

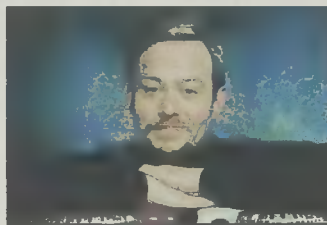
# Community News

## Jeff Katz, Chopped Herring, and the Crazy Mezuzah How a Conservative Jewish Republican Came to Charlotte Radio

By Amy Krakovitz

It's not exactly a clear and straight road from law enforcement to radio personality, but Philadelphia native Jeff Katz blazed his own trail. While on the Philadelphia police force for 4-1/2 years, he helped out his fellow officers in the police union by writing stories for newspapers and appearing on the radio and television. He was such a natural in broadcasting that he was mistaken for a radio guy who was helping out the police union, when the opposite was true.

His first real job in radio was as a salesman on an easy listening



The Chief Judge on the High Court of Rough Justice: Jeff Katz hosts WBT's 3-6 PM radio slot, Monday through Friday.

station. "It was like the Mantonvanni string version of 'A Funky Cold Medina,'" Katz says of the musical format. But, when it comes to his salesmanship: "I was pretty much the worst salesman in the history of radio." When the announcer from the overnight shift was leaving the radio station, Katz asked for the spot. "I think we can get along without you [in sales]," he quotes his sales manager.

From there Jeff built a reputation as a conservative spokesman in markets like Atlantic City, Hartford, Indianapolis, Sacramento, Boston, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, and most recently San Francisco.

It is his politically conservative persona that surprises some who may have a stereotypical view of Jewish people from large cities in the north. Always ready with a clever remark, Katz joked, "My mom was much more disturbed when she found a copy of *National Review* magazine in my room than when she found a copy of *Playboy* magazine." But he's aware that most people are taken aback when a nice Jewish boy is associated with conservative issues. "I got an award a couple of years ago from *Shomrim*, which is the Jewish police organization. I mentioned ... to my boss [that] I needed to take the evening off to get this award. He sort of looked at me and I said, 'Yeah, it's from the Jewish police organization.' And he said, 'Oh, will both of them be there?'"

Katz couldn't be more thrilled to be in Charlotte. "In terms of the radio business, if you look at it on paper, it doesn't make any sense," he explains. "Why do you leave market #4 and come to market #33? Or take a payout to go from San Francisco to Charlotte? Why try desperately to sell a house in California when there's no real housing market left in California? And the real reason is that we've got three little kids and we just weren't going to raise them in the Bay Area. It wasn't an area where the residents shared our views, where they shared our values, where they were concerned about the things we were and so we wanted some place where we could raise our children and be surrounded by people who, generally speaking, felt the way we did about a lot of important issues, values [and] morals."

As the "Chief Judge on the

High Court of Rough Justice" on WBT weekday afternoons 3-6 PM, Katz has found a welcome niche. "I have found the audience in Charlotte to be fundamentally very friendly, very receptive. Whether people are necessarily agreeing or not, there's a certain politeness I have found in Charlotte radio that I have not found elsewhere. My views resonate a little bit more with the audience in Charlotte than in San Francisco," he laughs. "The Charlotte audience is also very educated and well informed. They know about issues, a lot of nuance that you don't find in other cities. So I've been very impressed.

"I think part of it has to do with WBT," he continues. "A station like WBT is rare at this point in America. It's one of those stations people grow up with. There's more that's expected of people who are part of a WBT-type radio station than would be expected of other radio stations. So there's a real community sense and sense of ownership on the part of listeners and residents of Charlotte. It's their radio station and they demand a lot of it. And so I think that's reflected in the listenership."

Katz is also trying to find a niche in Charlotte's Jewish community. "I'm sort of synagogue shopping I guess you could call it," Katz explains. "I spent Rosh HaShanah at the Charlotte Torah Center. Yom Kippur at Ohr HaTorah. Services a couple of weeks ago at Temple Beth El." In addition to Jewish religious life, he is anxious to establish himself in Jewish communal life in Charlotte, as well. "I'm in the process of organizing a chapter of the Republican Jewish Coalition here. ... I'm very anxious to be involved here. I have on my desk the papers for the Bernstein Leadership Group. I'd done something similar to that with the American Jewish Committee in San Francisco. I wound up being named to the Board of Directors of the AJC in San Francisco. I saw the program name and I'm applying for that. I want to be as active as possible.

"My dad died five days before my oldest son was born," Katz continues, as he explains his re-attachment to Judaism. "I went from having a dad to being a dad in the course of five days. And it was tough. It was a very bizarre situation. And I can remember 'cause we were living away. My folks lived in Florida. My wife obviously was pregnant. My dad knew that she was pregnant. He knew that he was going to have a grandson. And I debated with my wife and my mom, do I come back to Florida to see my dad, to be there for the funeral? And my mom said, 'Look, you've got to realize your responsibility - and

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Richard Roskind  
Broker/Realtor®  
704-905-6175  
rroskind@aol.com



Mickey Gold  
Realtor®  
704-779-5859  
mickeyau@aol.com

**Gold/Roskind Team**  
[www.GoldRoskindHomes.com](http://www.GoldRoskindHomes.com)



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