

Mitch Jelniker: EVERYDAY GUY

By Liz Holzemer



I recently caught up with Mitch over breakfast to get the scoop on this 7NEWS veteran and Highlands Ranch resident. He has two passions in his life: work—putting in fifty to sixty hours a week; and above all else, family—wife, Kelly of twenty-two years, son, RJ, seventeen; and daughter, Brooke, fourteen.

“I’m the luckiest guy in the world,” Mitch confesses, between bites of his egg white omelet and dry toast. “Thankfully, Kelly had a thing for the average guy, because I am one. She’s the love of my life.”

So how did an average guy land in TV? Mitch credits his Niwot High School English teacher for encouraging him to try radio. “The station only had 100 watts at the time and we often joked there was more power from a hair dryer!”

Mitch went on to Colorado State University and earned a degree with a title he says is longer than a dining room table—“I have a B.A. in speech and theater arts with an emphasis in broadcast journalism.” After graduation, Mitch paid his dues in Oklahoma City, moving

up the ranks until he landed a highly coveted evening anchor spot. Thirteen years later, in 1995, he returned to Denver and has been at 7NEWS ever since.

I quickly picked up how modest Mitch is when he downplayed his five Emmy’s (yes FIVE) by joking that they were probably collecting dust somewhere in his house.

In 1999, Mitch was asked to do the 7Everyday Hero presentations. “It blows me away how much time and energy people spend volunteering,” Mitch said. “One hero has volunteered for thirty years to read to kids. It’s a great way to honor volunteers you don’t usually hear about, and my goal was to create a volunteer movement.”

And yes, there have been some interesting moments. Mitch recounts an awkward incident just minutes before he was about to present a plaque. He says, “The wife informed me her husband didn’t really like surprises. As I walked around the corner, he let go of a stream of expletives I had never heard before

in my life. Fortunately, he calmed down and graciously accepted his award.”

What little down time he has, Mitch likes to be outside as much as possible whether he’s biking, hiking or camping out, notably in Telluride where the entire family enjoys escaping. Along with a healthy diet, it’s no wonder he doesn’t look his forty-six years.

Not only that, Mitch emceed an average of three to four charity events a month and addresses local high schools and colleges about career choices. His best advice?

“I tell them to get a real job like a doctor or perform Lasik surgery,” he jokes. “Seriously, if they want a job like mine because they think it’s glamorous, I tell them they’re going into it for the wrong reasons. Just look at me—I’m just an average, boring, white guy.” Hardly!

When I asked Mitch what he thought most viewers would be surprised to know about him, he replied, “That I’m funny. I think I come across as very serious on TV,” he admits. “It’s been a running joke for years with my co-anchors that whenever we have a difficult name to pronounce on air, like Sultan Hassan Bolki-ah, I suggest we just say Matt Damon. It’s just a great name and you can’t mess it up.”

Yep, Mitch Jelniker is just an everyday guy.

Liz Holzemer is a regular contributor to Life and a 7Everyday Hero recipient. She can be reached at info@lizholzemer.com