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## Q-97 AND THE NORTH STATE'S DYNAMIC DUO, BILLY AND PATRICK

The sun hasn't yet peeked over the horizon, but Billy Pilgrim and Patrick John are fully caffeinated, updated on the latest news and ready to give the North State a friendly wake-up call. They know you're counting on them to roust you from slumber, tell you what happened while you slept and keep you company on your way to work.

But Q-97's Billy and Patrick didn't become the North State's most enduring morning show by simply sending headlines and weather over the airwaves each weekday morning. They've amassed tens of thousands of fans by immersing themselves into the heart of the North State – and both put the personality into the term “radio personality.”

Billy and Patrick first crossed paths at Redding's Jack in the Box drive-through – Billy was hungry, and Patrick's voice came over the loudspeaker to ask for his order. Patrick later landed an internship at radio station B94, and he was working overnights when Billy ended up needing a new morning partner. The pair started as “The Red Eye Ranch” on KEWB-FM, and then came on board as “Billy and Patrick Mornings” on Q97.

“When he first started, his voice had the same pitch as a choir girl,” Billy quips.

Now they're the longest-running morning show team in the North State, and they continue to rank number one in their market's ratings, according to Arbitron. They recently celebrated their 15th year on the air together.

Inside the country station's north Redding studio, Billy takes the driver's seat in front of two computers and a control board. With a touch of the screen, he starts a song or runs a commercial. At the opposite side of the table is Patrick, Q-97's program director, who flips through a stack of papers that include odd news items, birthday shout-out requests and press releases. On his computer screen, he skims a screen filled with the station's incoming text messages (they get hundreds each day if a contest or opinion poll is under way). He also checks the traffic online so he can warn listeners ASAP if they're going to have any trouble getting to work or school.

Meanwhile, the countdown clock strikes :00 on Billy's computer, and they're live.

Really live. Not five-second delay live; not “most of the time” live. What they say is what you hear, as if you're standing right there in the studio, with the Asphalt Cowboys bobblehead and the velvet Elvis and The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Country Music and the awards they've received over the years.

“We're as live as live can get,” Patrick says.

Billy gives a quick rundown of the time, the temperature and today's forecast before he and Patrick fall into easy, friendly conversation. They look at each other while they speak and use hand gestures just like they're in their living room.

“You seem very smiley and chipper this morning,” Billy tells his co-host, glancing over at Patrick's coffee mug. Sure enough – almost on empty.

“He can always tell how much coffee I've had,” Patrick says, before announcing that it's George Strait's birthday, and that “Ocean Front Property” will be the “song of the day” in his honor. Notes are tacked to the studio's wall, their “cheat sheets” for when they draw a blank: “Give me a call at 244-97FM, or you can text me at 70236.” But they don't need the reminders. Ad lib works for them – even on their “really live” show. “It's all structured pretty much in here,” Billy says, tapping his cranium.

There's still a half-hour before KRCR-TV's Chita Johnson will join Billy and Patrick to give the extended weather forecast, but Patrick offers a preliminary report: “There's a quarter inch of rain in the coffee cup out front,” he says.

Billy touches an icon on his computer screen and a commercial comes on. Technology has certainly made a radio host's job easier over the years, the pair say.

“When we started, we had three little CD players – we couldn't leave the studio for longer than the length of a song,” Patrick recalls. “Well, we really can't now, either,” Billy replies.

Good point, Patrick concedes. “People think we're sitting around in between songs, but we're answering the phone, getting the news, getting something ready,” Patrick says. “There's one minute here, 30 seconds there to do something.”

Their hearts are firmly planted in the North State – it's rare for them to turn down the opportunity to do a live remote or give an on-air shout-out to a worthy local cause. In fact, they celebrated their 15th anniversary by hosting a 90-minute variety show at the Cascade Theatre to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation and the Cascade Theatre Fund.

“We just love this place,” Patrick says. ●