

On the Air... On the Record



Arizona Attorney
Editor Tim Eigo, José Cárdenas
and Michael Grant in the Tempe
studios of KAET.

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Twenty years is a long time to do anything.

And when you're talking about a news program, that's an eternity.

But *Horizon* has been informing Arizona citizens about news and politics since 1981. On average, up to 35,000 people watch every night. So useful is the show's approach that the PBS program decided this past year to add a second show, *Horizonte*, which aims to look at Arizona events "through a Hispanic lens."

At the center of those influential shows are two prominent lawyers.

Michael Grant has been with *Horizon* since the beginning. An accomplished journalist, he also works full-time as a shareholder with Gallagher & Kennedy in Phoenix. He practices in administrative, regulatory and public utility law.

Horizonte is hosted by José A. Cárdenas, Chairman of the law firm Lewis and Roca in Phoenix. He is a commercial and civil litigator, and he also practices in transactional/international law.

ARIZONA ATTORNEY sat down recently with both hosts to see how they balance commitments to law and to media. And they even let us sit at their roundtable.

ARIZONA ATTORNEY: Michael, how did *Horizon* first begin, and how did you get involved?

MICHAEL GRANT: I had done some programming for Channel 8 previously. They tried a couple, three times to get a daily public affairs show going, and for a variety of reasons it just never had been successful. They called me up one day out of the blue—by that time I was in private practice—and said, “Hey, do you want to do a nightly public affairs show?” I said, “I don’t know if I can do that and practice law full time, but I’ll try it for six months.”

Here it is 23 years later—much to the chagrin of the audience, I might add.

AZAT: Was the format the same then?

GRANT: It’s always been pretty much the same: the long-form interviewing, public affairs, politics, Monday through Thursday. And then the Friday edition, the reporter roundtable has always been patterned after *Washington Week in Review*, which started two or three years before we started *Horizon*.

AZAT: Before you began, how did you expect it would affect your practice?

GRANT: I wasn’t quite sure. I was very concerned about the time demands associated with it. But I had been in broadcasting for about 10 years, mostly in news. And I’ve always been kind of a news junkie anyway; I read two or three daily newspapers just for fun. So the time demands did not turn out to be as bad as I expected.

AZAT: José, you started hosting *Horizonte* in the past year. What made you think, “TV, I can do that”?

JOSÉ CÁRDENAS: This was all part of Channel 8’s outreach effort to the Hispanic community. They invited a number of people to come and meet with them to discuss various ideas, this being one of them—the possibility of a program like this. In part, I think this is a reflection of that old adage “If you don’t show up, you may get selected.”

It was quite that direct. I did miss that meeting. They asked for names of people who might host a program like this. Mine was one of them. There were a number of other people, including some real professional talent, as I understand.

GRANT: [laughing] None more professional than you, José.

CÁRDENAS: Real professionals. They would know what they’re doing!

They then selected a number of people to do auditions. And I was humiliated by mine. I thought I was just awful, and I didn’t think it would go much beyond that. But it did, and they chose three people to do pilots; we did seven pilots among the three of us.

AZAT: Do you still have any butterflies when you tape, or are they gone?

CÁRDENAS: Oh, sure. A little bit. I’m used to public speaking, so it’s not as bad as it

might otherwise be, but I’m always concerned about looking dumber than I am.

GRANT: I can remember when I first cracked a mic, and I think I was only about 15 or 16. But I don’t think you ever completely lose the butterflies, and I don’t think you should, because I think there’s an edge to that. What you do is learn to control those and turn them to your advantage as opposed to allowing them to debilitate you.

AZAT: José, what’s the concept behind *Horizonte*?

CÁRDENAS: The format and concept is to take



Anchors aweigh:
KAET commentators
Cárdenas and
Grant animate the
discussion.





the successful formula for *Horizon* and give it a slightly different focus, focus more on Hispanic issues. As you may have noticed, there are any number of subjects that are covered on both shows, maybe a little differently, or sometimes it's a package that may have run on *Horizonte* or *Horizon* first. So there's a lot of overlap. The main difference is it's taking *Horizon*, adding a few letters to the end, and then, as the promos say, looking at the issues of the day through an Hispanic lens.

AZAT: Is that driven by the size of the Hispanic population in Arizona?

CARDENAS: That's part of the original rationale for this outreach effort.

AZAT: Mike, over 23 years, there must be some interviews that stand out for you—good and bad.

GRANT: There have been a number of interviews that have gone south; those clutter my brain all the time. I was trying to think of an interview that went north!

One of the funny ones is, the production staff thought they were booking Milton Friedman, the Nobel Prize-winning economist from the University of Chicago. But it actually was Dr. Milton Friedman, who was very interested in holistic medicine. That led to some last-minute ad lib changes. And I found out more about holistic medicine than anyone would ever want to do.

AZAT: That could make for a stressful show. José, have you had similar experiences?

CARDENAS: There is some sense that people may turn it off in part on the assumption that it's in Spanish; we've run into that a number of times.

We had a person on from a state agency; they sent her because she was a native Spanish speaker. She panicked when she found out it was going to be in English.

AZAT: Mike, are viewers seeing you live or on tape?

GRANT: We tape occasionally; most of the time we go live. And when we tape, we tape real time; we never edit on either show. What you see is what actually occurred. But

I really prefer live television. There's just an edge associated for some reason with knowing you're going live. It's not the same when you're just rolling tape.

AZAT: Take us through a typical show, from concept to broadcast.

GRANT: It will vary a lot. Some things that we do literally will hatch at 10, 11 in the morning, depending on what the day's news demands are. They will call a shot, which might entail dumping a segment that was planned. They will scramble production staff and lay down whatever video is necessary to create the package. Simultaneously, of course, the function going on is, "We need a guest or guests who is best positioned to argue that issue or explain that issue." Occasionally I am looped at that point in time, particularly in terms of selecting guests. They'll call me up and say, "Who's good on this subject that we may not be aware of?"

AZAT: And you're still at work at Gallagher & Kennedy at that time?

GRANT: Yes. I show up around 6:30. We'll normally be in touch at least once a day so I have some idea what the program's about, because I like to sort of tuck that in the back of my head and I'll think about, even if I don't realize that I'm thinking about it.

Of course, there are some programs that are planned two weeks out, particularly some that may require some more production qualities to them. We're always looking ahead, and we know that, for example, "X" is going to happen on this particular day, an oral argument is going to go before the Supreme Court, or whatever.

But quite honestly, some of the days I like the best are the ones where you've had some breaking development.

AZAT: There must be days when work and *Horizon* collide.

GRANT: I think my record is, I showed up one time because I was tied up at the Capitol in a hearing, the latest I have ever arrived was seven minutes until 7. I slid in the door, got makeup on, learned what was on the show, and went live at 7:00. But I try not to cut it quite *that* close.

AZAT: José, why is it important for your interview subjects to know that you know your stuff?

CARDENAS: We have a little bit more luxury in terms of time, because we tape just once a week. These tend to be subjects I know something about, and with some of these people it's helpful for them to know I know something about it, because they feel a little bit more comfortable. And it makes for an easier-flowing discussion.

GRANT: But you also don't want to know so much about it that you miss the questions that somebody at home would like you to ask. You don't want to be a complete insider. You don't want to be so immersed in the subject that you move the interview level above the heads of most of the audience.

CARDENAS: That's where our lawyer background comes in handy. You're thinking about your "record." You will interject [for clarity], because you're thinking about other people who are going to be listening or reading. So it's not just for your own benefit, and I think that helps.

AZAT: So you feel an obligation to be as accurate as possible.

GRANT: I feel a sharp sense of responsibility to the audience always. I think I really feel it more from that standpoint: I don't think there's ever been a drive home where I didn't get to Mill and University and say, "Gosh darn it, I should have asked this question."

CARDENAS: I don't even have to drive that far—

GRANT: [laughs] The moral of the story being, I think that's another thing I like about live TV: When it's over, it's over. It may have been good, it may have been bad, but you might as well move on.

There is a finality to it that I like, in sharp contrast to the practice of law. I've got cases that have been going on for eight years, and I'm sure they're never going to end. So that's one part of my broadcast life that I like better than my legal life.

CARDENAS: The other thing I've learned about are the moments where there's been a mis-



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— José Cárdenas



take that seem just an eternity to you as it's happening and for the next, in my case, 24 hours before you see the show. When you actually see the show it's not that bad.

AZAT: Mike, do you set aside time during the day to think about *Horizon*? Or do you find yourself in the middle of a case and realize you've spent 15 minutes thinking about something other than the case?

GRANT: I really don't segregate time for *Horizon*. The only exception to that is, I read the newspaper differently than most people. I always read the newspaper with an eye toward: The chances are more likely than not that I'm going to be doing an interview on that subject. So I do my shot selection pretty carefully. That's a daily routine that I really set aside for *Horizon*.

AZAT: Are you both paid by KAET?

GRANT: Yes. I would like to protest not enough [laughs].

AZAT: But I assume it's not an amount that gives law practice a run for its money.

GRANT: No.

CARDENAS: And mine goes to the firm.

GRANT: You've got to work out a different arrangement. I did that for awhile, and then they said, "It really isn't impacting your practice of law, so in fairness"

AZAT: When you're here in the studio, do

you see yourselves as journalists or as lawyers?

GRANT: Interesting. I would say journalists. But it may be more natural for me, just because of the time I spent in the field.

CARDENAS: I don't see myself as a journalist, but only because it would be presumptuous. I view journalists as a profession that I don't have much background or training in. But I don't think of myself as a lawyer except to the extent I think maybe I ask questions differently than somebody who didn't have legal background.

GRANT: You bring a different skill set to the table.

CARDENAS: Yes. But I certainly don't try to act like a lawyer in the interview process.

AZAT: What's been the hardest part of transitioning from asking lawyer questions to asking journalist questions? José, you're a litigator, so you're not really trained to ferret out the truth.

CARDENAS: My sense is that the people who are very, very good in this business, journalists, ask questions in many respects the way a lawyer would. They will ask the follow-up questions that sometimes you see interviewers don't ask. A well-trained lawyer will know "I need to ask another question, or maybe I need to ask it a different way. Or maybe I need to flesh this out." I don't see necessarily any inconsistency.

GRANT: I have always maintained that the practice of law keeps me fresher for the program. And, conversely, I think the program keeps me fresher for the practice of law.

The main difference here is that you are time-constrained. I normally go into an interview with four bullet points that I want to try to get to, simply because I think they are the four bullet points the audience ought to take away. So I sometimes will move from bullet point 1 to bullet point 2, not because I'm necessarily

satisfied with bullet point 1, but I realize I've now run five minutes of 11 minutes, and I've got three more bullet points to cover.

CARDENAS: Exactly. There are plenty of times when you just have to take the answer you got and move on because there are other areas you need to cover.

GRANT: My writing style in the law tends to be very journalist-oriented. I have a much punchier style than most attorneys, and it's because I wrote newscasts for 10 years before I ever wrote my first motion for summary judgment.

CARDENAS: And I would bet the best lawyers would have that kind of style.

AZAT: What dilemmas do you face as hosts who are also practicing lawyers? Mike, your practice is in administrative law and public utilities. But on the show you also cover Qwest, for example.

GRANT: It gets complicated from time to time, because Corporation Commission stories will occasionally happen. Some of those programs I will take myself off of. What's far more difficult for me is being part of a large law firm. I will sometimes have conflicts that I absolutely have no idea that I have. And it has not been unusual for a producer to call me at 11:00 and say, "We're doing that segment on BLANK tonight. Did you know that your law firm is

representing the plaintiff?" And I had absolutely no idea. That's sort of the frightening part of it.

AZAT: Have either of you ever had to give a caveat on the air, beyond your printed disclaimer that rolls at the end?

GRANT: That is why we run that I am a shareholder in the law firm of Gallagher & Kennedy; one of the reasons we started doing that a long time ago was that I wanted to get constantly in front of the public the fact that I was a lawyer, so they could draw whatever conclusions about that that they wanted to. And then from time to time, depending on what's going on, I will make a disclosure, either directly to the camera or I will drop into the conversation, to alert people that I may have a bias.

The far more frequent thing I do, though, is simply take myself off a show. I almost feel like if I'm uncomfortable enough with it that I need to disclose to somebody that I've got a problem, then maybe that's a solid indication that maybe I shouldn't be doing it at all.

AZAT: What about on the journalists' roundtable?

GRANT: It doesn't happen a lot, but I'll just tell the reporters, "I have a problem with this one." I will just open the subject; they will discuss it for awhile without any kind of input from me, and then I'll change the subject. That's not a perfect system, but it's the best one that I've worked out, because that really can get complicated.

AZAT: José, in your debut show, you interviewed Dr. Jeffrey Trent of TGen [Translational Genomics Research Institute]. But you're on TGen's board of directors. You didn't disclose that; did you not feel it was necessary for that interview?

CARDENAS: I think given the nature of that specific focus, which was on an agreement that had been signed with their Mexican counterpart, I don't think it was necessary.

What we have done, there have been a number of shows where I've mentioned in the interview, for the record, my firm represents or has been involved in the area.



There would be other matters where it would not be appropriate, even though I have personal involvement, for me to be involved. But we have the luxury of my being able to tell Mike, if you want to do that show, you'll have to have somebody else host it, because it's too close to home.

The other advantage of a show like this is, the focus is not on me or on Mike; it's the guest, it's the information that they're conveying.

AZAT: Mike, have you ever heard the phrase, "The road to the governor's office goes through Michael Grant"?

GRANT: No.

AZAT: Then you can quote ARIZONA ATTORNEY when it takes off. But it must be nice having the governor think enough of the show to stop by on a regular basis.

GRANT: Absolutely. Though governors have been on the program before, this is the first governor that we have actually scheduled a monthly visit with.

It has pluses and it has minuses. I kind of like better the "wait until something happens and then the governor comes on for 15 minutes" [approach]. Because it does make it more topical. What we're doing oftentimes is reaching back two weeks for something that occurred that you want to clarify.

AZAT: If you were a print magazine, what magazine would you be? You're not *Time*. Are you reaching a smaller group of decision-makers?

GRANT: Yes. I make a basic assumption that people who are watching the show probably have a level of information that would be 15 to 20 percent up from, let's say, the average viewer. I think that they are engaged in public affairs issues. I think many of them tend to be newspaper readers, as well as television watchers. But I think they are an informed audience. I always know that a lot of decision-makers watch the show, if nothing else, to see if their name is going to come up.

AZAT: How do you guard against being too "inside baseball"? For example, I saw that you had three shows on the Medicare

Prescription Drug Plan, which is either a great public service or ratings suicide.

GRANT: [laughs] Maybe. But with our audience, we probably had a ratings spike at that point.

There's an old expression: trying to put 20 pounds of manure in a 10-pound bag? There are some shows we do on *Horizon* where I feel like I'm trying to fill a 20-pound bag with 10 pounds of manure. But over a yearlong period, you get some subjects that are truly engaging and other subjects that are maybe not quite so engaging.

CARDENAS: In terms of our audience, I think we benefit from *Horizon's* coattails. Many of the same people who watch that show watch this one.

We pick up some other people when the word is spread that the show has a particular focus on the Hispanic community.

AZAT: After 20 years, *Horizon* decides to broaden its franchise, and it looks for diversity. But let me ask you: Mike, you were born in 1951, José, in 1952; you're both lawyers; Michael, you were admitted in 1976, José, in 1977; you're both part of prestigious, relatively large law firms, both with a strong local presence. Stop me when I get to the diversity.

Viewers may wonder if a woman host will be added at *Horizon's* 40th anniversary.

CARDENAS: I think the similarity not so much in the host but the similarity in the programs was intentional: to take advantage of a great program and give it a slightly different focus as part of the outreach to the Hispanic community.

Of course, their goal was not to find a Hispanic clone for Michael Grant.

AZAT: On both shows, on air and on your Web site, you each invite viewer questions, and then you ask them of your guests. So in that spirit, I asked State Bar staff via e-mail if



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they had a question for you both, and I got responses. So here is one viewer question:

What skill did you learn in this job as host that helped make you a better lawyer in your practice?

CARDENAS: I really admire Mike and the other people who have been doing this for a long time, because you have to keep track of a number of things that are going on. Whereas if you were just in a deposition, and there's no camera on you, you have the luxury of wandering a little bit. I think it's enhancing the ability to multitask.

GRANT: I'm a closer listener than I otherwise would be. One of the things that irritates me about most television interviewers and anchors was that you could tell that they were reading off a list of questions. They could get a really good answer to number 1; but of course whoever had typed them up didn't anticipate that great answer with number 1, so they went on to number 2, and it was rather obvious.

So one of the things early on in the program was I forced myself to improve my listening skills. And that has helped me a lot in the practice of law. ▀