



Hunley: Radio resurgence: Who needs terrestrial airwaves?

By [Jonathan Hunley](#)
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Manassas residents may not know it, but an international phenomenon happens five days a week on one of the city's nicest streets.

And the man whose name is on the enterprise doesn't even have to leave the living room couch to go to work.

That would be Mike O'Meara, the Washington-area radio veteran who found himself without a job last summer when WJFK-FM switched its format from guy talk to sports talk.

A JFK listener since I moved here in the late 1990s, I was bummed by the move, which ended O'Meara's gig and the "Big O and Dukes" show.

But O'Meara, perhaps the most famous person living in Manassas, came roaring back. And he brought the Big O, Oscar Santana, with him.

That duo, combined with longtime O'Meara buds Robb Spewak and Buzz Burbank, put together a one-hour podcast five days a week in a studio fashioned out of O'Meara's living room. It's on [mikeomearashow.com](#).

The Internet radio show has been on since December, and it gets 15,000 to 18,000 downloads a day.



{Jeff Mankie/News & Messenger}

The Mike O'Meara Show is broadcasting once again, this time from the "historic radio district of Manassas." O'Meara, right, has assembled former colleagues from WJFK-FM, including Robb Spewak, left, and Oscar Santana, for a podcast recorded five days a week from his living room in Manassas.

The regular version is free, but the guys also have broadcast some special pay-per-listen episodes.

Before the show taping a week ago, O'Meara said he's happy to be using his old skills with new technology.

And he's of course pleased that the venture is making a profit through advertising and merchandise sales, and direct contributions from listeners.

"This is our own little radio station," O'Meara said.

The podcast is like a scaled-down version of the guys' former afternoon-drive show on WJFK.

The four friends crack jokes, talk about their lives and tell stories; Spewak does his Audio Vault segments; and Burbank chimes in with the news of the day.

Because there are fewer commercial breaks, O'Meara and Co. go through in an hour what would take up about twice that on terrestrial radio.

They're also planning to livestream the podcast and to simulcast video of the show, which is usually posted by 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

East Coast listeners make up 40 percent to 45 percent of the O'Meara audience.

Residents of the Sacramento, Calif., area, who were big fans of O'Meara's two decades of work with Don Geronimo, download in big numbers, too.

And one radio station—KCJJ-AM in Coralville, Iowa, near Iowa City—broadcasts the show the old-fashioned way.

Though he certainly could have gotten another terrestrial radio job, O'Meara said Santana pushed him to do the podcast, which has been downloaded in 105 countries.

Now the challenge is to continue to develop the business model for the show and to get the word out about it.

For example, the guys have had media types like me sit in to see it, and they've even had some of Burbank's "Buzz Babes" hand out fliers on a street corner.

Once more people find out about the podcast and about how easy it is to download, whether at the computer or through mobile devices, the audience will grow for sure.

And that's good. Because listening to Mike O'Meara and his cohorts is one of those signature D.C. things. Something you've just go to do around here, like rooting for the Redskins or scarfing half-smokes from Ben's Chili Bowl.

When I was there, for example, O'Meara busted on Santana for being late to an outing and talked

about how prejudiced, fearful New Englanders mistake the phrase "black ice" for "black guys."

He began the show with a bit as the character "Internet Tommy," who broadcasts a radio show from his mother's basement.

Internet Tommy, whose voice sounds like someone who has inhaled helium, went on and on about an "a—clown" from Iceland who fouled up European airports recently.

That is, until Spewak and Burbank corrected him.

"It might not be an a—clown," Spewak said. "I think it's an *ash cloud*."

"Volcanic ash," Burbank added. "An *ash cloud*, not an a—clown."

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