

# Let me take you on a (safe) sea cruise

*Radio station promotions slow post Sept. 11*

By Kay Nolan

Jon Belmont, morning news anchor at WTMJ-AM radio, hesitated to make an announcement, shortly after Sept. 11, that he planned to take a Caribbean cruise in January as part of a promotion aimed at the station's listeners.

"As a newsman, I was a bit uncomfortable," said Belmont, a former ABC radio network news correspondent who worked in New York City for 19 years.

He wondered whether listeners would consider the promotion insensitive — or worse, unsafe — following the attacks. After waiting a few weeks, Belmont went ahead, partly because he felt sure that vacation travel remained safe and desirable.

"As I talked about how my wife and I felt comfortable with it, listeners began to sign up," he said. "I told them, 'If you're adventurous and not about to allow terrorism to rule you, it would be a lot of fun.'"

"Personality vacations," which invite listeners to take a trip with a local radio celebrity, have long been popular with several local stations. The Belmont promotion was planned months before Sept. 11, as were four other trips being promoted by



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WTMJ: a Caribbean cruise in February with sports announcer Bill "The Big Unit" Michaels, a trip to Italy in January with mid-morning talk show host Charlie Sykes, a trip

to France with afternoon talk show host Jeff Wagner, and a trip to Hawaii with traffic re-

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## Airports in holding pattern

in traffic, from 4,588,768 in 2000 to 4,362,247 this year. The number of scheduled flights in September was down about 17 percent compared with 2000.

"Traffic levels are so uncertain right now," Bateman said. "We needed to take a

*Uncertainties causing capital projects to be reevaluated*

By Becca Mader

breather so things could settle down."

Plans called for a \$25 million eight-gate expansion to Concourse C, a \$780,000 renovation of the concession mall area, and a

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### IN FOCUS



Dick Richards

## More room at the inns

*Waukesha gets boost in corporate-quality lodging*

By Becca Mader

Two new flagship hotels built within the past year on Interstate 94 near Pewaukee in Waukesha County have not only boosted the area's ability to attract corporate travelers but also have provided a greater variety of options in meeting and convention space.

The 119-room Radisson Hotel Milwaukee Suburban West opened last February and the 283-room Milwaukee Marriott West followed in April, providing new competition to the 200-room Country Inn

# Cruise

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porter Tom Carr.

Jon Schweitzer, WTMJ's general manager, said the promotions are good revenue-gatherers for the station as well as morale-builders for the on-air talent.

"Our people love doing these things," said Schweitzer. "It creates a higher profile for our celebrities and they can meet their listeners."

## WTMJ IS THE EXCEPTION

Travel industry representatives, however, say the timing of the September terrorist acts ruined many planned radio celebrity trips. They are intrigued that WTMJ is going ahead with five such promotions.

"Trips were canceled not because of fear or safety concerns, but because we lost critical promotion time," said Brian Hurley, marketing director for Fox World Travel, an Oshkosh travel agency that works with many Wisconsin radio stations to promote vacation trips. The peak season for vacation trips of this sort is January through March, so Fox World typically begins promoting them on the air right after Labor Day. Hurley said 70 percent of the firm's promotions were just about to begin airing the week of Sept. 11.

That was when radio stations devoted most of their air time to news coverage of the events. Plus, it just didn't seem right to announce vacation trip promotions at

that time, said Hurley.

By the time things calmed down, it didn't make sense for some of the promotions to be brought to market, he said. Hurley said Fox World Travel is in a voluntary layoff mode and that its radio celebri-

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ty trips are down 10 percent to 20 percent.

While interest in travel seemed to pick up about three weeks later, it dropped off again Oct. 7 when the United States began bombing in Afghanistan, Hurley said.

That kind of consumer uncertainty has been enough for the Wisconsin division of Your Man Tours, a travel firm based in Los Angeles, to hold off on radio celebrity vacation promotions for now.

"Personality tours are a positive thing to do," said John Sagmoe Jr., regional marketing and sales director for Your Man in Wisconsin. "And I support radio stations that are doing them now. It shows the listeners that the celebrities are not scaredy-cats and that vacation trips are still fun and safe despite the terrorism of Sept. 11."

But Your Man has chosen not to do any radio advertising at this point, Sagmoe said. Another issue is that one of Your Man's cruise vendors filed for Chapter 11 reorganization, he said.

When consumer confidence improves, Your Man plans to resume radio promotions, Sagmoe said.

## PROMOTIONS DOING WELL

Meanwhile, WTMJ's promotions are doing surprisingly well.

Advertising for the Belmont cruise was supposed to begin Sept. 17 but was delayed until Oct. 8. Still, there has been an excellent response, said Hurley.

That doesn't surprise Schweitzer.

"We understand there might be a different sentiment out there — and of course, we're concerned about safety," Schweitzer said. "But we're not going to get on the air and say there's going to be a cancellation and help harbor fear."

In some cases, radio stations receive a commission from the travel organization that arranges the trip, based on the number of people who sign up. Stations also get a discount on the celebrity's fare in exchange for discounted on-air advertising rates. In other cases, the travel firm pays for advertising to promote the trip, but comes out ahead if the trip is filled.

Station executives say they are not concerned about liability in case travelers are injured or inconvenienced due to terrorism.

The stations are not liable, because people purchase the trips on their own from the travel agency, said Dave Pugh,

vice president and market manager for Clear Channel Radio, which owns six stations in Milwaukee, including WISN-AM, which is promoting a trip with talk radio host Mark Belling.

"We don't own the trips; we own the promotion," Pugh said.

Travelers have always been asked to sign waivers of liability, said Hurley.

Michael Sheehan, spokesman for Royal Caribbean Cruises and Celebrity Cruises, based in Miami, added that cruise lines have always carried insurance against the unexpected. Insurance costs have not risen since Sept. 11, he said.

## SECURITY INCREASES

What has increased, he emphasized, is security. The cruise line is checking everything that comes on board — from luggage and carry-ons to provisions and supplies, Sheehan said. The line's staff is using tools such as metal detectors, X-ray equipment and specially trained dogs.

Belmont, who has flown once to New York since Sept. 11, said the added security made him feel less apprehensive about flying than he has in the past.

In January, he and his wife, Pam, will fly from Milwaukee to San Juan to meet their cruise. He and his group will be sailing on one of Celebrity's newer vessels, the Infinity.

"The radio station is not forcing me to go," he said. "It leaves these decisions up to the individual personalities. I even have to use my vacation time for this trip, but I feel comfortable with it and I think it will be worth it."