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HEARSAY ON THE AIR WAVES

Two Houston-Area Attorneys Talk Law on Radio Show

By DEBRA LEBERER COCKMANN

Lawyer friends and former law partners Chris Tritico and Brian Clary have created their own "hearsay" exception.

Every Sunday from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., Tritico, 41, and Clary, 35, host a radio call-in talk show called "Hearsay" on Clear Channel Radio's KPRC 950 AM.

"For us, it's fun," says Tritico of Houston's Denton & Tritico. "It's still doing what we love, which is the practice of law, but it's so different. We have a good time, and we dispense good information."

The show, which first aired in January, highlights headline-grabbing legal issues and cases, offering commentary and the opportunity for listeners to ask questions and express opinions. Recent topics include the Andrew Young bill, national security and racial profiling issues in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and, most recently, the indictment in March and conviction on June 13 of Arthur Andersen for obstruction of justice.

Whenever possible, Tritico and Clary invite attorneys involved in the cases, legal experts and com-

mentators.

Tritico's and Clary's questions and rapid-fire commentary are delivered by their good-natured snuffing of one another for their divergent political views. But listeners can discern at all times the lawyers' mutual respect for one another.

"I'm a Bush, Lindbergh, Republican cancer survivor, and he's a bleeding heart liberal lawyer Democratic liberal," Clary says, "so we try to bring a different perspective to the issues. We try to be as honest as we can about our true intellectual beliefs."

When it comes to advising their listener audience, however, the two are closely aligned. Each Sunday, Tritico and Clary set aside ample time to address callers' legal concerns, offering off-the-cuff legal advice served with a dose of compassion. Problems range from family law and estate issues to employment and real estate matters. "It's like sitting for the bar exam," says Clary, a corporate defense attorney based in Humble. "You never know what questions will be asked."

Tritico agrees. "You get to give old information to people who don't have any other way to get it. We talk to them and help them out. We can't, in that brief time, solve their problems, but we can tell them where to go and how to get started."

"I think they're doing a great job," says Hayes, an early guest and frequent listener. "Chris and Brian — I've worked with both of them — are very bright young lawyers... Add to that their quick wit and knowledge of the law and what a fine show does for the public."

Hayes applauds their format of having a guest talk about current legal issues and then writing each hour to field questions from listeners. "The show is organized well, and I think it's been received well by the public."

"Judging from the e-mails and calls they get, they're doing very well," says Eric Charles, director of AM programming for Clear Channel — Houston. "They do a great job of helping people with problems, but are good enough to still give and do good talk radio, too."

The show fills a unique niche for the station, Charles says. "We wanted a program with attorneys that helped answer questions but also wanted a show that talks about the big news of the day," he says. "Brian and Chris are bright enough, talented enough to do both things. There are a lot of lawyers who want to be talk show hosts, but there aren't a lot who can do it well. These two guys absolutely can."

Hooked on Radio

Clary, a self-proclaimed "talk radio junkie" who regards talk radio as an art form, says the idea for the

show occurred to him when Tritico returned to Houston during the summer of 1997 after the trial of Timothy McVeigh. Tritico was one of the defense lawyers for McVeigh, who was executed last June for



Chris Tritico (left) and Brian Clary.

the 1993 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Many of the radio professionals they approached, however, indicated they would have to lay aside if they wanted to do a show. But the lawyers didn't want to self-advertise or concern themselves with time flat of Texas rules regarding attorney advertising. Through personal contacts, Tritico began making weekly appearances as a guest legal analyst on a Clear Channel program. "I was hooked," he says.

Ultimately, he and Clary approached Charles about doing a weekly show, launched in mid-January. Initially, Tritico and Clary met during the week to prepare, but these days, preparation can be handled with a few phone calls and a pre-game huddle to identify noteworthy developments that occurred during the week. On Father's Day, for instance, they launched the first showing on June 13 of Houston attorney Gus Quinn, 47, of Round, Morgan & Quinn. They also discussed the Andersen trial, brainstorming and offering their personal spins on the world's significance.

"We've been friends forever, and I know Brian would be good at this," Tritico says.

"My idea is I'm a full-time lawyer and a part-time radio show host," Clary says. "I'd love one day to be a radio show host and part-time lawyer."

"I wouldn't turn that down, either," Tritico says. Tritico and Clary say it would be about if the show was syndicated throughout Texas — or beyond.

"It's a unique program, and we are looking for the right platform for them," Charles says. "As we continue to grow and they continue to grow in this role, anything is possible."

KCB



Brian Clary (left) and Chris Tritico take a caller on their radio talk show "Hearsay."

mentors on the show to answer questions and provide insight. A number of high-profile Houston lawyers have been featured on the show, including Texas attorneys Woodell & Tritico, a wife, and George Parrish of Parrish & Associates, Professor Gerald Dwyer of South Texas College of Law, Richard "Buckhorn" Hayes of Richard Hayes & Associates, Dick DeGuerin of DeGuerin & DeGuerin, and on June 13, Anderson lead defense counsel Russell "Rusty" Wardle Jr.

But the show reaches beyond Texas, as well. On June 5, for instance, Clary invited foreign affairs analyst Matthew Pat, an American of Pakistani heritage who supported India's counter-terrorism effort in the Clinton administration in 1998. Calling from an undisclosed location, Pat discussed national security and terrorism and alleged that former President Bill Clinton and his national security team ignored several chances to capture Osama bin Laden in the late

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