

Friday, November 30, 2007

WPFW at thirty.

WPFW (with Von Martin early in the tape). Â Â Amy Goodman. Â During the first week at law school in Washington, D.C., an area native described Washington as a small town. The notion that I might have moved to a small town from a huge city (Manhattan after Boston) threw me for a loop. I realized that Washington had a much smaller population than New York City and Boston, but had not stopped to check whether its population is dwarfed by New York's and Boston's, which it is.Â Plenty of other places have much smaller populations, but as major cities go, this is a small town in many ways. Â One feature of Washington that made meÂ immediately feel at home was Pacifica Radio station WPFW 89.3 FM. I thrived on the pure jazzÂ and other great music, and took to some of the political programming, although someÂ of it seemed whacked out of the stratosphere. I later learned about ugly infighting that would follow at Pacifica, and I do not knowÂ how much Pacifica and its listeners have recovered from that. At the same time, I continue listening; I am not aware of any other radio station that refusesÂ dollars fromÂ government and large corporate entities. Â WPFW has its own homey feel. Five years after relocating to Washington, I was driving nowhere in particular one early Saturday evening, and heard highly-talented Carribeana host Von Martin soliciting a ride forÂ a woman named GabiÂ to a Curry-out at the station. Von andÂ Gabi accepted my offer to drive her to the station, where I had a blast. Von showed me hisÂ cramped studio, where I suppose most of the announcers spoke to listeners. He gave me a cool tape of Caribbean music. IÂ found some tasty vegetarian eats among the meat-laden CaribbeanÂ food.Â The party apparently went very late; I departed muchÂ earlier than that. Â Yesterday, as I often try to do when at the courthouse in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, I had lunch at the vegan Everlasting Life restaurant in Capitol Heights, Maryland. The restaurant apparently is geared more towards health than bottom-line profit, proclaiming, for instance: "Once you get beyond all the studies, the statistics, the hype and the hoopla, it comes down to providing people with the knowledge on how to eat to live, the ability to access the things they need to make it a reality, and the support and dedication to encourage them to do so." The restaurant is surrounded by a sea of fast food joints, and seems always busy. Â On yesterday's visit to Everlasting Life, I met a uniformed animal control officer, and remarked that as much as I believe strongly in animal welfare, perhaps he and I one day would be on opposite sides of the court if I were to defend in criminal court someone accused by him of animal cruelty, which I would gladly do, just as I gladly defend all criminal defendants. He mentioned being vegetarian for fifty years (he is sixty-two, and looks to be in great health) and mostly or all vegan now. He mentioned Dick Gregory, who is apparently a vegetarian, and has shown himself to be very likeable when I bumped into him at the nearby Whole Foods market and a few years earlier at another store. He said that Mr. Gregory will be at WPFW's December 15 thirtieth anniversary celebration. It looks like quite a celebration -- not an inexpensive one to attend, but charging a little less than what plenty of other non-profit fundraisers charge.Â I decided to tell you about it. Â Also in attendance at WPFW's December 15 celebration will be Peace and Justice Award recipients Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, Ron Clark, John Conyers, Sonny Rollins (who presented a smashing Carnegie Hall performance in 1978 that I attended), and Dr. Dorothea Height. I likely will miss the event due to a prior obligation. If you go, please update me. Â If you are a WPFW listener, please remember to donate to the station, which cannot live on love alone. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 01:10