

Country jock Uncle Steve out of a job

Inside TV & Radio



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Morning personality Uncle Steve (Garrett), a fixture for seven years at the country station KKCS (101.9 FM), was fired Wednesday.

He tells me that for a few weeks, he's been on probation for having a bad attitude (I thought that was a morning-jock job requirement) and for being too raunchy.

He says he's been locking horns with general manager Jerry Grant since Grant came to the station in May. Garrett describes Grant as a conservative Christian who thinks the morning show was too foul-mouthed and off-color.

I know Garrett said "hell" and "damn" on occasion, but he was tame compared with the outrageous jocks on other morning shows.

In the past few months, Grant squashed several of the bits Garrett and his partner Big Dad (Carson Cornell) planned. One involved giving out (clean) underwear that they'd had signed by various country stars.

"He (Grant) just thought it was tasteless," Garrett says.

Grant acknowledges that he comes from a conservative Christian background, "but I didn't realize that we had a clash about that."

He refused to comment about Garrett's termination.

The dismissal comes at a bad time for Garrett. He's married and has a 3-year-old, and these are shaping up to be not-very-merry holidays.

The predicament makes him more sympathetic to Charlie Cassidy, the former programming director who was fired from CS102 in May 1998. Cassidy, who now works at competitor KCCY (96.9 FM), has filed a wrongful-termination suit.

Garrett wishes he'd supported Cassidy instead of joining those who picked apart his job performance. "I had just as much to do with him losing his job as anybody," Garrett says.

To his listeners, Garrett says: "Thanks for a great run. Our listeners, I still maintain, are the most loyal and best listeners in Colorado Springs."

I'll miss Uncle Steve.

He and Big Dad had one of the most consistent morning shows in town. Their personalities clicked. They also featured more celebrity interviews than I heard on any other station.

Program director Travis Daily says he and Grant haven't decided whether they'll replace Garrett.

Andy Kaufman tribute

I recently saw an advance screening of "Man on the Moon," a film about the late comic Andy Kaufman that opens Dec. 22. Jim Carrey's portrayal of Kaufman is brilliant, but it left me wanting to see the REAL Andy.

Fortunately, TV Land, that classic-couch-potato channel found at 59 on Adelphia cable, is preparing to give us all the Andy we can handle with a

"Taxi" marathon.

Showcasing all the funniest Latka episodes, the marathon runs 5 to 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. Monday through Wednesday.

I was always amazed at how a comedian who was so off-the-charts weird with his stand-up show could channel his funny into prime-time situation comedy.

The foreign-man character he developed on stage grew and developed such heart and versatility in the character of Latka. Among his best episodes were those with his fiery girlfriend/wife Simka (Carol Kane) and those in which he developed multiple personalities, including one that mimicked Judd Hirsch's character Alex Rieger.

"Man on the Moon" suggests that Kaufman never liked "Taxi," which is too bad. I loved it.

The other thing I learned from the movie about Kaufman is that the only reason he agreed to do "Taxi" is that ABC promised him his own special.

He made the one-hour special "Andy's Fun House" in 1977, but when then-network president Fred Silverman saw how strange and anti-TV it was, he canned it. ABC ended up selling the show to NBC in 1978, but Silverman moved to NBC shortly afterward and rejected the show again.

Kaufman, feeling frustrated and betrayed, pitched the show to ABC's new president, Tony Thomopolous, who

agreed to air it in a late-night time slot, where it slaughtered NBC's "Tonight Show." It repeated in prime time in 1980, and again it was a ratings winner.

TV Land airs that special at 7 and 10 p.m. Monday.

Kaufman fans who haven't seen the special are in for a treat. Although it's often more intentionally annoying than outright funny, it's 100 percent Andy.

It features some of his early material, such as foreign-man doing awful stand-up: "My wife's cooking ees so bad... it's tellible."

There are interesting cameos by Cindy Williams and Howdy Doody, Kaufman's trademark Elvis impression, and a biting satire of bad talk-show hosts.

It's a great way to get psyched up for the movie.

Local home on HGTV

Former city councilman John Hazlehurst talks about the amazing restoration of his turn-of-the-century (the last century) Cascade Avenue home in a special Colorado-themed episode of "Restore America" at 8 and 11 p.m. Sunday on HGTV (channel 73 on Adelphia).

HGTV programming highlights the region again at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 23. A special about "Christmas castles" will feature the Rosemount Museum in Pueblo.