

# TALKBACK TRASH and TREASURE ANECDOTES

Compiled by Stephanie Marsden and Bruce Carty

**Alan Jones – 2UE:** I wish that I could claim that I have never been conned. But I can't. 2UE program director John Brennan deserves the credit for this very clever scam. He informed me that Nana Mouskouri was on the line re an earlier discussion I had with her, to do some charity appearances. The "imposter" at the other end of the line was a professional English actress and she did a phenomenal job. I said "lovely to hear your voice again, let's play some of your beautiful music". I had been caught hook, line, and sinker. Despite being cautious, if your staff are devious enough, you can be conned. I claim it will never happen again, but my staff might not agree.

**Howard Sattler – 6PR:** My co-host Despene, also known as Anne Tenna, was our breakfast television critic and a former sub-editor of the West Australian newspaper. Our subject on this day was "The First Time". Callers were asked to describe how they lost their virginity. The first caller was Tony, who revealed the details, in all their glory, of how he deflowered our blushing Despene. OOPS!

**Tony Pilkington – 3YB:** My program director, David Swanson, advised me that the funeral announcements I was about to read were to be treated with the utmost respect. The local undertaker paid one guinea each, so in no circumstances was the announcer allowed to deviate from the script or ad-lib. After the funeral announcements, I had time to fill before the next program so I grabbed a record without checking, and played "So long, it's been good to know you". I started at 2QN one week later.

**Greg Carey – 4BC:** By phone I was talking on air to Rugby League Coach Tommy Raudonikis. A few minutes after the interview he rang back with a problem. During our talk on air he had taken his false teeth out and put them on top of a car. The car then drove off. What followed will go down in airwave annals as "The Tracking of Tommys' Teeth". Thanks to countless alert listeners, thirty minutes later a car proudly bearing a set of dentures on its roof was spotted. Coach and choppers were reunited.

**Bob Francis – 5AA:** As regular listeners know, I don't have time for wankers and scumbags on my talkback program. However, I do enjoy fulfilling the more reasonable requests. Having pioneered talkback in South Australia in 1967, you'd think by now I could spot a screw-up coming. Not so. A caller had set up a Christmas light display outside his house. To complete the show he needed a friendly Santa Claus to add some HO HO HO to the magic. Two months later I recognised the callers' voice again and asked him if I had found a suitable Santa for his display. He said "Oh yes, he was an excellent Father Christmas. Very jolly, and he ran off with my wife".

**Neil Mitchell – 3AW:** It was the first week of the AFL football finals. I was outraged. Outraged because there would be no football game in Melbourne this Saturday. My radio editorial thundered "This is the home of football. Don't these people understand you can't insult Melbourne like this? The interstate teams are taking over. There are games in Perth, Adelaide, and Sydney, but the Melbourne supporter stands insulted", and so it went on. I was merciless. I ended with a savage sting and crossed live to football commentator Rex Hunt who seemed oddly hesitant. He said "Er, well Neil, it looks like I might be a bit lonely because I thought I was going to the MCG on Saturday to see the game". I had misread the game fixtures. The major game that weekend was in Melbourne. I was completely and unbelievably wrong and found myself grovelling. Rex tried to help. "I think what you probably mean is it's a pity there're not more games in Melbourne". I said on air "No Rex, I stuffed up".

**Jeremy Cordeaux – 5DN:** The morning weather report on the Cordeaux show was always presented by a Bureau of Meteorology spokesman. My producer phoned the duty forecaster, and put her name, Louise, up on the studio monitor. On air I said "Louise, it's so nice to have a lady on the line for a change. What's in store for us weather wise"? For a meteorology official her personality was unusually bubbly and even flirty when we explored what else she could see from her window besides cold fronts. What her answers lacked in facts and figures, they certainly made up for in entertainment. The next day I was instructed that Bruce was on the line with the weather. I said "Bruce, that's two new forecasters in a row; is the Bureau expanding"? Bruce said "Oh no, yesterday you spoke to my wife". Then like Louise, he provided us all with a delightfully casual if unscientific view of the weather. I then learnt the truth. My producer had dialled the wrong number. By amazing good fortune, the couple she reached were incredibly helpful people who were determined not to let down some strange man on the radio.

**Terry Laidler – 3LO:** I interviewed the 'Chief Frog Keeper' about a colony of frogs being repatriated to Hong Kong. We then offered a family pass to the zoo for the caller with the best or funniest frog call. People phoned in with the usual 'rivets' and 'knee deeps' plus a few amusing originals. I said "Our last caller is Anna. Hello Anna, how old are you?" She replied "I'm eight". "And what does your frog say?" Anna said "Pobble-bonk, pobble bonk". I said "Very good Anna, but we wanted to know what your frog said, not what it did. We will announce the winner after the news". During the news the switchboard went berserk. How was I to know that the most endangered frog in Victoria was the Pobble-bonk, so called because of its' distinctive call? Another zoo family pass was then arranged.

**John Vincent – 2RE:** As a young green announcer in the 1960s, I was unaware of the malevolence lurking in the panel of knobs and switches before me on ANZAC day. All I had to do was put the large black record with the next pre-recorded program onto the turntable, cue up the needle, make the announcement, and get on with my other chores. It was a special feature to mark the day; a moving mix of war memories and music. My mistake was assuming it would be okay to take a toilet break. Speakers were located in all the corridors but not in the toilet, so I failed to hear when the needle got stuck. And what word was repeating over and over again? 'BLOODY'.

**Dita Cobb – 2GB:** Dita was taken off the air after a talkback discussion about cinema sex scenes. She said "The idea of watching mens' white bottoms bobbing up and down would be ludicrous". (The Australian Broadcasting Control Board wasn't amused).

**Lew White – 3DB:** I was on night duty when the phone rang and the voice said "Robert Menzies here". Suspecting a hoax I replied "The Arch Bishop of Canterbury here". However, it was Menzies, and I had to do some fast talking to save my neck.

