



Josiah Christoffer (seated, left) and Jake Niemand (also seated) went through their regular after school broadcast routine at KRAM-FM for Jason Davis (standing, right), host of KSTP television's "On the Road" feature. Filming the scene was KSTP cameraman Jason Hanson. (Staff photo by John Givan)

Jason Davis was 'On the Road' again; this time in Montevideo

By John Givan
Staff Writer

KRAM-FM 98.3, the basement radio station with a one-mile broadcast radius founded by Montevideo high school students Jake Niemand and Josiah Christoffer, is going nationwide. Maybe.

Jason Davis of KSTP television was in town last Thursday to film Niemand and Christoffer for a segment to be aired in a couple of weeks on Davis' "On the Road" series. The program airs during the 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. news broadcasts every Tuesday, as well as a couple of other times during the week. Davis said he would notify the school and the American-News as to when the program will air.

But beyond covering the metro area and going throughout the region on cable, "On the Road" is also syndicated through ABC in Chicago, according to Davis. The program is also picked up by CONUS, a satellite news sharing co-op, which reaches 150 stations. In all, KRAM-FM could air on 400 stations.

While visiting with Davis as he and cameraman Jason Hanson were filming Niemand and Christoffer at the high school and later at Niemand's house, the American-News learned that Davis has been on the road for the past 20 years. In that time, he estimates he's done 800 to 1,000 stories a year.

"That's 20,000 stories," Davis laughed.

Davis estimated he and his camera-

man traveled between 20,000 and 30,000 miles a year in the course of tracking down stories, either driving in the distinctive "On the Road" van or flying to more remote locations.

"It's not hard to find stories," he continued, "but it is hard to find good stories. My criteria is: If I think it's interesting, I'll do it."

He says he looks for stories that are different or that he hasn't heard about before. Also, the topic has to work on television. He won't drop a story once he has started on it, Davis said.

It's the people that he's met that stand out in his memory, said Davis, not the stories.

After working with the boys for a while, Davis commented to the

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American-News that what Niemand and Christoffer were doing with KRAM paralleled what Homer H. Hickam wrote about in his book "October Sky: A Memoir." Hickam, a 14-year-old from Coalwood, W. Va., was inspired by Werner von Braun and his Cape Canaveral team to build his own rockets in 1957. He grew up to be a NASA engineer.

It was apparent that Davis and Hanson were impressed by what they were seeing as they worked with Niemand and Christoffer. The two high-schoolers were completely at ease as they proceeded with their usual after-school broadcast routine and made plans to broadcast that afternoon's cross-country meet.

Hanson commented, "This is fun. These guys are something; they're really into what they're doing. It's refreshing to see."