



From the Top: Brief Transmissions from Tent Show Radio

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?Bottom line is, I'm the kind of guy who's happy to go to the opera, but I should like to be allowed to wear steel-toed boots with my evening suit. I like to read Harper's with a chaser of Varmint Hunter Magazine. Maybe that's why I enjoy a good show under canvas. Here we sit, brain-deep in arts and culture, but we're also just people hanging out in a tent, some of us wearing boots, a few of us wearing Birkenstocks, but best of all we're breathing free fresh air filled with music."

From Scandihoovian Spanglish to snickering chickens, New York Times bestselling author and humorist Michael Perry navigates a wide range of topics in this collection of brief essays drawn from his weekly appearances on the nationally syndicated Tent Show Radio program. Fatherhood, dumpster therapy, dangerous wedding rings, Christmas trees, used cars, why you should have bacon in your stock portfolio, loggers in clogs—whatever the subject, Perry has a rare ability to touch both the funny bone and the heart.

From the Top: Brief Transmissions from Tent Show Radio Details

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Jaime says

If this author were single, and I was single, I'd probably stalk him. Fell in love with Michael Perry all over again. Will be buying extra copies of this to gift.

Kathy says

After vacationing several times in the Bayfield, WI area, and going to a show once at the Big Top Chautauqua, I thought it would be fun to read this book. I'm not sure it would have been as much fun without my having been there. I read it on the Kindle on my phone, and the short, folksy essay format made it great for reading whenever I had a few spare minutes waiting somewhere.

Dianna says

3.5 stars. Michael Perry steps behind the microphone and fills the empty space with his words of wisdom during intermission at the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua shows in Bayfield, Wisconsin. These monologues "must be brief enough to fit the six-minute sandwich between two thick slices of music." Though he has written down these cute, introspective, wise, witty and not-so-witty stories I think they would've made a greater impact in audio version (or the real thing!).

I personally have seen some performances Under the Big Top Chautauqua and loved the experience! Would highly recommend a visit to The Big Top. (As a side note, the performances are not all music.) But read this little gem all in one sitting or 6 minutes at a time.

Teresa Gmur says

Michael Perry is always a quick and enjoyable read. This was fun because it was really just short musings. It was perfect for a long train ride where I often stopped and started. It also makes me quietly homesick for Wisconsin and the US midwest, but in a beautiful and nostalgic way that only Michael Perry and Garrison Keillor can elicit.

Patty says

Michael Perry is consistently wonderful and this is no exception. And, since it's a series of short pieces, I was able to enjoy it for a long time, dropping in to read a couple of essays now and then while reading other books.

R. says

From The Top is a tidy collection of tales and monologues that remind us its ok to slow down a bit and enjoy the life going on around us. Maybe even advisable to do so. There is a little something for everyone here; for my part I have a little warmer spot for my lovely wife, and for her damned chickens...

Peggy says

A collection of short stories. I've read and enjoyed all of Perry's books. This one was a little repetitious, but it was a fast read. I love Big Top Chattauaua and the stories ideas generated for there.

Christine says

Another 5-star book for me. This collection will make you laugh out loud - his humor is usually of the self-deprecating variety, never the "let's make fun of someone else" variety. And without preaching, Perry's words will probably make you want to do a little naval gazing. Perry's work always packs a positive punch, and this collection offers a shining example. Micheal Perry's "Brief transmissions" is wonderful.

Michelle says

I won a copy of *From the Top: Brief Transmissions from Tent Show Radio* from a firstreads giveaway, and I think I knew what to expect from this book when I saw the picture of the author on the back. Michael Perry is wearing a t-shirt and knit cap while holding a pair of fancy chickens. He's a farmer, an emcee, a comedian, and an author. This book is a collection of his monologues from the "Tent Radio Show," a program syndicated on NPR.

Michael Perry's monologues are folksy, entertaining, and short, on a range of topics as diverse as farming (he's a small-time farmer by his own admission), Crocs (the shoes, and never referred to by name), Music, and Christmas Trees to name a few. I finished this book quickly, and I think I would have enjoyed it more if I was more familiar with the program (I don't think WAMU carries it). This is more of a book for listeners, but it's still got some appeal for the rest of us. File this one under "musings".

Cheryl says

Just wow. Sure, some of these short 'essays' riff on topics Perry has covered elsewhere, but they're still funny and/or poignant every time. And they are short - if you have trouble with shorts, think of them as 'anecdotes' or maybe simply 'reflections.'

Kelly Whitt says

Brief essays on life that were first presented at Big Top Chautauqua in Northern WI.

Jay says

From The Top

By Michael Perry

I recently had the pleasure of hearing Mike speak at the Mable Tainter Center for the Arts in Menomonie and was so enthralled by his performance that I couldn't wait to read this. Part of the ticket price included a copy of his collection, "From The Top." It's an assortment of short essays that he mostly pre-recorded at his farm in Fall Creek, which were later played during intermission at the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua.

"One of the great freedoms of the Tent Show Radio format is that I am allowed to ramble on about whatever comes to mind: oddly shod loggers, my last cup of coffee, love and lost fingers, useful cheaters, gratitude, and guys who get guzzled. Also, timeless infinity. And Victoria's Secret. In the same essay."

There's something different going on this time; in this anthology. Mike seems to be reaching into places that are very personal and true and full of emotion. He weaves not only his original charm and grace into these small windows of thought, but there's a bearing of his soul I found really tender. He's basically a big, huge mush-ball and I think that most of us are as well, underneath all the Midwestern-ness.

Some of the vignettes are funny, others are simply awkward and yet all seem to ring true. Most of them have a quality of touching a place we often, as a culture, miss or skip over. Like the sound of rain on the tent's canvas and what that simple sound evokes.

"Rain on a flat rock sounds different than rain on a round rock. Rain on green leaves sounds different than rain on fallen leaves. Rain on your picnic table sounds different than rain blown sideways against a window. Rain on an umbrella sounds different than rain striking the bottom of an upturned canoe."

See what I mean? This collection will have you laughing one moment and all teary-eyed the next. The guy has a way of observing the world around him a single scene at a time. One of the many things I found refreshing is that he's not afraid to feel life. Not afraid to admit that sometimes things just happen that hit him right smack dab in the heart. Instead of moving away from the hard stuff; he steps forward.

Mike has the rare gift of sharing what he sees around him in a way that is both telling and new. He finds the nuance in everyday events and spins them into a story-rich tapestry. A true weaver of the human experience and not one to be shy using unusual words I often have to Google. I like that. Some of his choices are inventions. It's all in the name of storytelling.

"...I don't know what she caught, but by mid-morning we decided only one word really describe it, and that word was phlegm-tastic."

This is a book to be enjoyed like chocolate; one story at a time.

R.Z. says

This is a delightful compilation of radio talks by Michael Perry, the host of Tent Show Radio in northern Wisconsin. The talks are very short, about two or three pages each and are humorous looks at life in rural America. But don't be fooled. These are very 21st Century observations of what it's like to be a father, a husband, a farmer, a shopper, a fixer of things gone wrong, and much more. Whether you live in the country or the city, you'll relate to these stories.

Wendy says

Michael Perry's "From the Top: Brief Transmissions from Tent Show Radio" we get a whimsical look into the life of a multifaceted personality whose many talents include being an emcee, author, EMT/ registered nurse, father, husband and farmer. Written as a collection of tales and monologues which were played at the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua Tent Michael explores a gambit of human emotions in a variety of topics from fatherhood, chickens and dumpster therapy to wedding rings and a dose of the strep.

A master of contrasts he skilfully compares his non-drinking and non-smoking in "Teetotal" with his addiction to coffee in "Re-Decaffeinated". From waxing poetical about human commitment, he easily slides from a tale about the loss of fingers to losing his wedding ring in "Ring Off, Ring On". Mixing the warmth of family, and his personal experiences with tales that are humorous or emotionally insightful Michael Perry's collection is not only refreshing but very real.

I thoroughly enjoyed the folksy writing style of "From the Top: Brief Transmissions from Tent Show Radio" and will look for other books by an author who can touch both the "funny bone and the heart."

Wayne says

"Bottom line is, I'm the kind of guy who's happy to attend the opera, but I should like to be allowed to wear steel-toed boots with my evening suit."

- Michael Perry, 'From the Top...'

Garrison Keillor makes me proud of my Minnesota roots, but my favorite home-spun Midwestern storyteller is across the border. Michael Perry has written a few of my faves, including 'Truck: A Love Story' and 'Population 485'. Chicken farmer, first responder, author, and humorist, his essays strike close to home and pack more laughs per page than anything I read. I appreciate 'high culture' and big-city sensibilities just fine, but writers close to home hit me closest to home. Even Keillor's New York experiment showed that a Prairie Home Companion could only work on the prairie, he's back in St. Paul where he belonged, all along. 'From the Top...' is a wide ranging collection of brief monologues written for the Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua, the 'Carnegie Hall of tent shows' that Perry hosts near Bayfield, Wisconsin. A collection of neighborly musings on chickens and fatherhood and pork bellies and families and dozens of other topics, but

really an anti-intellectual's intellectual musings on love and life and purpose and meaning. A fun read that might inspire a roadtrip. Hope to see ya under the big blue tent at the foot of Mount Ashwabay some summer evening.
