

This is NPR



The WordchipperSM

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In the Fargo-Moorhead/Grand Forks area and throughout North Dakota and Minnesota, we are fortunate to have great access to National Public Radio. While Prairie Public Broadcasting has expanded its presence in North Dakota, Minnesota Public Radio is probably the top state public radio network nationally.

To have such an abundance of listener and government-supported public broadcasting, there must be a lot of fans—and there are. There might even be one on your gift list. If there is, here's something he or she will appreciate, and it's quite new and different. I'm referring to the book entitled *This Is NPR: The First Forty Years*, published this year by Chronicle Books, San Francisco. This hefty volume is comprised of 271 large pages and comes complete with an audio CD containing a number of memorable moments from the archives of National Public Radio.

Fans in this area will even find that the book tells of connections to Concordia College in Moorhead, as was the case with the book on the the Kennedy assassination I reviewed a couple weeks ago (see my column entitled "Living the Mission" archived at Wordchipper.com). This time it's the story of John Ydstie, who has covered the economy, Wall Street and the federal budget for NPR for two decades.

Ydstie was born in Minneapolis but grew up along the Canadian border in North Dakota. He became a student at Concordia during the 1970s, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree, summa cum laude, with a major in English literature and a minor in speech communications. He began his public radio career as an intern at the college's KCCM, one of the pioneering stations of the Minnesota Public Radio network. *This Is NPR* details how he went from our community to national prominence in public radio.

According to the network: "In recent years NPR has broadened (Ydstie's) responsibilities, making use of his reporting and interviewing skills to cover major stories like the aftermath of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the Jack Abramoff lobbying scandal. His current focus is reporting on the global financial crisis. Ydstie is heard regularly on the NPR news programs *Morning Edition*, *All Things Considered*, *Weekend Edition* and *Talk of the Nation*."

As I awaken to *Morning Edition*, I hear a calm, intelligent presentation of the news without a partisan agenda or needless noise. When there is opinion-based commentary, it is clearly identified as such. This is in stark contrast with what one hears today on most AM radio and sees on the cable TV networks, with all their shouting, partisan slants, over-cooked graphics, irritating sounds and commercial clutter. If you're not a public radio listener, try it sometime. It's a huge relief.

You'll also learn about how NPR management rejected moving Garrison Keillor's statewide *A Prairie Home Companion* in Minnesota to the national network. The program was eventually syndicated to public stations throughout the country via a new entity at the time: American Public Radio, a very successful venture started by Minnesota Public Radio president Bill Kling. This distribution service evolved into what is today called American Public Media. And in Keillor's work, you'll find another Concordia connection: His program is named after the *Prairie Home Cemetery*, located just across the street from the college.

Along with Ydstie's piece, in the book you'll find essays and anecdotes by such public radio luminaries as Cokie Roberts, Susan Stamberg, Noah Adams, Renée Montagne, Paula Poundstone, Linda Werthheimer, Nina Totenberg, Robert Siegel and more. Many photographs of staff and historic moments are included.

So, if you have a public-radio fan interested in the network's history on your gift list, you'll hit the mark with this idea.

And now a thought for the employed: Moving from the subject of broadcasting to something on being an employee or any type of subordinate. Follow this advice at your own risk, particularly during this economic downturn when jobs are scarce: "When you submit in spirit to aggressors or to an unjust and impossible situation, you do not buy yourself any real peace. You encourage people to go further, to take more from you, to use you for their own purposes. They sense your lack of self-respect and they feel justified in mistreating you. When you are humble, you reap the wages of humility. You must develop the *opposite*—a fighting stance that comes from deep within and cannot be shaken. You force some respect." This from a book called *The 50th Law*, by American rapper Curtis James Jackson III (known as "50 Cent") and Robert Greene. Their theory is opposite of what the Bible says in Matthew 5:5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."