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TALKERS[®]

magazine

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Dial Global syndicated talk star Stephanie Miller receives the *Judy Jarvis Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Talk Radio by a Woman* at New Media Seminar 2011. TALKERS interview on page 14.

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The Bible of Talk Radio and the New Talk Media

Issue 219

PROGRAMMING • MANAGEMENT • MARKETING • TECHNICAL • LEGAL

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INTERVIEW

The TALKERS interview

A Conversation with Stephanie Miller

Dial Global talk star receives 2011 Judy Jarvis Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Talk Radio by a Woman

Stephanie Miller is the 2011 recipient of the TALKERS “Judy Jarvis Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Talk Radio by a Woman” also referred to as the “Woman of the Year” award in the talk radio industry. Her successful morning show, produced by Ron Hartenbaum’s WYD Media Management and syndicated by Dial Global Networks, has been on the air nationally since 2004 and stands as one of the relative handful of examples that prove “progressive” or liberal talk radio, when properly executed on both content and business levels, can survive and actually thrive.

Her show is a high-energy, meticulously produced ensemble program that covers everything from politics to celebrity gossip in which Miller presides over a cast of comedic characters punctuated by co-hosts, impressionist Jim Ward and producer Chris Lavoie, and outstanding regulars highlighted by stand up comics John Fugelsang and Hal Sparks, among others.

Miller’s on-air radio career dates back to the late 1980s with positions on major music FMs in New York and Chicago. Her history as a major league talker began in 1993 when

she began a successful stint at KFI, Los Angeles where she hosted a highly rated nighttime program. She also worked at Los Angeles stations KABC and KTZN during the 1990s as well as performing as host of several television projects. She even did some film and TV acting.

In addition to appearing daily as host of her own syndicated radio show, Stephanie Miller is a regular talking head guest on most of the major cable news/talk networks including CNN, MSNBC, Fox News Channel and others.

Stephanie’s role as a liberal talk show host is made even more colorful being the daughter of the late former U.S. Representative William E. Miller who was Barry Goldwater’s vice presidential running mate on the Republican Party ticket in the 1964 election.

She was also the subject of significant buzz last year upon “coming out” and revealing on-air that she is gay.

Part of the significant industry interest that surrounds the Stephanie Miller Show is the success it has achieved in the arena of generating revenue via podcasts and the recent launch of a live tour packaged as “The



Sexy Liberal Comedy Tour” (with Miller, Fugelsang and Sparks) which has reportedly been selling out tickets in advance wherever it has been booked.

Most of the interest, however, rightfully stems from the fact that this funny, witty, hard-working, intelligent and beautiful woman is a total original who defies the radio industry’s chronic impulse to pigeon-hole its players and formats into convenient cookie-cutter categories.

The TALKERS Interview with Stephanie Miller was conducted by Michael Harrison.

TALKERS: I was just listening to you via ISDN in our studio here in Massachusetts as you were doing the last segment of your show this morning in Los Angeles prior to our interview and it was as if you were in the studio next door. Most people listen to a program such as yours on AM radio and there’s the compression and static and all

the surrounding distractions that go with listening to morning radio — but when you're listening in a foreground way on the big speakers via ISDN, it becomes apparent what an amazingly high-energy program you do. Way more than most! Is it exhausting?

MILLER: It's an audio mochachino. It must be the speakers because I sound like Jo Anne Worley in person, as you know. It's the show I've always done, Michael. You and I have known each other for roughly a thousand years. I think I reported on the Rutherford B. Hayes inauguration for *TALKERS*. You and I've just always called it "radio." Before there was such a thing as "progressive" — I did *morning* radio, I did *rock 'n' roll* radio, I did *top 40* radio, I even worked on *conservative* talk stations — KFI and KABC — all before there was such a thing as progressive. I happen to *be* progressive but what I try to do is a comedy show, essentially. Yes, I talk about politics from that perspective, but my main thrust has always been to do an entertaining show. So, we talk about everything — we talk about entertainment, pop culture... and politics is a big part of it.

TALKERS: Let me congratulate you on receiving the Judy Jarvis Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Talk Radio by a Woman for 2011. This award has quite a history. It goes back a number of years and some fabulous women in broadcasting have received it. You're going to be receiving the award at the New Media Seminar in New York City on June 11. It's a very big deal and I want to congratulate you on behalf of all of us at *TALKERS*.

MILLER: May I say that *TALKERS* has always had exquisite taste in both broads and broadcasting. I'm thrilled to hear you make a big deal of it because I assumed it's because I was the last woman left in talk radio that hasn't gotten it. I thought it was a default thing. But I *do* appreciate it. As you know, I've been doing this a long time.

TALKERS: You *have* been doing it a long time and we've been giving this award out for a long time and every year that we give the award we always say we wish there was no need for this award.

MILLER: Yes, why is that, Michael? Because as you know, whenever anyone in the free world — or not even the free world — is doing a story on radio, they call Michael Harrison. So, why are there proportionally so fewer women than men in radio, still?

TALKERS: That's really what I wanted to ask you. The numbers indicate proportionately fewer women certainly in *talk radio*. You hear more women as announcers or what we used to call *deejays* on music radio proportionate to the men than on talk. And women have made significant progress in all-news radio.

MILLER: First of all, I'm too bitter to do those love songs kind of shows. I need to do talk radio by default because I'm just a bitter old hag!

TALKERS: Oh, sure you are... but in talk radio, it's mostly males. For example, in our Heavy Hundred this year there are 16 women — including members of teams — out of the 100 Most Important Radio Talk Show Hosts in America. The fact is there are far more men on air in talk radio than women. And, as you say, I'm constantly being asked why. There are several possible reasons, none of which are absolutely the only one or even necessarily true.

MILLER: Well, shockingly, as any man will tell you, women really like to talk so you'd think there would be more of them in talk radio but, I don't know why either.

TALKERS: Well, women might like to talk but the issue really is do women like to *listen*. Or more precisely, to *what* do they want to listen. It's not so much about how many like to talk... it's about listenership and it's about what management of radio stations and syndicators think will gather listeners. But, my first answer always is, "Well, there are just more men in it." You know the old "it is what it is" cop out. Then they understandably ask, "Why are there more men?" and there's an accompanying accusatory tone suggesting perhaps it's because women are purposefully being locked out of talk radio, that hirers don't want women based on either some kind of an idea from old-time radio — when voices were more important — that women didn't sound like they belong on radio, that peo-

ple didn't want to hear a woman's voice coming out of the speaker. Well, that's been dispelled by the fact that there are women on radio singing songs, there are women on radio playing music, there are women on radio doing news. And in spite of the small numbers, there are women doing talk radio successfully. So, my answer is just that more men have been, over the years, attracted to going into talk radio and as a result there's more of a talent pool and that given time, eventually, there will be more women. Another more ominous common claim is made that most of the managers in talk radio are biased men who simply don't like women and don't want to work with them. I personally don't buy that argument. But I'm asking you as an accomplished expert living the experience what do *you* have to say about the issue of women in talk radio?

MILLER: It's interesting the thing you brought up initially about a woman's voice — I've counteracted that by my voice having dropped like an octave a decade, now I'm really into my old Lucy/Maude phase. I know what you're saying... but Michael, I've *always* been in a boy's club. In standup comedy, in talk radio, whether it's politics or political punditry — all of that — so maybe I'm the aberration. I just don't know. I think that there are certainly people like my friend Randi Rhodes and Laura Ingraham and other people who have been doing this very successfully for a long time. All you can hope is that things will change, that things are starting to change and there are and will continue to be more women in this field.

TALKERS: There are two prongs to the women issue. The first, which we just discussed, is the issue of why there aren't more women on the air doing talk radio in general. The other is the issue of targeting talk radio to attract a female audience and the question of why there are so few talk formats on radio doing this...especially when it works so well on television, not to mention magazines targeted to women do well. What do *you* think women want to hear? One of the biggest problems that programmers have is that when they decide to do a format for women, and you've been involved in one such high-profile effort in the past, there's not a complete con-

sensus as to exactly what do you do to attract women? Do you put a woman on the air? Do you talk about “women’s issues?” Or is this something that’s just so nebulous that nobody really understands it? We once had a panel on this subject at the New Media Seminar including Sally Jesse Raphael, Daria Dolan, Grace Blazer, Heather Cohen, Karen Hunter, Edie Hilliard and it was moderated by Dr. Laura Schlessinger. It was an amazing panel but they could not come to any agreement whatsoever among themselves as to the question of what women as a target group want to hear on the radio.

MILLER: You know Michael, this reminds me of the same conversation you and I have had about whether it’s conservative or progressive or what-you-call-it. All I know how to do is entertaining radio — or at least what I think is entertaining. I’ve never quite gotten this other stuff. I don’t know how you do a show for women or for men. I do what I think is funny, what I think is entertaining and what I think is interesting. Talk radio, in particular, tends to skew particularly male. You know, the listenership has always been more male. But I have to say I’ve seen a lot of our ratings around the country and I don’t know if it’s me or the progressive aspect of the show, but we are having a much higher percentage of women listeners than I’ve seen traditionally in talk radio. So, it’s hard to say. I remember when you said I was involved in one format here in L.A. for a short time. And, literally, I didn’t do any different a show than I’m doing now or than I did on KFI or KABC. I just do what I think is funny and entertaining.

TALKERS: That effort in L.A. — the old KMPC becoming KTZN in 1997 and instituting a female-targeted format called The Zone” — was basically defined by the fact that women were hosts. So it was assumed, or at least the thinking behind its strategy was, that women want to hear women. Of course, a case could be made that women might want to hear men. Do you remember Bill Ballance back in the early 1970s with “Feminine Forum?” He had a large female audience. This was back during the days of the Fairness Doctrine and was probably the most controversial thing on radio at the time. He talked with women about their sex lives, love

lives and relationships and women listened in significant numbers.

MILLER: It’s interesting because I’ve always had a sexual edge, as you know. That’s always been part of my humor ever since I came up in radio and standup. My ads that we used to run in *TALKERS* magazine used to say, “Making Men Rise in the Morning,” because my male numbers are huge. But again, talk radio tends to skew more male. We do some sexual stuff and whether that’s attracting more women as well these days it’s hard to say. Because we sometimes talk about relationships, I don’t call this a relationship show. Because I happen to be a progressive, I wouldn’t call it a progressive show. You know what I’m saying? It’s a radio show. I try to do great radio.

TALKERS: I tend to think that the reason it’s always and pragmatically labeled a progressive show is because it’s specifically not a conservative show. My view of it is that anything these days either in radio or even the broader public discussion of politics that’s not specifically conservative is tagged liberal. Liberal these days is anything left of whatever or whoever is self-described as conservative. Conservatives accuse each other of being liberals — look at the Republican in Name Only, the RINO thing.

MILLER: Coming from my particular background — my dad was the Republican candidate for vice president in 1964 with Barry Goldwater — that’s part of the point I’m making...I think Reagan would be tea-bagged out of the Republican Party today. This is not my dad’s and Goldwater’s Republican Party so I don’t really feel like I’m a liberal and gee, what happened to you? I don’t think the Republican Party would have my dad and Goldwater today as far to the right as they’ve gone.

TALKERS: If that’s the case, then certainly that same set of circumstances and mode of thinking have to be factored into figuring out what the heck the true and accurate categories should be in political news/talk radio.

MILLER: Michael the point — and you and I have talked about this before — has got to be *entertainment*. I think on either side, if

you’re just doing the talking points and you consider yourself a political movement, you’re dead. We’re not. We’re entertainment. We’re here to get ratings and sell stuff. **TALKERS: I think that’s true and it goes well beyond radio. Even political movements have to be entertaining. You can’t even become president in this culture if you don’t have a certain entertainment quality about you, let alone be a successful talk show host.**

MILLER: I don’t want to belabor the progressive thing...I know you guys just ran a great article on it but I think that everybody knows the mistakes Air America made. The people who have survived in progressive radio are the people who are real radio people who have been succeeding for years before there was such a thing as progressive radio because quite simply, they’re radio pros.

TALKERS: You mentioned your father. I find that part of your history fascinating. I mean...it’s not enough that you are a multi-media figure with experience in just about every venue under the sun with an approach, brand and lifestyle that make you difficult if not impossible to pigeon-hole — but on top of it all, you are connected by family ties to one of the most colorful and seminal chapters of modern American political history. Now, granted, you were just a child when your father was running for vice president on the Goldwater ticket but do you remember those days at all?

MILLER: I do not. Every now and then somebody will show me an old newspaper report and apparently when I was three, I was already getting a couple of lines off. The reporters were trying to interview my brother and I — we were three and five — and that was before they used kids as props on the campaign trail. They left us home. The reporters showed me a picture of my family and I said, “Oh... I remember them.” So apparently I was getting lines off when I was three already. But that’s how my family knew they were on the road too much.

TALKERS: So what are your earliest memories of your family, your life and your father and the politics in your family?

MILLER: I grew up in Lockport, New York, right outside of Buffalo, so my life was completely the opposite of what my sisters experienced. My sisters are almost 20 years older than I am. Their life was Washington. They were in private Catholic girls' school with all senators' and congressmen's daughters and secret service and all that stuff. And I wonder if, perhaps, that is the reason for my politics. I grew up in a very blue collar, normal life in Lockport, New York — in a small town. Sometimes people say they think it was like rebellion on my part. My dad died when I was 21 — when I had just graduated from USC. I wasn't political at all back then. At that point, I thought I was going to be Carol Burnett — that was one of many, many dreams that died (laughs) — but radio was really kind of an accident for me. Sometimes your dreams turn out different than you think. As far as my involvement with politics, I don't know. That sort of developed later. I remember having a reaction to Pat Buchanan's speech and thinking, "Wow! That seems mean-spirited and not the Republican Party I remember from my dad." And so I just started gradually developing my position in this area. It was *not* a reaction to my dad. My dad was gone long before I actually became political. Then I started here in L.A. on KFI. That's how I started into politics and starting to talk about politics in addition to other stuff on the radio.

TALKERS: But you do remember him, I mean, 21 years old...

MILLER: Oh yeah! God, yeah! That's all I can speak to. Honestly, there's this division in our family, today. My mom and brother are still very Republican and my sisters and I are big Obama supporters. There's a division. It's not fair to say, "What would my dad think?" all these many years after he's gone, you know what I mean? You can look at Barry Goldwater's political conversion and how pro-choice and how pro-gay rights that he was on the Senate floor in the 1980s and sort of extrapolate. I know what kind of man my father was. I think he was a really kind, loving, compassionate man and father. There are those moments that you never forget. I remember the Christmas right before he died, I remember saying to him, "I just hope I can be half as great as you are, someday." And he said, "Oh, honey I

think you're going to be far greater." And it still makes me cry to think about it today. It was just a father being incredibly humble and kind and loving. He didn't understand anything about show business. It was so foreign to him and yet he had such a belief in me. And that's what I know of him as a human being. I can't say on each and every issue what he would think today or if we would agree but I'm just saying that some of the mean-spiritedness and rhetoric I see on the right, I don't recognize from my father's day.

TALKERS: Do you ever find mean-spirited rhetoric on the left? Do you ever find yourself viewing Democrats or liberals or liberal radio hosts and say, "Ugh! That's embarrassing?"

MILLER: Sure. We're all human. Of course, there are people that go too far on both sides. I'm sure I do on some days or people think a joke is too far or too much or too mean. But I'm just saying, I don't recognize this rhetoric in my father's day. You know, a congressman screaming, "You lie!" at the president. This birther thing. The out-and-out racism at some of these Tea Party rallies. I can go on and on and give a million examples of these racist e-mails that Republican chairpeople are sending around. It's just the level of rhetoric. Taken in its total, I think it has been incredibly disrespectful and mean-spirited, in particular against this president.

TALKERS: Do you think the modern media — beyond talk radio — play into this? Do you think that journalism... newspapers, television news, the entire media commercial industrial complex if there is such a thing, is somehow responsible for this harsh rhetoric that you're describing?

MILLER: I always laugh when I hear somebody say "liberal media" because to me, the media is so: a) corporate and b), so afraid of being called liberal, to me they go out of their way to be tougher on Obama and the Democrats than they are on the Republicans. Someone did a head count after the bin Laden killing on the Sunday shows. Three out of four guests were Bush Administration officials. So, now is it about what Bush Administration officials think about what they weren't able to accomplish and

this president was? And so, of course, they put their own spin on it and how somehow this is George Bush's victory. That's the kind of thing I'm talking about. What liberal media?

TALKERS: Would you think — getting political for just a moment — that it's a victory for both presidents? That this was, in fact, a line of succession that took a while for the U.S. to get bin Laden that started with Bush and ended with Obama? There are a lot of independents out there who don't buy into the left-versus-right thing but rather think neither one of them is any better than the other.

MILLER: Hmm, let me think about that, Michael (mockingly). *No!* I don't see how anything could be anymore clear cut than that, honestly. George Bush pursued, obviously, exactly the wrong strategy, outsourced the job of getting bin Laden at Tora Bora, started a war that had nothing to do with getting bin Laden, was on record saying, "I don't care about him, I don't really think about him that much anymore," and closed the bin Laden unit. This president accomplished exactly what he said he was going to do during the campaign. I honestly don't see how you spin that. People who have seen the intelligence — Dianne Feinstein, head of the Senate Intelligence Committee — said, "This was achieved through standard interrogation." The way the right is spinning this is laughable to me.

TALKERS: So you really are in combat mode. You are, at any given moment, ready to argue the left versus right cause.

MILLER: Well, on that particular issue. Although, I've got to tell you, a lot of people have accused me of being bloodthirsty and spiking the football over bin Laden, on the left. I don't think of myself as left or right. I don't know what you call me. I'm a fiscal conservative, I'm a law-and-order liberal — most human beings aren't just left or right. I wouldn't say I'm in combat mode on that particular issue you brought up. I just think it's ludicrous to say somehow this is George Bush's... I mean, first of all, the worst intelligence failure in our history happened on his watch — 9/11 in the first place — somehow they spun it that he's the one who kept us safe. This president is the one who finally

got us justice for what happened 10 years ago. That I feel very strongly about.

TALKERS: *I'm not here to argue with you, I'm just trying to find out a little bit more about you for the people reading this. You are quite a political animal, aren't you, there's no question about it. Some hosts claim to be sucked into it because that is, in fact, the nature of the business — you have to take a stand! How's the saying go? "Have a take and don't suck." I believe Jim Rome first said that. That's today's radio. I'm always asked about that. "Do you think they really mean what they say? How much of it is contrived and how much of it is shtick?"*

MILLER: Isn't that essentially what talk radio is about — *arguing*? It's bitching. Isn't it? We get paid to bitch for three hours.

TALKERS: *On a certain level, I guess that's part of it. No question. And bitching is part of the First Amendment. I mean, what good is the First Amendment if everybody goes around saying, "Have a nice day. Isn't life lovely?" As a matter of fact, in countries where they don't have a First Amendment, in countries where the press is repressed and where it's illegal to speak out, most of the news is good news. It's all good news.*

MILLER: Good news is bad news for talk radio. You asked, "Are you a political animal?" I think there are probably some people in talk radio for whom it *is* shtick. In my case, if you're asking me, I really do believe, I think that anyone who knows me could tell you that I believe passionately in the things that I talk about. As somebody considered an industry expert recently told me, "If you suddenly 'rediscovered' your Republican roots and decided you're a conservative, you could probably pick up 300 more stations tomorrow." And that's probably not a joke.

TALKERS: *You probably could... Interesting! So let's talk now about the other issue that put you in the news and that is the "coming out" issue. Were you surprised by whatever the reaction was to your coming out?*

MILLER: I was shocked at how many peo-

ple were shocked. People were sending me the joke going around on the internet saying Radio Shack was recalling all its "gaydar" devices. Maybe it's because I don't fit a stereotype but that was one of the reasons why I thought it was important to do it. As you and I have talked, I've been out to my friends and family and co-workers for years. As you know, I've never pretended to be straight. I never got married or made up boyfriends. I was just very private and wasn't used to talking about my private life. I never tried to lie about it. I've been very outspoken about gay rights for years. I've been a liberal for years even when I was on right-wing stations such as KFI or KABC — so I think that, for me, I got to my tipping point. I got to my perfect storm. I happen to think that this is the civil rights battle of our generation. As I kept talking about 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and Prop 8 out here in California, I finally just decided, it's time for me to speak my truth. It's time for me to not just say I'm *for* that but I *am* that. There's a point where I felt that I have to stop cheering gay rights from the sidelines and just get down on the field myself. It's too important. In a lot of the polling, marriage equality finally has majority support in the country for the first time. And it's because people say, "Oh, it's my sister," or "It's my father," or "It's my favorite radio host." It's putting a human face on it. We're at a point where members of the Bush and the McCain family have come out. You know, Dick Cheney has a gay daughter. Newt Gingrich has a gay sister. I don't think this is a partisan issue anymore. I think it's about being able to look in your loved one's face and say, "I love you but I don't believe you deserve the same rights I do." So, I just wanted to add my voice, I guess.

TALKERS: *How has your life changed since then? Has it changed?*

MILLER: It's only gotten worse, Michael (laughs). You know any morning radio person has a crappy social life.

TALKERS: *Actually, that's interesting. I was a 'morning man' for years, so I know first-hand. You're being funny but it is a truth. Being a morning person on the radio does take its toll on one's life on many levels. We'll get to that in a second. But let's finish up the gay issue. First of all you're*

a public person because you're on the radio, you're high profile, you do lots of different media and now, suddenly, this is part of your story. How has your life changed?

MILLER: Honestly, it doesn't feel like it has in a significant way. I was just talking to my producer the other day and we were saying that after the first burst of this, the show's the same, except for the occasional reference or joke. Because that's what I think we were afraid of. Because people did write and say, "Oh God, is this going to be the gay show now?" That's part of why I didn't talk about it is because I thought I don't want to be the *lesbian talk show host*. Again, I also don't want to be the progressive talk show host...I want to be the great talk show host, Stephanie Miller, hopefully.

TALKERS: *This is up to you. Ellen DeGeneres allowed her show to become the gay show, that wonderful sitcom that she had the opportunity to do and then it sort of went sour. You can't stop talent and then she came back and now she's herself.*

MILLER: I don't think people like preachy whether it's liberal issues, conservative issues, gay issues, you know what I mean? I think that you just want entertainment and relatability and so it's just a part of me that I just suddenly revealed...and I think there were fears. As we alluded to, the business is very male, talk radio listenership skews male. There was a business concern probably early on. You know I mentioned my ads about "making men rise in the morning," I mean, the fact is, I love men. And I've always been flirty with men. As far as my program directors have told me my numbers with men have only gone up. A lot of people were laughing saying, "Stephanie, what did you think was going to turn me off about this?"

TALKERS: *There are some, ahem, social theorists who believe men like lesbians so you know...*

MILLER: ...They don't buy it Michael. They don't buy the whole gay thing. They just think you haven't seen theirs yet, you know what I'm saying? They don't give up. It only makes them try harder.

TALKERS: You haven't answered my question. I asked how your *life* has changed and you told me how your *show* hasn't changed. Let's go one level deeper. How has your life changed? I ask you that because I find it interesting that you might have been under a lot of pressure from the gay community to come out though you say people knew that and you also might now be under pressure to be more of an activist. Are you invited to things? How has your life changed now that this little shingle is among your many shingles?

MILLER: I do get invited to a lot more...because there are always a lot of great events. I always tried to do charity stuff before. But yeah, I get invited to more stuff. But the truth, Michael, if what you're getting at is, no I'm single and I'm not happy about that. That's a very personal thing and I've never really talked about my personal life. I was in a long-term relationship. I'm not right now. I think that was the other thing. I always thought, "Oh, I'll naturally talk about it when I'm in a relationship again." But then I just thought maybe that's part of the problem when you're making choices in the dark. It's interesting you brought up the gay community. That was the other thing I was shocked about is that they were shocked. I don't think the gay community knew I was gay. I was on Michelangelo Signorile's show on satellite and he's been famous for outing some people, particularly hypocritical legislators, that sort of thing. He was shocked. I have other friends in the gay community say that a lot of people in the gay community didn't know. So when you ask that question, "Was there pressure?" I would say no, I think that they've always appreciated that I've spoken out for gay rights and I think the fact that I...

TALKERS: ...Then were any of them angry at you for not coming out earlier? The point I'm driving at is that you can't please everybody and no good deed goes unpunished and so...

MILLER: I've got to say Michael, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Honestly, barely a ripple of anybody who said anything like that.

TALKERS: Good. Now, let's talk about your personal life being on the radio re-

gardless of whatever your orientation is. You've been a morning person now for about seven years and getting up every morning early...

MILLER: We're up at insane o'clock, as we say, and we go to bed at stupid o'clock.

TALKERS: Do you have control over it? Some morning hosts walk around sleepy all the time. I've had spans in my career in which I was both morning host and program director of the station and it was physically brutal. Because TALKERS is a professional trade publication, most people reading this are doing so purely from an industrial point of view. Mornings are considered to be prime time in radio. What's it like being a woman out there in the world running a career, running a business, having interests, having activities and getting up every morning at "insane o'clock?"

MILLER: As anyone in morning radio will tell you, it's tough. I don't think anybody likes these hours. But I'm also one of the very few lucky people in the world who get to do this. I really do get to arrive in the morning and hang out with a couple of my best friends and make jokes all morning. A lot of times people say, "You sound like you're having so much fun." We really are. How lucky am I that I get to do this for a living? So, I think that supersedes the hours. I do feel very lucky and very grateful. Personally, it can be very lonely when you're not with a partner or have a family. So that part I'm hoping changes because that's been tough. It is tough, the combination of morning radio and being single and going to bed so early. It's not like I have a big social life, particularly during the week. But I'm hoping with this TALKERS magazine article everything will change (chuckles)! TALKERS magazine has been known to change your life!

TALKERS: Now let's talk about your live, traveling "Sexy Liberal Comedy Show." The "sexy liberal" concept is one you've said and used before. This is part of your shtick. But you actually are on the road now as we're doing this with live bookings and you are drawing crowds. How did this happen?

MILLER: Well it started, like most things in my life, as a joke. Now it's sort of taken off much to my surprise...I think it was a plot just to get me out of my house. We did it in New York. John Fugelsang and Hal Sparks are just amazing standup comics and they're on the radio show every week — on Wednesday and on Friday — and they happen to be hot. And so I think it started as a joke — me even calling it that — the "sexy liberal show." We did a sold-out show in New York and it went great. We just mentioned it on the air and suddenly we were the fastest-selling show in the history of the Barrymore in Madison. We sold out two shows and now it's literally selling out all over the country. Facebook pages are popping up all over the place — even in places where we don't have terrestrial stations — which is shocking. You and I have obviously talked about new media a ton but I mean, clearly you look at the internet and podcasting and satellite and in the end we're all in the content business because clearly there's got to be a much larger listenership than we're measuring through traditional means. You would not believe the Twitter and Facebook response we're getting around the country. And I don't know whether it's just catching a wave on Republican overreach in some of these states. We give money to a different progressive cause in each state — in Madison it was obviously the epicenter for worker's rights and union rights and that went to the recall of Governor Walker. Then in New York, we're doing marriage equality. But it's just a really great comedy show and conservatives are coming to see it too because it's a really fun show. We all do standup and then we do a panel discussion and then we do Q&A with the audience and it's just a really amazing, raucous comedy show.

TALKERS: Are you making money with this? Is this a business model that others can look at and maybe say, "Hmm...we could do something like that as well?" It really doesn't have to be comedy, doesn't have to be "sexy liberal," it could be anything. It could be gardening. We have people like Dave Ramsey out there filling arenas. Sean Hannity has put on charity concerts with rock bands that have drawn thousands. What do you think about this idea for others?

MILLER: Yes. Why not? We're doing a promo calling it "the show the right wing doesn't want you to see." We have had literally, one show in which someone actually tried to bribe our booker \$10,000 to stop booking it. Our Facebook and Twitter pages were hacked. We have scalping sites selling tickets for \$500 apiece because it's literally — I'm not trying to overhype it — it's become a phenomenon. We're one show into this as we're speaking now and we're selling out 2,000-seat theaters in some places — in some cases on the first day — the VIP tickets are gone. The good news is our stations are participating in that. So, it's a way to make our stations money and help them out and do appearances. It really has become just a win-win for everybody.

TALKERS: Just backing up for a minute now. You mentioned Facebook and Twitter. Would you say that social media, properly applied, is what's fueling this or is that just accompanying it with the station promotion? In other words, what I see here in this discussion is a relationship between promoting something on a station and promoting something in accompanying social media and internet media. How would you put it all together in explaining this?

MILLER: Well, I think it's all of it but in talking to my tour director who's done this a lot — he's done this all his life — he says he's never seen anything like this. We are not doing any traditional advertising. In many cases it really is the strength of the radio show. In Madison, for instance, we're on an FM Clear Channel station and I've been the number one talk show in the market for years. So that's what he's saying, he's never seen this phenomenon. As you know, in radio we just have a natural promotional vehicle that most people don't who do shows on the road. On top of that, it's not just *my* Facebook and Twitter but Hal's and John's so I think it's all of it. We're booking dates months out in advance that are starting to sell out. It's kind of incredible.

TALKERS: It's wonderful, actually. It's very inspirational. Again, the holy grail of this particular era in talk radio, as well as radio in general, and certainly in any kind of internet media is finding and creating

non-traditional vehicles to generate revenue. If you can make money doing something that is actually artistic, that furthers your image in a positive way — so much the better!

MILLER: We are all in a challenging economy and a challenging time in the radio business. *TALKERS* has been such a great support for all of us in the radio business. As you know, in progressive it's even more challenging in that there are only maybe 60 stations in the country so, you're exactly right, this is one of the ways we're monetizing. We do an incredible podcast business which shows me that there is an audience for this because people say, "You've got to hear this show," and obviously, most times people say, "I don't get that here." So they buy the podcast and that, and now the live shows we're doing, are what's keeping the show profitable. It's putting together a whole model that is not just relying on terrestrial radio ad sales.

TALKERS: I get the feeling that most radio broadcasters today have not even begun to scratch the surface of podcasting's potential in terms of making money. Can you share a little more about that with us?

MILLER: When we started podcasting, it took us by surprise but it's been another barometer like I say — and this is the argument we are trying to make to the radio business why they should be putting more progressive stations on — because of the kind of podcast business and live show business that can be generated and I'm told people really are starting to wake up and pay attention to this. Because people in that business know that this is unprecedented in terms of ticket sales for an entity of this nature. And the fact that Facebook pages are springing up with amazing demand. For instance, in South Florida, we have incredible demand for the road show. We have not one radio station in South Florida. But I used to be on a Clear Channel station in Miami that got terrific ratings. They flipped to sports and that station now has no ratings at all. Maybe it's going to those companies and saying, you may want to think about putting this back on and getting some better sales people because...

TALKERS: Yeah but there are a lot of issues here you have to think about. Now, why is there a demand in Florida for your show if you're not on a station and haven't been for years. Where is that coming from? I'm not saying it's not, I believe you...

MILLER: But it hasn't been *years*, that's what I'm saying. I think I had a big enough following in Miami and elsewhere that when the station goes away, they buy my podcast. We were shocked at the podcast revenue we were making when we started. The bad news is they can't get you and that becomes good news for the podcast business when you have a loyal audience.

TALKERS: Have you ever stopped to think that maybe there's some kind of strange inversion going on here — there's a reverse ratio — that the reason you're able to do so well with podcasts and the reason you're able to do so well with live performances in specific venues is because it's hard to find you or your type on the radio? That in fact...

MILLER: So I should hope for even fewer radio stations (laughs)?

TALKERS: Obviously not. But you're making the assumption here, Stephanie, that you're part of a genre. Maybe you're not. Maybe you're a unique entity being squeezed into a genre by an industry obsessed with easily packaged stationality. Look, everything we've discussed about you has shown you to be a total individual. I cannot think of another person in talk radio who fits this model. There are liberals, there are political talkers, there are women talkers, there are people who do shows in the morning. But you're this blend of all of this stuff and more and then we always get back to, "There are not enough stations doing this format," well, what are they going to do for the rest of the day? You are a very different act than say Thom Hartmann or Bill Press when viewed outside the lens of pure politics.

MILLER: That's why, in Syracuse I'm on an FM with mixed programming — there's me and Mark Levin — that's why we've been making the argument forever that...look I had great ratings on KFI following Rush

and Dr. Laura. I had great ratings on KABC. "Progressive" has created stations for us to be on but unfortunately it's created this sort of ghetto. This kind of, "Okay you're going to be on lower-powered stations and you can only be there." And I think you're absolutely right. I think what I have always tried to do is be just an entertainment show. You and I have talked about this before. You have said to me, "Part of your problem is you're too funny," and to tap into those other areas of myself and I do. I think if you listen to my "coming out" show, if you listen to my show the day my dog died I cried through the whole show. I think there are different elements to all of us that if you tap into those you're just more relatable. But I also think that what makes me unique is the comedy part. I think that's what this comedy tour is proving which is specifically what I do is something different than what anyone else does and I think the one thing in common is people want to laugh during these times.

TALKERS: Good point! Let's give comedy its credit. I think when Rush Limbaugh started he was very, very different than he is today in that very regard. I remember interviewing him in 1990 in *TALKERS* magazine where he told me that he thinks political activism has no place on radio. He considered himself an entertainer who uses politics as a medium of discussion. He was critical in that piece of talk show hosts who were out there tangibly instigating political movements such as the late 1980s tea bag rebellion. Of course he's changed over the years, but if you go back and listen to early Limbaugh, he was very much a conservative doing for the conservatives what Jon Stewart does today for liberals: Biting social commentary with a political message that basically uses humor. A lot of what Rush Limbaugh started doing as tongue-in-cheek humor has become serious but that's another story.

MILLER: Listen, you can always engage me in a little Rush Limbaugh bashing (laughs).

TALKERS: I am certainly not bashing Rush Limbaugh.

MILLER: No, I absolutely think that's a re-

ally salient point. I think a point of view is fine but what I was saying is so important to me that not only are members of my family Republican — whom I love and who love me and think I'm funny, hopefully — but people who listen to my show and come to even the live shows. We always say you've got to laugh or you'll cry all day. I think that these are serious times and that's what we try to do is just find the funny in stuff.

TALKERS: Well, what we try to find at *TALKERS* are ways to help the talk radio industry in *all of its permutations* have a nice long life and be successful. And I'm going to leave you with this question: Do you think there's a chance, do you think it would be good if there were hundreds and hundreds of talk stations around the country that were open to the idea of having liberals, conservatives, moderates and all kinds of people on and maybe even having intelligent debates between people on their own stations as opposed to stationarity being dictated exclusively by left or right?

MILLER: Yeah, absolutely. That's exactly what I think the crux is. Look, when I was next door from where I am right here at Clear Channel Los Angeles on KFI, I had the exact ratings that the folks over there do now, because it's a 50,000-watt power blaster. I followed Rush and Dr. Laura and John & Ken and I had great ratings but because, again...I don't know why more people don't take a page from KFI, which is one of the most successful stations in the country. Bill Handel isn't doctrinaire conservative, he's just entertaining. Again, I think it's because he's a great talk show host and that's what you always say, "Just be great." I think that would be fascinating because, like I said, most people are not all one thing or another politically. And so that's what I would love, especially FMs, if they would just start putting a bunch of great radio shows on. When I was on KABC I had the highest ratings on that station from 5:00 am to 9:00 pm and it was all right-wingers and me.

TALKERS: Well, there are good reasons why you are receiving this year's Woman of the Year honors. In fact the official

name of the award again is the Judy Jarvis Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Talk Radio by a Woman... and Stephanie, you truly deserve it. You're going to be presented this award by last year's recipient — a marvelous multifaceted woman, Laurie Cantillo, who is the program director of what many rightfully consider to be a conservative station — and so it's going to be a great moment.

MILLER: She's terrific.

TALKERS: That's what she said about you when she found out you were receiving this year's award.

MILLER: Thanks, Michael.

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