

OWINGS MILLS TIMES

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WCBM host introduces radical radio

Barbara Ramsey

Lou is worried about the demise of civilization.

Trees are being cut down, and politicians say not to worry about it, he complains over the phone.

Talk show host Zoh Hieronimus, her smiling face framed by headphones, listens intently to his concerns. She concurs: We are hitting a crisis on earth.

"At some point, the earth will vomit us up," she replies in a melodious, alto voice.

The 38-year-old Hieronimus, daughter of multi-millionaire philanthropist Joseph Meyerhoff Sr., makes no secret that she is opinionated. As the Baltimore area's only female radio talk show host, she is paid to be that way.

The Owings Mills resident, whose name has become synonymous with unconventional thinking through 21st Century Radio's Hieronimus and Company, began a new era in Baltimore talk radio Nov. 1.

She took over the Late Morning Show at WCBM 680 AM from Ed Graham. Her views on topics, which range from cold fusion to the history of beer, can be heard weekdays from 9 to 11 a.m.

Hieronimus sees herself as "an anomaly," a deviation from the Owings Mills radio station's otherwise conservative

lineup. Her beliefs swing as drastically left as they do right. She believes in the imminent demise of the environment, and in gun possession "which surprises people."

If Hieronimus appears at home behind a microphone, it's because she is.

"I'm never at a loss for something to say," she declares during a commercial break. "I'm a very verbal person. One of my teachers at school used to call me 'motormouth.' It was not meant to be a compliment."

She acknowledges that the radio station took a gamble in giving her the show. She had gained a reputation as a radical from regular guest appearances on the Tom Marr show. Station officials feared her combative attitude would scare morning listeners away.

It hasn't.

General Manager Nick Mangione Jr. admits the station took a chance in promoting Hieronimus to a prime spot in its lineup. So far, he has gotten positive feedback from listeners, he says.

'Undiscovered diamond'

Hieronimus sees her show as more than just the fulfillment of a dream — it is an opportunity to foster better human understanding, while raising mankind's awareness of his relationship to the ecosystem.



Staff photo by Rich Riggins

Zoh Hieronimus sees her late morning talk show as a deviation from WCBM's otherwise conservative radio line-up.

She prefers radio to television because it allows people "to respond to your essence and you to theirs. On television they respond to your looks."

For this reason, she sees radio as "the last free forum in the United States." The trick is, in part, to feel what the person on the phone might be feeling. People are freed up to say what they believe because nobody is looking at them.

"I love radio," Hieronimus smiles. "There have been few things in my life that I've loved like this."

Tom Marr, a veteran radio announcer of more than a quarter of a century, views Hieronimus as "an undiscovered diamond."

When they met, she was co-host with her husband Dr. Bob Hieronimus on his Sunday eve-

ning show, Hieronimus and Company, which moved to WCBM a year and a half ago.

"She always had a determined look on her face," recalls the ultra-conservative Marr. "I never saw her smile. I named her chief guardian of the misery index."

One day he struck up a conversation with her, and made her smile. They found that they had "more in common than we thought we did."

With an air that crosses between amusement and admiration, Marr says her intelligence sometimes causes her to latch onto subjects "that go over the listeners' heads. She has worked on that."

"She knows her stuff so well," says Dr. Neil Solomon who recently appeared on Hieronimus' show to promote

his book 'Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired.' "She could have written the book," which talks about people with a profound sensitivity to chemicals. "She's done her homework."

The half-a-dozen newspapers, highlighted in pink pen, that she shuffles back and forth throughout her show attest to her vast knowledge. She spends eight hours each day preparing.

Lewis, a caller on a recent show, voiced his approval during an exchange with Hieronimus concerning animal rights. She suggested that if people ate 10% less meat, the grain that would be saved would feed the Earth's starving population.

"It's refreshing to hear a talk show hostess who feels that way," Lewis said.