

# Jim Kipping

## Creative Services Director Emmis Broadcasting Austin, TX

by Jerry Vigil

*How many times have you said, “One of these days... I’m going to buy me a piece of land outside of town and build my dream home, with my dream studio”? That’s what Jim Kipping said some 9 years ago when we last interviewed him in May of 1999. In fact, he had just purchased 11 acres near Willie Nelson’s home outside of Austin, Texas. This month’s RAP Interview checks in on this dream, which is in the final stages of completion – a fabulous home he calls, Il Poggio Secco, Italian for “the dry hill.” Keeping with the Italian theme, the house features a tile roof, picturesque views from the windows overlooking the Texas Hill Country and the Pedernales River, ornate décor throughout, and of course, his soon-to-be dream studio. Did he hit the lottery? No. This is a simple story of vision and hard work, even while maintaining a demanding full-time job, which he still holds as Creative Services Director at Emmis Broadcasting’s Austin properties. An in his spare time, Jim has managed to cut his niche in the national voice-over business. Jim tells us what’s new at Emmis Austin, how he’s managed to grow his VO business, and what it has taken to bring his dream to fruition. Check out this month’s RAP CD for a sample of the excellent work his crew is churning out at the stations, and check out his website at [www.jimkippling.com](http://www.jimkippling.com) for more on Il Poggio Secco.*

**JV: You had an ownership change since our last chat.**

**Jim:** Yes. About seven years ago, we were purchased by Emmis Broadcasting. The last time we talked, we had five stations, and now we have six. And these are six powerhouse stations — they’re not like ugly houses that they came into buy — we are blowing and going almost 24/7.

**JV: How many people helping you with all those stations?**

**Jim:** We have 3 full-time producers, including me. There’s one full-time continuity director, and one full-time continuity/production backup person. These latter two both do production but not as their main task. Then we have three part-time producers which do fill-in production while one of us full-timers is on vacation or on a Saturday shift we do still carry.

We have someone in the department from 6am to 6pm to handle all major problems of missing spots and also to leverage the space we have to its fullest potential. I used to have someone here till 11pm on weekends, 8 hours on both Saturday and Sundays too — of course, that was before budget cuts. I truly believe that this kind of staffing has kept us not only the highest *billers* in the market, but also the highest *collectors* as well. The worst thing that can happen to the hard work of getting a client on the air is that the spot doesn’t run for either a technical or human reason.

**JV: In our last chat, you also talked about a separate production arm of the company called Sound Design. How has that evolved over the years?**

**Jim:** At the time, we thought about doing that, and it being a revenue stream for the company. Under really close watch, I looked at it and said, you know, first of all, we as an industry have given what we do away, unlike TV, for so long. If we turn around and say, “Oh yeah, now every time you come in to do a spot for your campaign, it’s going to cost you,” there would be an outright revolt. The other thing is the fact that our main bread and butter is getting the spots on the air; and to take us away from a \$30,000 campaign from start to finish, to try to turn a profit at \$150 a spot, just didn’t make sense. That’s kind of what I

inherited when I came here.

So I went back upstairs and said, “Okay, now let me get this straight. You want me to nickel and dime for a dollar a holler and piss people off, or I can come up with a campaign for your AE on KLBJ-AM that’s a \$100,000 annual buy. Where do you want me to spend time, because it’s going to take time and resources to do both? I don’t think we can do both, but if that’s what you’re telling me, then that’s what we’ll do.” When you mess with people’s money, all of a sudden it becomes very clear what needs to happen.

**JV: So the attention went to the buy instead of a few bucks on production fees.**

**Jim:** Absolutely, especially when we pulled another station on the air.

One thing we try to do is churn out a good product, try not to do just voice over music. We try to churn out pretty elaborate spots if we can, agency quality stuff. But then again, we try to keep with the brevity that the radio industry has fostered over the years of churning stuff out quickly, unlike something like TV that would take a week or two weeks to get your spot done. And we try to leverage as much help as we can from the jocks on the air and try to make it a pretty easy place to work.

But typically, if it is something that’s going to be running on our stations only, there are no production fees, and we mainly give that benefit to local direct business. Not saying that we don’t produce for agencies, but we definitely award that time in production to the local direct clients, because there isn’t an agency involved. We want to make sure that they feel they have a little more personal time given to their campaign than just having an AE come in, throwing a production order on the desk and saying, “Make it creative.” But if that local direct client says, “Hey Jimbo, we want to run this across town over at KJFI or over at Entercom,” then they would pay your talent fees and \$75 an hour for studio time as well. But for the most part, the local direct clients get the hour of production, and if it’s running on our station, we don’t charge them.

**JV: How many production studios for these six stations?**

**Jim:** A number of years ago, I finally



went upstairs to management and said, “You know, we have three studios for six stations.” The analogy I gave them was, if you fly over DFW Airport, you see about six terminals, and then you have about eight different runways going all different directions, right? Well, when you fly over our airport, we have six terminals and just three runways, trying to land 747’s and Piper planes all at once. When I put it in that perspective, they were like, “Oh, okay. What do you need?”

Well, at one time my studio was pretty large, and I cut that into basically three walk-in production bays. The days of having big huge rooms to get what we need done are over. Technology has made what we do so easy, and you don’t need a big room with \$100,000 of equipment. Basically, you just need walk-in voice booths, big enough to get a couple people in there, if you’re doing a two person

spot.

We just made the decision that we are staying in this building for another five to ten years, so I’m going to go up there and say, “Hey, fiscal year ’09, I want another three smaller walk-in production bays sprinkled throughout the building, just because we need it.”

I actually came in one time – without getting approval — and started bringing in this stuff from Home Depot. I built this walk-in voice booth that’s no bigger than three and a half by three and a half with a door and a really cool monitor and keyboard mount that mounts on the wall, and basically made a big walk-in production booth or voice booth that people can walk into, voice their stuff, and walk out. And then, in this big commons area that we call Continuity, you can actually produce on one of these workstations at your desk and get it into the automation system. Again, we’re

taking the concept of brevity — getting in, getting out — and doing what you need to do and getting it into the system as quickly as possible. It's become a necessity. And when I brought management down one day and they saw me with the saws, you know, putting sheetrock up, they realized what I was doing and quickly reimbursed me.

**JV: Nine years ago, you said about 40 to 45 percent of the work you were doing was from scratch and the rest was dubs. Does that ratio still apply today?**

**Jim:** It depends on what station it is. In this market size, we get hit from all directions. We get a lot of dubs, a lot of stuff from out of house, but we have a big staff of sales folks. We have something like 45, 47 salespeople. And because of that, we do quite a bit of locally produced spots. Tags, doughnut fills... that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about something from scratch, and I would say that's still at about 40 percent.

**JV: That's a lot!**

**Jim:** It is a lot. And at one time a number of years ago, we had a sales manager that mandated that each one of their seven salespeople had to do five spec spots per week. Imagine — I mean, I don't have any hair because I just got it cut, but imagine how I pulled my hair out then. They were just doing busy work. They were crawling all over the paper to see who could rip something out the quickest and bring it down and say, "Make me a spot." About 98 percent of that crap didn't even see the client.

So, with only a handful of full-time producers plus a couple part-time folks in continuity, you have a numbers battle to deal with. If each one of those salespeople had 20 clients on the air, and 40 percent of those are full produced at any given time... that figure is staggering. Try to knock that out day in and day out.

But as a media group, our cluster continues to be the top biller in the market over a lot of the big guys. Emmis only has maybe 28 stations across the country, but the six here in Austin continually outperform stations that are part of a much bigger enterprise.

**JV: Back in '99, it's hard to believe**

**that we were talking about the new technology of MP3's being e-mailed across the country. You took the lead in a project there and kind of created a network of people from stations all over Austin, to try and set standards for this new technology, among other things. Have you kept your foot in some sort of organizational thing there in the Austin area?**

**Jim:** Absolutely. When we did that a number of years ago, MP3 was not the household word that it is today. At the time, there was a Telos product called Audioactive that was a standalone piece of software that would enable you to take a wave file and compress it down to MP3. When that came out, we got not only the radio stations involved, but all the production houses. I remember meeting at a restaurant in town basically taking a whole back room and saying, "Hey guys, we have an opportunity to save time and money and get stuff to each other faster and with a whole lot better sound to boot. Let's do this." I believe it was shortly thereafter that when you and I talked about that, and shortly thereafter, lots of radio stations started doing it, and subsequently a lot of big advertisers started doing that. It was the precursor to the DG's and the DCI's of the world at that point.

But there's still a network of production people in town. Nothing formal that everybody belongs to, but we definitely keep in touch via the web. We're all pretty close knit, even though the Austin area is coming up on two million people for the total surrounding area. For the size of our market and how quickly it's growing, we're pretty tightly knit and we do keep in touch. And doing a lot more stuff out of my house, I've become familiar with a number of the studios in town as well.

**JV: Which brings us to your voice-over business. You were doing some outside VO work when we last talked, but it looks like that has taken off pretty well in recent years.**

**Jim:** You know, the funny thing is, in voice-over in general, if you're known as a radio guy, it's almost the kiss of death, and it's sad because we act for a living, and voice-over is acting, and my background growing up was acting. I took a lot of live musical theater, lots of drama. I was your typical drama guy, in

band and singing; I did it all.

So that was my background, and that has led me to do what I do outside of the radio station, and that has grown because of the simple fact that when they say absolutely no announcer, what they really are saying is no pukers. They don't want somebody who sounds like they're the afternoon jock on 101 or The Eagle up in Dallas. They want somebody who can act and who can talk and who can relate a script. I kind of took that to heart when I started to really dive into my side business, and, yeah, the side business has grown tremendously.

I've had a studio at my house for a number of years, and I've maintained an ISDN line at that studio for a number of years. Even before Don LaFontaine and all that driving around in a limo stuff, I had an ISDN. I actually talked to Don when I interviewed him for a book I did about people who make money with their voice. We talked for about an hour. When I approached him with a question about how we saw him on *20/20* going from studio to studio in a limo, he said, "Well, Jimbo, you know, we don't do that anymore. Us big guys have this thing called ISDN. We can just stand right here...." I'm thinking in my head, holy crap! I guess that means I was a big guy a long time ago. Excellent!

Technology has definitely also made it possible to do what I do no matter where I am. I have a studio at the station group, but also at the house. I also have a mobile unit that I take with me anywhere I go, especially if I'm on vacation. I can lay down auditions if I'm sitting in a hotel. I did this from a hotel in Tokyo a number of years ago and nobody could tell that I wasn't sitting in a \$100,000 studio, which is kind of funny.

**JV: So business has been good in the voice-over arena?**

**Jim:** Yeah. It's been great, it's been exciting. I had always been the kind of guy in my side business to want to take control and do everything from scratch and actually produce, because I'm a producer and I'm an engineer and I can produce my own stuff. I always tell my staff that you've got to work smarter, not harder. Well, you know, when I was doing \$75-a-holler club spots and working my ass off to make those club spots a number of years ago, I thought that was my own little bubble, that was where I was at.

Then I realized that that's not the case. The people who make money in this business don't necessarily put their own stuff together. So as soon as I took the courage to release that control over the production aspect and just started doing auditions and landing those auditions and letting somebody else produce it, I started making much more money on the side and enjoying myself a whole lot more, because you're not actually taking the time to produce it.

A good case in point is a time when I got hooked up with a talent agent just by sheer coincidence, by just making contact with him. I said, here's what I do, here's my demo, and they got me an audition for Netflix. This was about three, four years ago, and they've been using me on this specific campaign for that entire time. But the description basically was pointing out the character J. Peterman on Seinfeld, so I read it that way. It was all big and boisterous and kind of funny and all over the place, and they said, "Oh, my God, that's exactly what we were looking for."

So the first campaign we did was very much a J. Peterman knockoff. Subsequently, a number of years later, the agency who was producing that bit was pitching a cruise line at the time, and I remember getting a call one day and they said, "Hey, Jimbo, remember that time we did that J. Peterman thing?" "Yeah, sure, absolutely." "Well, we're kind of pitching a cruise line and the idea is actually for O'Hurley's voice, but we don't want to talk to him yet. We'd like to see if you'd do the voice for us to do the pitch with." I laughed and said, "Absolutely. I'd be more than happy to do that, on one condition: if that son of a bitch gets the gig, he better call and thank me." (laughs)

So we did the bit and they ended up doing something completely different, but that really kind of started this snowball effect of letting somebody else go out there and hawk your wares. Yeah, they get a cut, but it's so much more than doing the dollar-a-holler stuff, and it's completely changed the way I thought about my business. And I've had fun doing it too. It's been a real blast.

I ended up doing the voice of *Geraldo at Large* for two weeks when the main guy there was on vacation. Back in February, I did an urban read for Sunny Delight. "Just can't beat the power

packed taste of Sunny D. Unleash the power of the sun." They were going for an urban thing, and sure enough, one of my other agents sent that off and we landed it. I have a bunch of stuff that we'll be auditioning for here in the next couple days, both union and non-union, which is actually kind of interesting. I've done both kinds of gigs.

#### **JV: How does that work?**

**Jim:** Well, there's a reason why I live in Texas. A), I love it. B), it's a right to work state. Honestly, if I were to join the union right now, I would actually lose money. If I lived in LA, New York, Chicago, whatever, I probably would have to do it. But the fact of the matter is, there's not enough union gigs to go around, so I'd actually be losing money. There's something called FICORE that basically says, "You know what? I'll work under union rules for this gig. You get your take, but I am not an official card-carrying union member." So that's kind of the road that I have chosen at this point.

I did a campaign that's an ongoing campaign for South Texas — I can't believe it's a union gig in Texas — down in the valley for a convenience store chain called Stripes. It just so happened that the agency producing the spot was actually here in Austin, and I went down to another studio and did it. It was a lot of fun and it was one of those deals where you walk in the studio, somebody else touches the microphone, you do your bit

and leave, and that's pretty cool. Then they send you a check. That's even better.

#### **JV: Are you using multiple agents?**

**Jim:** Yeah, I am, and here's the reason why: every time, if I talk to an agent and they say, "Well, we want you to sign exclusively with us," I say, "Man, that's great, because, you know, all of my other agents, they have other clients, and if you're saying you're only going to represent me, freaking awesome! Sign me up!" And when I say that, they're, like, "Oh, well, no, we're not going to do that." "Okay, well I'll tell you what... you get me the gig and I give you some money. That's how it works. So if you bring me a gig, I'll audition for it. It doesn't cost you anything out of your pocket. I'm on your roster. You know you have somebody who's going to be there to do some voice work for you. But, if somebody comes to me directly, I'm not going to say, go talk to so and so." "But hey, there's a whole network of people who know how to work with agents." Great. Super. Go talk to them. But if somebody comes to me and says, "Hey, I want you to do something," not a problem.

So I actually have somebody in New York, somebody in Denver that kind of handles the upper Midwest, and then I have an agent who's actually based here in Texas but does stuff in LA and the central region here too. There's somebody else in Atlanta that is

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interested in having me hop on their roster, which is not all that uncommon these days.

I did an audition for *The History Channel*—big, huge show that’s out right now called *Jurassic Fight Club*. I remember getting the e-mail from the agent here in town, and the e-mail said, “Hey, agent, I see that you rep Jim Kipping and Tom Kane. I’d be interested in seeing if they wouldn’t mind doing a call back for us.” If you don’t know who Tom Kane is, you’ve heard him on thousands of things. He was the voice of a big awards show in 2006, the Oscars I believe. He’s been on just countless, thousands of narrations that you see every day on *Discovery Channel*, *Learning Channel*, all that type stuff. To see my name in the same e-mail saying, “Hey, I’d like for these two to do a call back for us,” — even though I didn’t get it, even though Tom Kane didn’t get it, it was a validation that said I was on the right track, that it’s not just an announcer role that you play, and it’s not just wacky characters that you play. It’s everything in between. And to see my name in that same sentence with Tom Kane, that was humbling and it made me feel good to know, that at some point in time, when this radio thing goes away, that I’ll still have some way to make some money.

**JV: And that brings us to your dream house, which I’m assuming is going to be that place where you reside and work, once the radio thing does go**

**away.**

**Jim:** I think the last time we talked, I had just purchased that property. I lived in Italy when I was a kid, and my dad was in the Navy, and I was 11, 12, 13 years old. So for those three years of my life, very formidable years, I was old enough to appreciate it — the Italian lifestyle, the way that they just approach everything. We’re so uptight in America these days compared to the Italians, you know? They’re going to get stuff done, as they say, *domani*... tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. I like that way of thinking, and I like the architecture and the way that they build houses over there.

I had been around the construction industry doing home theater installation, stuff like that, and I love doing that type work. And believe it or not, I do it for fun. I’ve done it for many of my friends, for my family, for Lucy Johnson, Lady Bird’s daughter here in Austin. And because I was around the construction industry, I know the steps that you take to get a job done, from the conceptualization, to putting it on paper, to working with an architect, to getting approval, the whole nine yards.

So when I bought that property back in ’99, I said, “We’re going to build our dream house, and we’re going to do it ourselves.” With the help of all of my friends that owed me favors, we had a big barn-raising, and I built a two story single car garage. Upstairs is about 400 square feet; downstairs is about 475, 500 square feet. Now, the bottom was

definitely going to be a garage at one time, but the upper floor, I had always had the intention of making that my studio. I built that entire building myself. We sold our house in South Austin, and instead of saying, “Hey, let’s find another house in town,” we moved into basically the 350, 370 square feet upstairs in the pump house, or the studio.

So we lived there for two years while we got the plans together, while we got everything all buttoned up and came up with a set of plans that we liked. Then we pulled the trigger and we just did it, and we saved so much money. If I were to put a dollar figure per square foot, it was about \$128 a square foot to get into this house, which is very much a custom home that overlooks the Pedernales River. And the neighbors across the river? Robert Rodriguez... they were just shooting a movie down at his place. I can see his property from our hill. Willie Nelson is on the hill behind us. One of the Dixie Chicks used to live in the valley below us. It’s a really cool community outside of Austin. And again, mind you, this was while we were both working full-time jobs, my wife and I, and living in 300 square feet.

We were out there every day. The way my schedule works here at the station, I get here at 6 a.m., and on a good day, I’m out at 2. Bad day, it’s, 3, 4, 5:00. But for the most part, while we were building, I pretty much was able to get out of here at least by 3:00 and meet subs if I needed to do it. But I also had the advantage of being the techno geek that I am. I had wired the whole property with cameras, so I knew who was at the property at what given time and what time they got there. Cameras down at the front gate, up on the house, and that was really to my advantage because a), nothing walked — there was absolutely zero theft on my job site.

And b), nobody could bullshit me. If they said that they were going to be out there delivering wood, I’m like, “well, my crew is out there ready to go, where are you?” “Well, we’re in front of your house right now.” “No, you’re not. I have a camera saying that you’re not.” “Oh, well, we’re down at the gate.” “I have another five cameras that say you’re not at the gate.” “Well, okay, we’re up the hill and we’ll be there shortly.” “Well, good, you get there.” And it was stuff like that that enabled me to be able to be at

the jobsite without being at the jobsite, because I could log on remotely and open the gate, and I could see what the crews were doing at any given time.

Again, it's technology. I am a big geek when it comes to technology and any way to make a job easier, and I don't care if it's here at the radio station, to invent something to make it easier, or a way to build the house remotely. That caught the eye of the local business journal, by the way. They did a story on us, two pages on how we built this house and made our dream house on our own. It was kind of fun.

**JV: Were people of the stature that you just mentioned buying property out there 10 years ago?**

**Jim:** You know, we lucked into this piece. Even back then, it went from anywhere from \$5,100 an acre when we bought, to \$10,000. There is property out there that sells anywhere from our size acreage from \$300,000 up to a million now. In 10 years. So, it's being at the right place at the right time, taking the time to develop it. We had to subdivide it. We subdivided three acres out and sold that to my sister. She's about to build starting next year, and I'm actually going to help

her with that process. Actually, we're going to film that and pitch it to HDTV or DIY or something like that. Screw *Extreme Makeover*; this is "Extremely Extreme Makeover." So we have that going on.

We had to get the water out there. We had to get the electricity and the communications out there. It was funny, when we originally bought that property back in '99, I had the stipulation that I have to be able to get ISDN out there. So before we even purchased the property, I was out there dealing with engineers for, at the time, Southwestern





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Bell, and they said, "Oh, yeah, absolutely, we can get ISDN." So I've had an ISDN out there almost the entire time.

**JV: What is the plan for the studio? How cool is the studio itself is going to be?**

**Jim:** The studio is going to be pretty cool. Like I said, it's about 375, 380 square feet. I have a separate voice booth that's about 7x9, and I'm going to have that all pretty tricked out. I picked up some really cool doors. There was a studio closing their doors here in town, Digital Anvil, which came up with Wing Commander and stuff like that a number of years ago. They closed the studio, and there was a contractor that called the radio station, of all people,

on the morning show on KGSR and said, "Hey, I don't know if anybody could use these, but we're about to just trash all these studio doors, and you might want to send somebody down here and pick them up." I got these three studio doors that are made by a company, ironically, here in the central Texas area, but they ship this stuff all around the world. These are about \$6,000 apiece. So I picked these up for nothing, and those are going to be incorporated into the studio.

We're going to have a separate area to be able to produce in that's basically a U that you sit into that has a big screen TV and multiple monitors, keyboard, all that type stuff, but still keeping kind of a minimalistic approach — not like the

station studio I'm sitting in right now, where I'm in front of this big, behemoth board that I use three pots on. It's like taking a 747 between here and Cedar Park, which is like 10 minutes away by car.

It's going to be all digital. It's going to be nice and quiet. It overlooks the Pedernales River Valley, and it's just really going to be very cool. My flooring is going to be maple, solid, 3/4-inch thick maple. It's beautiful stuff. I may hire a crew to do stuff, but most likely it's going to be me putting the floors down, because I know how to do it. It's going to be me hooking up all the equipment because I know how to do it. I like to do that type stuff too, and it won't take very long.

And again, it will have all the bells and whistles, and even though I won't be doing any band recording, if somebody wants to come and do like an acoustic type set, I can do that type recording. But mostly it's just going to be strictly voiceover. If somebody wants to come out and record a book on tape or audition or the stuff I'm doing on the side, whatever it's going to be, it's going to be very comfortable and very relaxed. I've been in small studios before. The one I'm sitting in right now, even though it's a good size, doesn't have any windows. I haven't seen the outside world, and I haven't seen the sun in 15 years. Yes, this is actually my 15<sup>th</sup> year here at the radio station. I'm so vitamin D deficient, I need a little sun.

**JV: How do you manage the full-time job at the station, the time that's got to be devoted to that house, and your VO business? Your energy level must be sky high.**

**Jim:** My staff gives me crap all the time. I'll say, "Yeah, I was reading a good book last night..." They'll say, "When the hell do you have time to read a book?"

I'm not going to lie to you. It's non-stop. I get up at 4:00 every day, and when I'm not doing a lot of construction and stuff, I go to the gym. I'm at the gym at 4. Get out of there, and I'm at the station at 6 and pretty much produce non-stop until two or three. There's just enough time to get on the road and take care of whatever I need to in the afternoon at the house.

And mind you, there are still little

things that we're doing, some outside. There's landscaping, the back fence and stuff like that. I'm going to build an outside kitchen with a real fireplace, a real pizza oven, which I think would be really cool, but that's going to be a winter project. But it is non-stop.

Here's the other thing. We don't have kids, so those with kids, it's going to be tough to do. But I've known people that have built their own house and have lived in something smaller than I lived in — I mean, a little trailer, for heaven's sake.

**JV: What time do you get to sleep?**

**Jim:** I'm usually in bed reading by about 8, 8:15.

**JV: I think you keyed in on something very important there, that if people did get up at 4:00 in the morning, they would find themselves able to do a lot more than they would otherwise.**

**Jim:** I love people when they say, "Oh, I just don't have time," and my sister is a big example of this. You just sat in front of the TV for five hours! What do you mean you don't have time? Don't give me that crap. I mean, did we take that to an extreme? Probably, but looking at what we have done and what we have accomplished, was it worth it? Hell yeah, absolutely. I can tell you honestly with no doubt. My wife said it the other day, "It's hard to leave the house when the sun comes up because it's like leaving a vacation home." And it's what we live in every day.

Plus, I love what I do. I'm here at the station because I love what I do at the station. I absolutely love our industry. I believe in our industry and I believe in what we're doing, and we're still a viable industry. People still listen to what we do. Do we have a lot of competitors? Absolutely. Are we adapting? You bet we are.

But also knowing that, I'm diversifying what I do, to know at some point in time when I don't do this here at the radio station any more, I'm going to have some stuff to fall back on, and stuff that I love doing as well. This is just my philosophy, in order for you to have a fulfilling life, you've got to love what you do. I couldn't even begin to think about going to a job I didn't like doing. I would think that that would get boring. I know people who have

changed careers, that have graduated when I graduated, and they're like on their seventh or eighth career. Man, you must not like what you do. I've been doing this here at this particular company for 15 years, but my first radio gig was when I was 14. It's just fun.

**JV: A lot of guys reading this will also share that dream of wanting to build a dream home with a studio in it, or maybe just building a studio out back or something like that. Given your background in construction, what advice would you give them that perhaps isn't so obvious, that they wouldn't know because they don't have your background?**

**Jim:** One thing that I'm a big believer in is self education. I know what I know by hanging out with people who know it. I'm a big fan of hanging out with engineers and picking their brain and seeing how stuff works. I might not be out working on a transmitter, but I can sure wire a damn studio because I hung out with the people that knew. There are a lot of people that you can rely on, contractors that you may have produced spots for at your radio station. Get to know those people, hang out with them. Go work on a job.

Here's something amazingly simple and free. Go and volunteer for a Habitat for Humanity project. There's nothing more gratifying for me than getting all

hot and stinky on a Saturday afternoon volunteering for somebody, but yet, it's kind of a selfish thing, because I'm learning how to make a stud wall and set it up. I just built a shed, personally, by myself over the last couple weekends that could eventually turn into another guest house out on my property. Again, I got to know that knowledge by hanging around the people and the projects that I wanted to glean that information from.

So if there is one thing I could tell you, it's that you might not have the ability to do that now, but a), don't tell me you don't have the time, because I'll call BS on that. Secondly, everybody has a Home Depot in their town, I guarantee you. Just go hang out and pick up some of those books down at the front of the store. You'd be surprised at the little plan book for a shed that's the perfect size for a studio. And honestly, when you think of the money that you're spending on entertainment, you could probably build one of those with less than five grand for your entire project, not including equipment and stuff.

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**Our thanks to Jim for this month's awesome return visit. Jim welcomes your correspondence at [jim@jimkippling.com](mailto:jim@jimkippling.com). Be sure and check out his website at [www.jimkippling.com](http://www.jimkippling.com) for more audio, info and pix.**



**House View From the Studio**