

ANOTHER NON-PERSON

WJZR's Anita Bonita

vanishes without a trace

RADIO SOMEWHERE

BY MAUREEN NEVIN DUFFY
Correspondent

Another bright, dedicated radio personality has disappeared from the airwaves. This time it's Anita Bonita, the morning DJ on WJZR/Oldies 100, who did a morning show with fellow host Spyder McGuire.

Bonita joined WJZR on Jan. 16, 2006. Her last day was Friday, Sept. 12.

As seems to be the form in these cases, the station program director has not returned our e-mail or phone messages. The Web site has been stripped of all mention of Anita Bonita — as though she were a pre-revolution despot.

The site simply reads now: "The Jersey Shore Morning Show — Wake up each weekday morning from 5 to 10 for The Jersey Shore Morning Show. Twice an hour get the latest news and sports, while four times an hour Pete Tauriello and Frank Lombardo check in with 'up to the minute' traffic reports as well as the Big Screen Weather Forecast. Plus, test your knowledge to win some fabulous prizes with 'Stumper Trivia,' and the 'Magical Mystery Tune.'"

Another disturbing aspect is that the program director in this case, Jeff Rafter, was the subject of our column just recently. On Aug. 10, Rafter, who is program director and operations manager for WJZR, based in Manahawkin, and the program director for WMGQ, Magic 98.3 FM, told us how important radio talent is to the business today and WJZR's business model in particular.

Rafter spent much of our hour-plus, in-person interview impressing us with how vital experienced talent is to WJZR. The hardest thing on-air talent has to get right is "to learn to be yourself," he told us. "It takes years." What happened?

Bonita, who was both news director and co-host at WJZR, has 30 years in broadcasting, 12 of them physically in radio stations. She's worked as a major league sports reporter for CBS Sports, produced radio commercials for a big ad agency and worked for a software company that makes 85 percent of the software stations run on. You may remember her from the Z100 Morning Zoo team. She worked up to line producer there.

Bonita told this to an Asbury Park Press reporter for a feature that ran in the Jersey @ Work section on July

Like 'fighting'

Big Jay Sorensen, who co-hosted a morning show with Bonita on WJZR for about a year, described their pairing as "fighting in a bottle." Sorensen says, "Perhaps it reflects the economy as a whole, or just that the radio business has forgotten that people listen for personalities. As a jingle once said back in the glory days of Top-40 Radio, "It's what's between the music that counts."

Of course, the other part of the pattern is that the person let go must remain mute or risk never working anywhere again. Bonita politely declined an interview and sent this message instead: "Anita Bonita thanks all her fans for the love and support they've offered, since her departure from WJZR/Oldies 100."

Note: When asked for that article what she disliked about her job, Bonita answered, "to see so many talented broadcasters who have not been able to find positions in the field."

Radio Somewhere will forward your messages for Anita Bonita. Please send them to AsburyRadio@aol.com or 3 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, NJ 07712.

28. "By getting to be part of (Z100) and watch some of the absolute best in action, you learn a lot about how a morning show should be conducted, as far as news, information, piecing content—it's like a graduate course."

Rafter told Radio Somewhere, "We need them on the air, on the phone, in the video or podcast and in public. The industry needs entertainers who can do all of this."

Again, what happened? Bonita gave her typical day as rising at 2:30 a.m., scanning the Internet and "listening to some of the other radio stations to see what it is that they're reporting, so that I can get an idea for what is out there." At the studio she scanned local publications and wire copy to "get a handle on what it is that people need to know about to get through their day." She did seven newscasts on the half-hour between 5:30 and 8:30 a.m. Stop it, I'm exhausted.

If this was a budget-driven decision, as might be the case since Spyder is listed as solo now, the station needs to say so. Incidentally, don't you love it when these companies make budget-related announcements, so popular with Wall Street, that they've trimmed back staff and executed other economic efficiencies? Don't you wonder how, if the big company can't afford stuff, the staff is supposed to survive without an income? One of those great mysteries of our age.