

*a
focus
on volunteers
feature*

by Carolyn Nelson



“...the eyes and ears of a lot of people.”

John Hockenberry has a penchant for sound. “The big thing,” he says, “is putting music and information together. This he does regularly, sometimes twelve hours a day, for KLCC. Hockenberry is co-anchor for the Morning News and a reporter-at-large.

Hockenberry is a music major at the U of O studying piano, harpsichord, and composition. He tells a story about calling KLCC News Director Don Hein one day last spring when he was in “a raunchy mood.” “I’d been listening to the Blue Plate Special,” says Hockenberry, “and I heard a lot of NPR stories. I suggested they change the name of the Blue Plate to NPR Playback.” Hockenberry was surprised at Hein’s reply. “He told me to come on in and do some volunteer work at the station.

Two weeks later, Hockenberry went in and was put to work doing rewrites and general production for KLCC. In the summer he started doing reports, including one he sold to NPR. He’s working on two more reports for NPR which stem from a story he did about the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Richland, Washington.

“You get a tremendous sense of purpose with your little tape recorder, going out there to be the eyes and ears of a lot of people, and they’re interested in what you’re saying,” says Hockenberry.

As for background, Hockenberry says he had none in journalism, but he worked in graphics when he was at the University of Chicago, has some theatrical experience, and was a high school debator. Somehow, along with his music, they all added up to working in radio.

Hockenberry was in an auto accident in Chicago which left him confined to a wheelchair. “I was just adjusting to the wheelchair scene,” says Hockenberry, “and the weather was terrible, hard to get around in all that snow. A friend of mine recommended Eugene, said there was a good jazz station, and Ralph Towner was from Eugene.”

Hockenberry’s been in Eugene four years now, two of those years at the U of O, but he’s in a “state of flux” now. Hockenberry’s taking a break from his studies, but not from work. He’s in the KLCC studios at 6 a.m. and says it’s not unusual for him to stay around until after the evening news.

The hardest part is not the long hours for Hockenberry; it’s the technical perfection he’s striving to achieve. Says Hockenberry, “It’s getting a good, clean sound when the technical things and the meaning don’t conflict, getting the two to go together.”

Hockenberry believes that radio is at a stage where it’s “coming into its own.” This will give him a chance to, as he puts it, “integrate his expression in music with news.” Whether he’ll continue to do that in Eugene is not certain. Hockenberry says he misses the diversity of culture of the east coast and middle west. He misses the snow and the “flash of fall.”

Talking about the future, Hockenberry says the “best of all possible worlds” would be getting a job stringing news at \$4.00 per hour up in Lake Superior, but, he adds, “You can’t live up there unless you eat trees or work at 3M.

Says Hockenberry, “Right now I’m seeing how much of myself can be integrated into presenting information. I’m anxious to unify media, use a variety of things. There’s some ground yet to be broken in.”

BECOME A FRIEND OF KLCC — CALL 741-2200 — YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE