

# *On Life and Meaning*

MARK PERES

## **Episode 11** – Michael Goldfarb – All Along the Watchtower

### *The Voices of NPR and Kittens*

And now a personal word,

Listening to Michael Goldfarb talk about his work as a journalist and historian, I'm reminded of countless hours listening to the reporters of NPR report from distant places from around the world.

As writer Dierdre Mask noted in an article in *The Atlantic* magazine, 'We can't see NPR reporters, so we have to picture them. And because they are with us in our most private moments—alone in the car, half-asleep in bed—we start to think we know them.'

And we do think we know them. Their voices are iconic: distinct, informative, comforting, familiar. Their voices are the sounds of our better selves when we are bright and learned and engaged in the affairs of the world. No matter the day's events, they give us hope that in this crazy world sense and sensibility will prevail.

Here are a few names I grew up with:

Susan Stamberg  
Bob Edwards  
Carl Kasell  
Noah Adams  
Linda Wertheimer  
Robert Siegel  
Scott Simon  
Cokie Roberts  
Bob Mondello

Each name evokes a voice, a style, a beat, that is the news soundtrack of my life. Of our lives. Of our shared imagination.

We hear their stories as they report from bureaus from foreign capitals:

Eleanor Beardsley, Paris  
Rob Gifford, London

Ofiebea Quist-Arcton, Dakar

and, of course, Sylvia Poggioli, Rome.

We hear war correspondents in the thick of battle:

Michael Golfarb, in Northern Ireland and Bosnia;  
Kelly McEvers, in the midst of death and kidnapping in the Arab Spring;  
Tom Bowman, among the fire and mortars of Helmand Province;

and David Gilkey, ambushed and killed by the Taliban.

We admire them for the work they do, sharing what they see and hear so we might better understand, alert for the dangers and tripwires of this world, standing all along the watchtower.

They guard the guardians. They keep the powers of the world honest. They are in the game devoting themselves to reporting and story-telling and to the first drafts of history.

And on a much lighter note, we love them for their wonderful, instantly recognizable names:

Lourdes Garcia Navarro  
Dina Temple-Raston  
Charlayne Hunter-Gault  
Korva Coleman

If we had a litter of kittens, we would name them after NPR reporters. Our Persian cats would be Neda Ulaby and Soraya Sarhaddi-Nelson, our Bengal cat would be Lakshmi Singh, and our American short hair cat would be Renee Montaigne.

And our favorite cats, of course, the one closet to our hearts, would be Ari Shapiro and Yuki Noguchi.

What would be more fun that?

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