

Meet the Personalities 003 Tim Conway Jr.

Podcast Transcript

Recording date: February 9, 2017

Guest: Tim Conway Jr.

Host: Tom Smith

Recording: Mondo

Producer/Editor: Gil Perez



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Tom: *Meet the Personalities* is brought to you by LA Radio Specialist. Learn more about working with the very personalities you hear from within these podcasts at LARadioSpecialist.com. LARadioSpecialist.com, impactful marketing programs driven by influential personalities and the power of sound.

Tom: Welcome to "*Meet the Personalities*," the podcast where we sit down with radio personalities for a candid talk about their take on the business of radio. I'm your host Tom Smith, and today I'm joined by Tim Conway Junior.

Tim: This is where I come in? Thank you, thank you very much. Appreciate that intro.

Tom: Very special guest today, Tim Conway, Junior. I'm a huge fan. I'm a fan.

Tim: Aww, thanks, Tommy!

Tom: And Tim can be heard right here, in the Los Angeles Market on KFI-AM 640, Monday through Friday, from 6 to 10.

Tim: Six to 10, right. Six to 10 PM. Ding-dong! Four hours alone.

Tom: Ding-dong.

Tim: Let's go!

Tom: Let's do it.

Tim: All right.

Tom: So Tim, how did radio come into the equation for your career?

Tim: Well, it started way back...I don't know. Maybe it started...you wanna go back to when I was 10?

Tom: Absolutely, the very beginning.

Tim: My favorite thing to do...I bought a...I got some money for Christmas one year and I went out and bought a CB radio and put a big antenna on top of my house, and I was literally talking to truckers on the 101 Freeway. I could get them from about Thousand Oaks all the way to about Glendale, and so I would talk to them late at night. And, thinking back on it, I was wondering why maybe some of these 56-year-old truckers were talking to a 10-year-old at 11:00 at night on a CB, but everything worked out pretty good, you know?

Anyway, so I was always interested in the audio. Not so much the video in television and movies because, when you do a television show, there's probably about 150 people to make a decision on everything. When you have a script, it's the writers, the producers, the directors. The makeup lady will say she's got a funny line. The hair person will say, "Hey, why don't you say it this way?" And there's about 900 people that get involved in your life. With radio, it's just one and there's no editing. It's over, it's done. You don't edit and, you know, spend nine hours trying to perfect it, it's over. You get it out there and it's done. And it's only me, Mondo, Bellio, Angel, and Mark Thompson, and that's it essentially. Well, and we have some help from the newsroom here at KFI with Vanessa and Carla, but it's a pretty small group, pretty skeleton group.

So anyway...so here's how I got into radio. I went to college for radio, TV, and film in Bowling Green, and I got kicked out of college, for a lot of reasons. I don't wanna get into them.

Tom: What was the headline?

Tim: Well, when I first got there, my first semester, I got a 3.5 GPA.

Tom: Good.

Tim: So I was on the Dean's List and I thought, "Wow, this was easy." So I slept through the next semester and the grades slipped a little. I woke up one morning, it was 72 degrees below zero with the wind-chill factor in Bowling Green. It was winter of '81-'82. You can look it up if you think I'm BS-ing you. And I called my dad. I was talking to my dad, and he was sitting near the pool and it was 70 degrees out. I'm like, "Wow, it's a 142-degree difference. I've gotta get the hell outta here." So I get to Los Angeles and I wanna get into radio but I don't know how, so I was offered a job on a website called IFNet to do a late-night talk show called "Late Net." And it was the first video and audio streaming talk show on the internet, and we told everybody we had 400,000-500,000 people listening every night. Well, back then...

Tom: What year was that?

Tim: 1995. Back in 1995, nobody had the ability to download even pictures, you know, let alone audio packages and video. It was impossible, but we said we had 400,000-500,000 people listening. "People Magazine" bought it. They did a whole article on it.

"Entertainment Weekly," "Time Magazine," LA Times. Everybody jumped on board once people did and they wrote that we had 400,000-500,000 people listening every night because there was no way for them to check it, you know? They just sort of believed what we were telling them. I knew it was time to get out of the business though because there was no cash register in the building. There was no money coming in. We went to Budweiser and we said to Budweiser, "We're gonna put you up as the banner sponsor and talk about Budweiser every night on the show, and we're gonna do it for free." And we got a letter back from Budweiser saying, "If you do that, we'll sue you." And I'm like, "Oh okay, well, there's no money here. I've gotta get out." So I invited all the program directors of the LA radio stations to be our guests on the show, you know, a way to meet them.

Tom: Sure.

Tim: And Jay Clark was the only guy that said yes and he comes down. We interview him, and he has a love of sailing and so did I, so he invited me out sailing one day, and we sailed around with me, Doug Steckler, and Jay Clark. And Doug Steckler is scared to death of getting eaten by a shark in his apartment in Los Angeles off the 10 Freeway. He's afraid of getting eaten by a shark there. Can you imagine out on a sailboat?

Tom: Sure.

Tim: So we finish sailing, we desalinate the boat for two hours, and we talk, and he finally says, after about three or four times sailing with him, "Hey, you guys seem to have pretty good chemistry. Would you come on and fill in one night for "Ferrall on the Bench," this sports talk show guy. So we said yes. So on Christmas Eve eve, December 23, 1996, Doug Steckler and I spent from 8 o'clock till midnight coming in doing our first talk show. And then we got hired to do part-time fill-in. Whenever somebody got sick, we'd fill in. And then we got offered a slot from midnight to 4 AM on KLSX. That sort of grew from there. People got fired and we were cheap, and we signed our first afternoon drive contract to do afternoon drives in Los Angeles for \$75,000 shared between the two of us. So we're making about 38 grand each and we loved it, ya know? The guy says...

Tom: What year was that?

Tim: 1996...'97...1997. And so he says, "Hey, we only have \$75,000 for the time slot," and we said, "We'll take it," and we signed for...we split \$75,000, and we loved it. We thought we were on cloud nine and it just sort of took off from there. Now, we also were responsible for the whole David Cash story. David Cash was good friends with the guy who killed Sherrice Iverson in the Nevada State Line Casino, right next to Buffalo Bills. I think it was called Primadonna Casino. The guy killed a young black girl. I think she was only like seven or eight years old because he fantasized about killing a little girl. David Cash's friend witnessed it. Jeremy Strohmeyer did the killing. David Cash witnessed it, and David Cash didn't go to jail over it and wouldn't rat out his friend.

So David Cash was gonna go to school in Berkeley. And we said, "What kinda kid is going to school in Berkeley where his best friend kills a young girl and then doesn't report it, and yet he's allowed to go to Berkeley? And we said, "That's not gonna stand." So we got David Cash on the phone one night and David Cash said, "It wasn't my responsibility. I feel no remorse for that girl whatsoever." And we went ballistic. It was covered by every news magazine, every news show, every network. It was on "60 Minutes," it was on "World News Tonight," ABC, NBC. Everybody covered, so they sent all the cameras out to Berkeley and there literally were 100 cameras. There were people from Japan, China, Russia covering this thing. It was unbelievable.

And so we got fired shortly after that and then the ratings came in. The ratings were up 1,000 or 1,200% from what they were before, so they hired us back, and since then, you know, knock on wood, I've been very lucky to keep a job. Because, as you know, in radio, it's very difficult to keep a job more than two years. I think it's easier to keep a job in the NFL than it is in radio. And if you think about, it it's true, because how many Dodgers are there? Are there 30 Dodgers that are in uniform every night, right?

Tom: Uh-huh, sure.

Tim: Maybe 28, 30. I bet it's 30, 35. Well, there's not 30 talk shows in Los Angeles, so it's more difficult to get a talk show in Los Angeles than it is to play for the Dodgers. Big dog with the Dodgers.

Tom: Everybody knows your dad, Tim Conway.

Tim: Right.

Tom: How much of your dad's influence is in your being in entertainment, on radio, in the field overall?

Tim: Well, it's sort of odd. I really haven't talked about this before.

Tom: You don't have to if you don't want to.

Tim: No, no, no, no, no, it's cool. I'd like to get it off my chest. As a child, my dad had very strict rules. For instance, none of his children got to meet him until we were 35. Isn't that odd?

Tom: That is strange.

Tim: So I've only known him for about 12 years now.

Tom: That is strange.

Tim: Seems like a nice guy, funny guy.

Tom: Yeah.

Tim: I watched him in movies a lot and though, "Wow, I'd like to meet that guy."

Tom: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: "Oh, that's your dad." No, a lot of influence. He used to do "The Carol Burnett Show." You remember "The Carroll Burnett Show?" You're old enough, right?

Tom: Sure, yeah, absolutely.

Tim: And we used to go after school, 2 o'clock, 2:30, 3 o'clock, after school on Friday, and my mom would drive us down to "The Carol Burnett Show." We'd watch "The Carol Burnett Show" and I thought, "Oh, that's pretty cool." But whenever he went to do radio, like "Lohman & Barkley" or "The Michael Jackson Show" over at KBC or Larry King, I always 100% loved, you know, just the whole idea of radio. But I think, obviously a lot of influence. I mean, you know, you grow up around and see one of the funniest men in the world every single day, you would have to be a moron not to have anything rub off on you, ya know? Which may explain why [a couple of?] my brothers didn't really get into entertainment. But you know, I think of him as a big influence, huge influence, as opposed to my mom. Somebody asked me recently...this is so great. Somebody asked me recently, I can't remember who the hell it was. They said, "Of your parents, who was the funnier one?"

Tom: And?

Tim: And I went, "Wow, that's sort of..." I never had been asked that before. That's like saying, you know, you're Jack Nicholas' son, and you're like, "Between your mom and dad, who is the better golfer?" Right? And I'm like, "Oh, my dad was great, you know? My mom didn't even play golf, but my dad won, you know, 16 majors, and you know, golf courses are named after him. He's in the Hall of Fame. He's one of the world's greatest golfers. I'd have to say my dad was a better golfer than my mom because she didn't even play the game."

Tom: So, was it through being around your dad and seeing the differences between film and television and radio that kind of helped you decide, "Yeah, radio's the one for me?"

Tim: You know, when you're doing a film, you're standing around a lot, you know? He would go to work at five, six o'clock in the morning over on the Disney lot when he did "The Apple Dumpling Gang." We went with him a couple of times for a two-week period there during the summer. And you get there at 6:00 in the morning and sometimes it would be 6 PM before they did anything, before they shot anything. They would shoot for 10 minutes and you'd go home and you come back to do the same thing again. So, show biz, everyone thinks it's so, you know, glamorous and everything is, you know, first-class, there's always people surrounding you, it's always very glamorous, but it's just not. It really isn't.

Tom: You were on internet radio before internet radio really is what it is today.

Tim: Exactly. That's exactly right.

Tom: Radio comes in so many different flavors these days, right? You have terrestrial AM/FM, you have HD, you have satellite, you have streaming, and you have podcasting. It's all audible content, right?

Tim: Right.

Tom: What do you see in the future, crystal ball? Do you ever contemplate that?

Tim: I never like to because people are always saying it's over for talk radio, and then you look around and we get the highest ratings we've ever had last year.

Tom: There's no way. I don't buy it for a second.

Tim: I think you can automate music after a while, but I don't think you can automate talk radio. I mean, we had last year, during the presidential race...you remember that right? Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?

Tom: Sure, heard about that.

Tim: Well, we had our highest ratings. We came in number two in the city of Los Angeles, only behind one radio station, KOST 103.5. Then we were second. You know, a guy alone sitting in a room with Mondo and Bellio comes in second over all the music, all the other sports talk shows, the news, the foreign shows, the Spanish language. It was really cool, I mean, to have that kinda success. It was pretty neat.

Tom: Well, you guys deserve it. You're awesome. I love it.

Tim: Thank you, man. Appreciate it.

Tom: With that in mind, prospective advertisers. What's the Tim Conway Junior philosophy? You and I have sat with prospective advertisers more than once.

Tim: You bet.

Tom: But for the prospective advertisers out there that are gonna stumble across this podcast and I'm gonna share it with, what's your perspective on how, when, where, why?

Tim: I like to be able to use the product. There are very few advertisers that we have that I have not used the actual product. LoanMart is one of them because I have not needed, you know, an auto title loan, but I'll be there one day. Trust me.

Tom: It's the radio.

Tim: But I use everything else. The REM mattress. I use the bed. I use Aamco all the time. I've not filed bankruptcy, so I've not had the luxury of using Oaktree Law. But I like to be able to use the product, and I think one of the differences that we have, and again, you know, knock on wood, is that we have longevity. We've had LoanMart with us for six years, Oaktree Law for four years, and Morongo Casino--that I have used actually--they've been around for four years. And I think it's just the longevity. You know, the people hearing consistency every night that advertisers stick with the show, it makes them more comfortable advertising with the show.

And I think it was you that told me this, Tom. You said, "If you wanna see if you have a business plan that works, advertise on radio and you'll see very quickly if it works or it doesn't. And if it doesn't, well, you've saved a lot of time, you know, where you don't have to wait four or five years to fail. You can fail right away. But if you're successful, you're gonna know right away as well." But that stuck with me.

Tom: Thank you. Ding-dong.

Tim: By the way, you did it perfectly.

Tom: Yeah, ding-dong!

Tim: Lots of energy. The right cadence.

Tom: Where did that come from? I love it.

Tim: Ding-dong is an old track term. When you get a pack of nine horses and they're coming around the final turn into the stretch, and two have separated from the pack, so you have the 6 and the 8 and the rest of them are 20 lengths back. And with every stride, there's a new leader. Six, eight, eight, six, eight, six, six, eight, eight, six, and they're neck and neck, head and head. And you'll hear the old-timers up in the grandstand going, "We got a ding-dong! Ding-dong with these horses!" Because it's "ding-dong." Six, eight, eight, six. "Ding-dong, ding-dong!"

So we were talking about a story one night where a guy kills his wife in San Diego and I said, "Wow, that guy's an a-hole for killing his wife." Then I found out she was stealing from him and sleeping with her brother and I'm like, "Oh, well, maybe she was the a-hole." And then she was only doing it because he had cheated on her, and it was going back and forth, back and forth. And I couldn't figure out who was the a-hole. So I said, "We got a ding-dong!" And I wouldn't have said it twice but I got a call from Matt "Money" Smith over at KLAC. He said, "Buddy," he goes, "I was on the 605. I heard you yell out "ding-dong" with these two lunatics. I had to pull off the freeway two exits before I got home." He goes, "I was gonna urinate myself and I couldn't stop laughing."

And I said, "Wow. If Matt "Money" Smith, the smartest guy in talk radio or in sports radio, in all of radio, in my opinion, if he liked that, I'm gonna use that again." We used it again and it took off. And fortunately, it was right when Hostess lost their Ding-Dongs, you know, when Ding-Dong went out of business. So Rush Limbaugh was talking

about it, it was on ABC News, NBC News, and everyone thought, "Wow. This kid really has an influence on the world. Everyone's saying ding-dong!"

Tom: Before they did the remodel here at iHeart, I was walking by Tim's office and literally buckled over. There was a doormat...

Tim: Oh yeah, right.

Tom: In front of the office door. It said, "The door bell's broken, just yell..."

Tim/Tom: "Ding-dong!"

Tim: We have a kid who throws paper in Long Beach. He delivers for the local Long Beach paper, so...and he got a complaint from a resident. They said, "Please show up on trailer court earlier. And when you throw the paper, stop yelling 'ding-dong.'" You've got influence on these kids, you know?

Tom: So, back to the business of radio real quick.

Tim: Sure.

Tom: What advice do you have for a prospective advertiser? Who's right for radio? Who's right for Tim Conway Junior's show?

Tim: I don't know. I think anything with...you know, I'm a very outdoorsy, sports-oriented, climber, biker, skydiver type of guy.

Tom: Skydiver?

Tim: Yeah, anything active.

Tom: You really skydive?

Tim: Yeah. I don't like sitting around, you know, playing TVG on the internet and, you know, watching news and crap like that. I like to get out there, play tennis every morning. I'm active!

Tom: Right!

Tim: Yeah, so any kind of activewear, that's me. No, I think anything like the normal guy uses. His car breaks down, he's gotta declare bankruptcy, he's broke, you know, he needs cash.

Tom: Lost it all at the track.

Tim: Yeah. He's gotta, you know, he's scratching, clawing, to get by. And I think a lot of people in Los Angeles...it's so expensive in Southern California to live here. I think a lot of people sort of relate to them.

Tom: Santa Anita.

Tim: Yes.

Tom: How did you get hooked on the horses?

Tim: I was about three or four when I first went with my dad to Santa Anita. He took me. I've told this story a billion times, so I know Mondo's gonna pass out here. I'm not doing well in math in school in third grade. My dad takes me out of school to take me to the track and show me how to do math. The next day, it's show and tell and it's my turn, and I've got nothin'. So I look in my backpack and I've got a program from the track. So I show the third-grade audience, the third-grade class there, how to box an exacta. "If you like the three eight, go eight three three eight. In case it comes in three eight and you have an eight three, don't get screwed."

Principal's office, call home, and my dad fortunately picks up the phone. And the principal says, "It's borderline child abuse to teach your third-grader how to box an exacta," and my dad said, "Let me tell you what child abuse is." And I'll leave you this story. My dad says, "Child abuse is my son has a three eight, it comes in eight three, and he doesn't have it boxed. That's child abuse!" Tommy, you're a big star. Thank you, sir. Giants die.

Tom: Tim Conway Junior, thank you.

Tim: And let's do this again. Ding-dong!

Tom: Thank you so much. Thank you. Tim Conway Junior. He's gotta go hop on the air, Mondo's gotta go hop on the air. I'm your host, Tom Smith. That was Tim Conway Junior right here in Los Angeles Market, KFI AM 640, Monday through Friday 6 to 10. This was "Meet the Personalities." That was Tim Conway Junior's take on the business of radio. Thank you so much.

Announcer: This episode of Meet the Personalities was recorded by Tim Conway Junior's board operator, Mondo. It was produced and engineered Gil Perez.

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