. Developed *This is the Law*. Did writing, casting on that one,

basically developed the show."

"Where to after Toronto?"

"For me? Probably nowhere. I'm content. People talk about Los Angeles, some try it, but the velocity of the business is so much faster there. You know what they say in L.A.? The second best thing to being aired is being cancelled. Because they're always developing, always moving. But I can't understand that kind of ambition." He smiles and adds: "Hang on while I make a few calls."

Finkleman rolls across the bed and connects with his producer. Tells him about an interview he's doing on a take-out pyrogy place in Edmonton.

He mutters something about recording problems and inconvenient schedules for studio time. I extend, without authority, a blanket invitation to make use of CKSR's facilities.

We start talking about university. Turns out Danny had a BA by the time he was 19. Now he says university at such a young age is wasting education on people who aren't equipped for it.

"I also graduated from Law School," he adds tangentially. "I keep trying to forget that."

Convenient memory, I murmur to myself.

"Why law?" I ask.

"Had nothing better to do," Danny says. "If you know what I mean."

I don't, but notice the flippancy that's buoyed us both slips for a moment. The shadow of three empty years fleets over Danny's face.

"The discipline helped

though," he adds, brightening immediately. "Without it I would have been dead — you know why free schools went down the tube? No discipline."

I mutter something perfunctory about maybe discipline should go down the tube because it lacks freedom.

"Well sure," Finkleman says: "A lot of people run on fear. But there's got to be something else — ambition, you gotta have heart,

drive, like a good horse, you've gotta have heart to run. You play the horses?"

"No," I say remembering the one time I went to the races — remembering that the horses seemed to be running more on fear than heart.

"Hang on while I make a few calls," Danny Finkleman says, rolling over the bed to the phone. And I hope heart will win the race for Danny Finkleman.

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