

May 28, 1997----

CONCORD, Mich. It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. An early morning sun skips across the tranquil Ted Nugent compound in the backwoods of south central Michigan.

To arrive at the rocker's home on the 600-acre ranch, visitors navigate a winding gravel road, marked with yellow and black road signs: "SLOW, 5 MPH. PLEASE!!! DON'T HURT MY CRITTERS." Another diamond-shaped sign depicts the silhouette of a crooked old man wearing a dog-eared hunting cap. This sign warns: "OLD HUNTER X-ING." A couple of pheasant are exploring the narrow road.

Suddenly, a shriek comes from a distant barn:

"*Throb on My Friends!*," shouts Nugent.

The pheasants fly away.

Inside the barn, Nugent is sitting at a desk yelling into a radio microphone. The broadcast studio is lined with Detroit Red Wings paraphernalia, guitars and paperback books such as America's Dumbest Criminals.

Nugent is now a five-days-a week morning drive host for WWBR-FM (102.7). The Detroit station changed it's call letters to WWBR and became "The Bear" in tribute to Nugent's passion for bear hunting.

The expansion of Nugent's empire from rock 'n' roll to radio has been good for all involved. According to the latest Arbitron book, the Bear's morning ratings have shot up 40 percent in the 12-years-and-over market since January, when Nugent became a full-time host. His competition includes former Chicago personality Danny Bonaduce.

Nugent's self-described "Commando Radio" style is heavy on talk, with snippets of rock 'n' roll music and the occasional moments of Ted unplugged, live in the studio. Bursting with opinions - some decidedly against the mainstream - Nugent is never less than engaging.

On this day, Nugent is in a good mood. Just before retiring around midnight the previous evening, he bagged a nosy raccoon on his back porch. The raccoon was raiding eggs in the nest of a female Baltimore Oriole. Nugent shot the critter, killing it. Rocky Raccoon is still sprawled out on the back porch as Nugent discusses his lively radio career over coffee and cookies.

Nugent peers out a kitchen window at the raccoon and says with a laugh, "This guy

danced like an - - - - - on MTV last night before he died. Nugent Vermin Patrol. We never sleep."  
Then Nugent gets serious.

He adds, "My dad explained to me you have a responsibility to be proficient with your weapon and to kill them cleanly. For my dad, hunting was casual and recreational. To me, there's a spirituality that comes from understanding, face-to-face, the system by which you procure your sustenance. When you witness the death of your sustenance, you come to grips with this creation, a power that is beyond man. Hell, I get excited seeing that damn warbler out the window. I really live this."

Nugent, wife Shemane and sons Toby, 20, and Rocco Winchester, 5, love the wild life. On any given morning they could be greeted by coyote, muskrat, mink, owls, fox, possum, quail, weasel, deer, snipe, water fowl and even the occasional eagle that live on the wide open Nugent ranch.

Hunting and rock 'n' roll are the linchpins for Nugent's radio show. He also tackles law enforcement (since 1978 Nugent has been a sheriff's deputy in several Michigan counties), justice issues, the nutritional benefits of red meat and guitar playing. (As a guitarist, he's at the top of his game right now).

The glib Whackmaster is downright G. Gordon Giddy.

Nugent has been a favorite of radio and television hosts since 1967, when he began appearing on the airwaves to promote his first hit single, the Amboy Dukes' "Journey to the Center of Your Mind."

"I love touring so much, but now that I'm 48 and had a granddaughter two months ago, I started laying back," said Nugent, who has two grown children by a previous marriage. "So I got into this. Five years ago, I knew I was going to do radio. It was just a matter of getting the right deal, getting to be me.

"I've learned great things from Kevin Matthews, Jonathon Brandmeier, Steve Dahl, even Mancow Muller. I don't want to be overly gushy, because I also learned what not to do. For example, you don't have to be mean. You can be mean for a flash, but then you apologize. I even learned from Arthur Godfrey, although I didn't do an interview with him. Arthur invented this casual, coffee-table radio. It's just that my coffee table happens to be a .44 magnum and some fresh coonskins."

Nugent takes his music on the road half the year, and by 1998 he hopes to debut the national "Ted Nugent Spirit of the Wild" outdoors television show.

Nugent says he doesn't prep for shows, but his studio is littered with copious notes, books and piles of magazines. His guests have included actress Lynda Carter, Alice Cooper, Olympic Gold Medalist Kerri Strug, and former FBI agent Gary

Aldrich, who wrote the book *Unlimited Access*. Ex-Detroit Tiger Kirk Gibson is a regular guest.

Last week, Nugent featured a fourth-grade class from the Borculo Christian School in Zeeland, Mich. who wanted to have the whitetail deer named the official state mammal. Nugent reminded his radio audience, "I'm close second, by the way."

Nugent is a keen listener, much more so than renowned interviewers like Larry King. The Nuge doesn't interrupt callers. In fact, as they talk, Nugent nods his head as if they were sitting in the studio. He scrawls every caller's name and some of their comments in a big white spiral notebook.

"Ted's style comes from the heart," says Chicago radio personality Kevin Matthews, who will be bow hunting with the Nuge this weekend in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

"What he has to say is true, and a lot of people don't want to hear the truth today. He's not a zookeeper and he's not out for a cheap, shock element. He has high standards, he loves his family. Sure he hunts, but at the same time he knows more about what he's hunting and why he's hunting than just about anybody. He's done some unbelievable things for the outdoors."

Since 1988, Nugent had been doing an annual fall radio show in Detroit. He embarked on his professional radio career in January, commuting to Detroit. He would leave his home at 4 a.m.

"It's a 106-mile commute," Nugent says with a sigh. "My best time was 42 minutes."

Shemane is standing in the kitchen. She shouts, "What?"

Nugent repeats, "42 minutes, in a (Corvette) ZR-1, doing 130 (m.p.h.) all the way. At 4 a.m., I'm the only guy there. But it got to be too much. Part of the deal was to build a broadcasting studio on my property. We began broadcasting out of the barn in March. I stay up late, and I have farm chores to do."

Nugent peers out over the dead raccoon into a beautiful green ravine and continues, "I got to join that front loader over there and pick up rocks this afternoon. Then I'll put crops in for the animals. I'm a participant in nature. When I get my little boy up early in the morning and we plant 10,000 trees like we did again this year, he learns. He learns about life."

The sparkle in Ted Nugent's eyes is stronger than any clear-channel signal.