

# Peacock North

FALL, 1998



Volume 7 Edition 3

at 30 rock



by Dan Grabel

## The 25 Year Watch

Remember when you got yours? Mine was a Bulova with two time zones and numerical as well as a traditional face. **Fred Silverman** passed me the box that contained it and, in fact, I'm looking up at the photo of the presentation in 1980 on the wall near my computer as these words come spewing out of my dome and into my still nimble fingertips.

Well, like the Pierce Arrow, white tennis balls, and butter sold from firkins, watches commemorating long and faithful service at NBC surely are headed for a museum, if one exists, to show future generations how we lived in the 20th century.

The day will come when 25-year watches at 30 Rock will be a memory, just like Fred Silverman. How much longer will the company have veterans of 25 years standing?

I ask the question because I seem to have the answer.

I hear that many employees now get hired on an 18-month deal. Yup, even production assistants in the news

department. And some come on board as per diem employees! There are plenty of candidates waiting for the opportunity. Some will latch on to a permanent job. But many are in and out in 18 months. So few will make that magic 25 year seniority list.

Oh, by the way, my 25-year Bulova – can't get it repaired because Bulova has made it obsolete.

## Sweet Meet

There she was, WNBC field producer **Angelina Vivolo**, enjoying a quiet moment on a Greek island in the Aegean Sea. She was on a quick tour and this was one of those infrequent moments when one could sit in a cafe and sip an ouzo. Along comes an American couple, also on a visit, and looking for a chair and table, they ask Angelina if they can share it with her. Sure! After the customary pleasantries she tells the Americans she works at NBC, New York. "Oh," says he, "I used to be a vice president at NBC!" It was **Russ Tornebene**, holidaying with spouse Audrey.

## Local Types & Others

**Rita Satz**, who spent some 25 years in the News Department, has moved into retirement. One of her longtime assignments was with the **Betty Furness** Consumer Affairs unit.....**Dr. Frank Field** is still at the microphone. He does radio spots for a major health plan and also has a Saturday morning health radio show on WQEW-New York....**Gloria Clyne**, 2nd only to Nipper at NBC, and you don't see Nipper too often. But you do see Gloria and now she's out on the street...happily. Glo has handled many assignments at the local station and now she's a field producer and one of her regular jobs is with the show "Positively Black." Clyne works with anchor Miriam Wright and says she has made so many contacts in Harlem that she likes working with crews in that section of town. If you can believe this, Clyne will be marking

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*Happy Holidays*



her 55th year at the company in '98. Came right after kindergarten, along with **Don Pardo** who will also mark that anniversary. Announcer **Howard Reig** is right up there, too... I was confused recently when I got an e-mail message signed AS. It turned out to be **Al Smith**, 25 years with NBC, mostly with the "Today" show. He left in the 70s to take a big job with BMI — Broadcast Music, Inc — and ended up a vice president. Now retired, Smith lives in New Rochelle, and he is a new PN member.

### Marv's Back

It was a blockbuster of an announcement in mid-July when Madison Square Garden said it was hiring **Marv Albert** to work at MSG cable and also broadcast Knicks games on the radio. The women's NOW organization and others complained because of his conviction as a woman abuser, but MSG said he had been punished long enough. Marv had been out of sight for 10 months. It will be interesting to see if there is any pressure on advertisers by the protesters and if this affects the MSG-Albert connection.



*Marv is back.*

### "Dateline" — Guilty, again!!

The NBC magazine show got a tougher sentence than Marv when a jury in Maine decided that three of the state's residents were the victims of negligence and misrepresentation when correspondent **Fred Francis** and freelance producer **Alan Handel** did a story about the trucking industry.

A federal court said the NBC journalists mislead the plaintiffs about the theme of the segment, telling them it would be a "positive" story, but the finished product focused on safety violations. NBC said it had promised only to report the story accurately.

NBC was ordered to pay \$525,000 in damages — including damages for a conviction for inflicting emotional distress! Boy, that sounds like a hometown verdict. The company said it is standing by the "Dateline" piece and may appeal. (In one quote a truck driver admitted he had driven his rig from Chicago to Boston non-stop and that apparently is a longer trip than allowed by federal law. The same guy admitted his trip logbook was "a joke," meaning it was inaccurate.

News industry leaders are concerned that the decision could spark other cases by people who are the subject of critical news stories and are unhappy about the revelations.

### Voices from Black Rock

The e-mail brings word from **Alan Statsky**,

(AS4@cbsnews.com) one of the savviest and more enterprising newsmen around, who has taken retirement from NBC and is happily working as a producer at CBS for the network's Morning show.

Alan left NBC in 1997 and moved over to Black Rock local to be the medical news producer for **Dr. Max Gomez**, who had just jumped to CBS. Shortly after, Gomez went back to NBC. Alan didn't, or couldn't, but the CBS network types grabbed him to produce the nets' medical stuff for **Drs. Emily Senay** and **Bernadine Healy**. Statsky says he does a lot of traveling, and was on the road so he missed the June luncheon at LaMagnetite.

Black Rock, he says, is peopled with ex-NBCers including many faces he recognizes but does not know by name — many engineering, unit mgrs and sports personnel. However, he did list these folk: **Betty Ruocco** (once **Al Lewin's** secretary), reporters **Pablo Guzman**, **Lou Young**, **David Diaz** and **Jennifer McLogan**.

Statsky spent 28 years at 30 Rock and while he likes the new joint and the people, it is not quite like home yet.

### Buy Big Names with Big Bucks

As I have often said, I'm always dubious when I hear those huge dollar figures that are reportedly paid to performers and top news personalities. Probably an agent is behind the pen when the press announcement is prepared.

Anyway, after it was disclosed that **Tom Brokaw** is getting \$7-million — that's per year, son — the AP carried a report that **Geraldo Rivera**, **Katie Couric**, **Jane Pauley** and **Stone Philips** were close behind at \$5-million. Rivera's deal is for six years — that's nice insurance. Couric's salary tripled, said the AP. With "Today" leading the pack, and a happy Katie, that means insurance and a continuing flow of cash for NBC. Likeo for NBCwise with Pauley and Philips heading up the successfully popular "Date Line."



*Stone & Jane*

On the entertainment side **Helen Hunt** and **Paul Reiser** of "Mad About You" are reportedly getting one million per episode.

Maybe its my "union" mentality, but with the company doing so well you wonder why they don't follow the trickle down philosophy and make life secure and enriched for those behind the scenes.

Commenting on the high pay, **Reuven Frank**, former NBC News president, said, "Maybe what they ought to do is follow the NBA system and have a salary cap."

### The Web

GE enterprise probably is behind the new idea that NBC should sell a lot of its intellectual material via the





Videoseeker Web Screen.

Internet. A service, called Videoseeker which came on line in June (<http://www.videoseeker.com>), will give viewers a chance to download a **Jay Leno** monologue, interviews with tv stars, clips from "Saturday Night Live," and bits from "Access Hollywood."

To start, the service will be free, but NBC will ask seekers to register. That will provide the company with a mailing list of prospects for other stuff, such as videocassettes, it can sell.

NBC has a new department called NBC Interactive and it is headed by **Martin Yudkovitz** who tossed around phrases like "It supports our transactional philosophy." "An industry analyst came up with "Inherent in the concept of a monologue repurposed for a new medium is a different theory for how consumers will get entertainment." Now, can you repeat that in English?

Many tv and cable sources have long offered news clips for sale, but this stuff is into programming.

### NBC's "Biography"

The A&E show titled "Biography," often hosted by former NBC correspondent **Jack Perkins**, soon will have an NBC version. Different name, of course, but same idea. (You may recall that more than 30 years ago NBC radio did a series called "Biography," and **Jim Aldrich** was one of the writers.) People at CNBC, along with personnel from NBC News, have begun to produce a series on famous people. One anonymous guy said, "We're going to try to be more like profiles you see in Vanity Fair magazine." Well, for that, they'll need racier subjects than people like John D. Rockefeller and Florence Nightingale, who might turn up on the A&E show.

Don Ohlmeyer, head of NBC's entertainment operation, said shows like "Biography" cost about \$150,000 per episode. Compare that with the usual tab of one million for a network entertainment show.

## Let the Pigskins Fly

When NBC and the Ted Turner network got squeezed out of NFL football in last year's bidding, the rest of the gang — Fox, ABC, CBS, and ESPN — committed themselves to an \$18-billion dollar cost for the next 4 years.

NBC and Turner Broadcasting are unhappy about not having this sort of mayhem on their stations so they think they can solve the problem by creating their own football league! It has been tried before — American Football League, USFL, World Football League, and a Canadian version.

Since late winter NBC and Turner have been conducting focus groups in ten markets to test public reaction. There are plenty of big towns that would like a team, so there are markets and stadiums available. There are plenty of players — some NFL young rejects, some new out-of-work collegians, and some older NFL discards — who are minor rather than major attractions. Maybe the new league will come up with another **Joe Namath**.

Every NFL game is not the Superbowl and football nuts can't get enough of the action. Remember last spring when ESPN could not get enough action sports and they broadcast the National Spelling Bee? Next, they'll have Rosy Grier showing us how to crochet!

NBC and Turner would own the league — that means no \$18-billion layout for rights. And they have their own stations for the tv programming. That's two major obstacles overcome. They probably will be partners with local team owners, so they'll own the league and a piece of the clubs.

When would the NBC/Turner League begin ops? Unknown. They'd get creamed if they go up against the NFL, so they might have to play on the nights there is no NFL football. They can't broadcast during the summer of 2000 since NBC will be showing the Olympics. Then again, they may have some inventive way to broadcast both.

As expected, there are plenty of sports buffs who say either — it will never happen, or, as one columnist put it, "Turner will fumble new league."

**Neil Pilson**, who headed CBS Sports until 1994 when he fumbled and did not renew the NFL contract, said, "I see no groundswell of interest for another league." They said the same thing when Turner started CNN.

Which brings us to another story. Turner was being

### Monitor Memories

PN's next issue will try to recall the halcyon days of Monitor Radio on NBC. Anyone who has anecdotes, photos, outrageous stories — please send them to me so we can all enjoy the memories of that epic weekend show — another milestone in radio. *Dan Grabel*. (see back page for address.)



interviewed in his Time-Warner office and had one eye towards the reporter, the other on the stock ticker. "Hmm," said he, "just lost \$150-million." But when you're worth \$5-billion, who cares!! And with **Jane Fonda**, he's got a working wife!

### Alms for the Poor

CBS is paying \$500-million a year for its NFL games and to share that burden with the affils, CBS has figured out a way to get \$50-million a year from them. It will get cash and commercial ad time. That will add up to \$200-million over four years, nearly cutting the net's NFL cost in half.

NBC also is restructuring its money relations with the affils. One proposal is for joint ventures in other businesses and in cable. The capital would come by phasing out certain net payments to the affils by ten percent a year to provide the venture funds.

### Whatever Became Of...

Dick Dudley asks: The NBC dances at the Waldorf...the parties for employee's children in 8H...the picnics at the transmitter given by WEA...sexless soap-operas...Rock Center area brownstone residences...and the White Rose Bars which served free lunch. Yeah, where did they go?

### The Public Memory

Remember when **Magic Johnson** had to quit NBA basketball after it was disclosed he was HIV positive in 1991? Company endorsements Johnson had for a dozen years disappeared overnight. Surprisingly (to us) American Express and Coors Beer are using him again. He talked about that on NBC's "Access Hollywood," with **Pat O'Brien**, the on-again-off-again sports caster who hosts that show.

### Phrase-Makers

Remember when the Knicks were hot and Coach **Pat Riley** copyrighted his phrase "Three-peat," meaning they had won a third title. It was a ploy to make a few bucks and few probably is the right word.

NBC had a great slogan years ago in "Be There!" It has been copied so widely that one has to assume the net did not copyright it.

Now, NBC has come up with "Must See TV" (is there such a thing?) and has trademarked the phrase. It is licensing it for use on a dozen products including "Must Hog Sofa" (a dog collar), "Must Saw Logs" (a bed sheet), and "Must Pull Fingers" (T-shirts)

NBC is expanding its NBC Store retailing venture and has toll-free phone numbers to sell videos of its mini-series and other items from shows like "Saturday Night Live."

Interesting sidebit: To get a nostalgic feel in the 30



Rock Company store NBC contacted PN sources for photos of the old radio and tv stars. We publish some of these from time to time but return photos to the members, so we have no "photo morgue."

Years back NBC had its own photo studio and a vast "morgue." Some brilliant manager decided the whole thing took up too much space, got rid of the photo file and all the still photographers! I believe they also did that with the vast newsreel film vaults and now have to pay heavily when they want to buy back scenes once filmed by NBC cameramen like **Cy Avnet**, **Joe Vadala**, **Harvey Weinstein** and **Jerry Yarus**!

### Industry Appraisal

Neilson ratings show that audience ratings of the big three nets were down four percent during the 1997 season, and in the past two years ABC, CBS and NBC have lost ten percent of their viewers.

One media critic thinks that one reason is the sameness of network programming — everybody has an across-the-board magazine show ("Dateline") or an entertainment news show ("Entertainment Tonight" or "Extra"), so viewers are looking elsewhere for their tv fare.

Another gloomy picture — advance sales of network tv time for the 98-99 season are running at flat levels. NBC says, however, it expects its sales to be a little better than the \$2.15 billion it did last year.

Media reporter **Jonathan Storm** of the Knight Ridder syndicate wrote about nets targeting audiences for an entire night's viewing. He said the WB net goes wall-to-wall with so-called "urban" comedies on Thursday night. "Urban," says Storm, is tv industry lingo for a black audience.

### 120 Minutes or More



*Neal Shapiro, Dateline Producer, expanded mag show to five nights a week.*

Despite the protestations of **Don Hewitt** and the rest of the aging gang at 60 Minutes, the network is going ahead with plans to clone the show, starting in January. It will start with one extra show a week and with a different cast. But if it is successful, do you think CBS money mavens will stop there? Nah, they'll say if "Dateline" can do five shows a

### In Search of History

NBC is looking to recapture some of its exciting past, and you can help! The company is looking for scripts, set designs, photos, props...anything historic. It can be donated or loaned.

*Contact Elizabeth Davis: 212-874-4081.*



week, we can too.

As a former tv writer and field producer, I especially liked Hewitt's comment — "It's not hard to find correspondents, but to find 20 good producers worth their salt is extremely difficult." That's an acknowledgement not often voiced.

### Cable People

**Charles Grodin**, the erudite talk host on CNBC was surprised when the net axed him in mid season in June. That cable net is shifting its focus to news-oriented programming and was not interested in Grodin's commentary on social issues. He was axed by CNBC, but returned to the air with a similar talk show on MSNBC.

### Network People

**Dick Ebersol** has walked away from his job as NBC sports president to assume the new title chairman of NBC Sports and to pay more attention to NBC's Olympic interests. **Ken Schanzer**, an executive vice president of the division will, move up to president.

### Local People

Newcomers to WNBC — correspondents **Tim Minton** and **Jay DeDapper**, both anklng Channel Seven....Channel Four will scrap its low-rated mid-day news show at 11:30 am. I thought it was a strange hour when it was announced, and now, I guess WNBC brass thinks so too...I am amazed by the regular promos for WNBC's early morning show, starting at 5:30 am. Who do you expect to jump out of bed at that hour? The promos are so fast-paced that you can't tell what they are promoting. Razzle-dazzle. And the short length of most local news stories can't impart too much information anyway, so why get up?

### People -Here & There

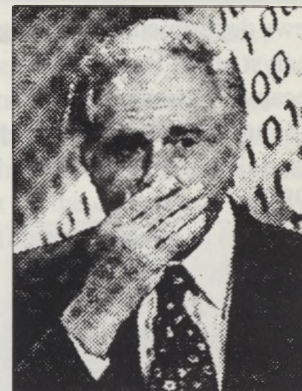
When the AP put out a hold-for-release obit on **Bob Hope**, age 95, in June, some antzy novice in Congress, no less, passed the wire story to **Rep. Bob Stump** of Arizona and he declared, "It is with great sadness that I announce Bob Hope has died." After that it was wildfire. Hope, at the time, was home at Toluca Lake, CA enjoying breakfast. Stupidly, the item was headlined "Dead." Correctly, the lead paragraph left out specific details. House Majority leader **Dick Armey** had handed the item to Stump. That's a pal...**Magic Johnson**, the basketball player who had to quit the NBA because



Bob, alive and well.

of his HIV, debuted in a syndicated tv talk show in June and the one critic we read wrote — "It isn't just bad. It is historically bad."...Comedian **Roseanne Barr** began a tv talk show in September on WNBC in NY....CBS

sportscaster **Warner Wolf** coughed up a new denture while on camera. Not enough Polident?...The new tv buzz word may be convergence — a means of clicking through your tv set to get on to the Internet. NBC just got into it by buying 60 percent of Snap Navigation Service for \$38-million...None of the biggie anchors went to China with **Clinton**, but



Or maybe Fixodent.

**Geraldo Rivera** suggested he go and did spots for "Today" and his CNBC show. Some who don't care for Jerry said it was his dream to be an NBC News correspondent and he got that title for the trip....CNN and Time magazine took a close look too late after declaring the US army had used nerve gas in Laos in 1970 — that's 28 years ago! The much heralded Peter Arnett was the major fall guy. He claimed he didn't write the piece, just read it....The Pew Research Center said Americans still rely heavily on the local papers for news. Just listen to the tv and radio newscasts, if you can digest the poor writing, to realize you have to go to the printed page to get the story....Pew also reports that Americans spend as much time surfing the Internet as they do reading magazines....We found a great internet address: [www:IPL.org](http://www.IPL.org), (the public library) and it has front page snippets from newspapers all over the globe.

### ID Cards

At the LaMagnette lunch a retiree asked Peg McKinley about NBC issuing ID cards so that a visitor could enter the building without a lot of trouble.

Looking through old papers I notice I got a card when I retired in 1987. It's a simple little thing which says "NBC extends the courtesies of its studios to Dan Grabel." I can't ever remember using it, but wouldn't that do the trick?

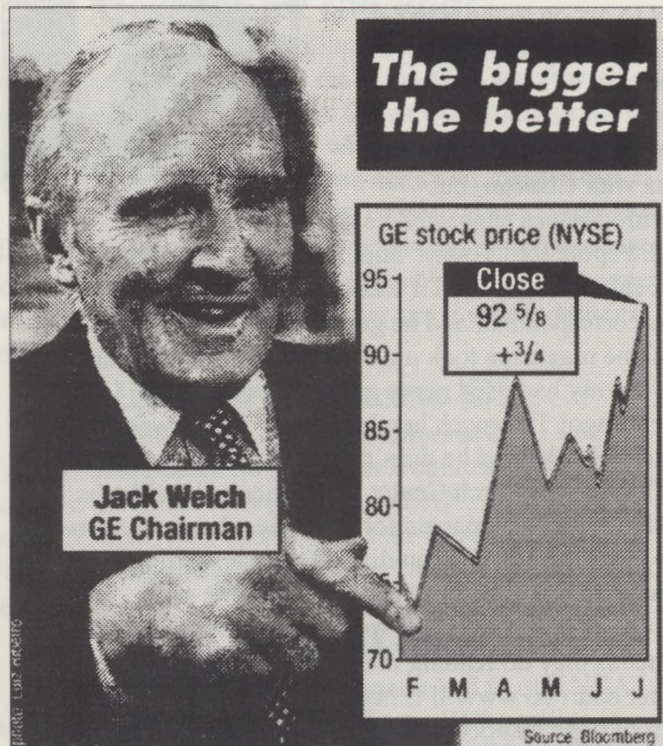
### Strictly NBC

NBC has posted a "Personal Conduct & Integrity" notice stating: employees should not try to capitalize on their connection with the company, not make any political contributions, and that expense accounts claims should not be creative....NBC had another round of "Wellness" seminars and screening programs for employees. The seminars have been run five times a week during work hours. Typical subjects: osteoporosis, sexual health, weight reduction, etc. The NBC gym also is a nice perk with programs from 7:15AM to 7PM....WNBC News remains number one at 11pm and the early morning shows... **Steven Brill**, the lawyer who created Court TV, has called NBC White House reporter **David Bloom** "a lap dog," and "virtual stenographer" for investigator **Ken Starr**....Remember the name **Tom Wolzein**? He was a





news department exec in the '80s. He is now a media analyst at the Sanford Bernstein Co., brokerage....GE became the first company in the land to be worth \$300-billion when its stock edged up one day in July. It was worth just \$12-billion when **Jack Welch** came on the scene in 1981.



### Potpourri

NBC got the first pictures of the Capitol shoot-up in July because a CNBC EJ crew was outside the building doing a story with reporter **Hampton Pearson**. They got it all — police cars, ambulances, crowd running for cover. CBS had a crew on the scene — but inside the Capitol. Police detained them along with everybody else....**Beth Comstock**, NBC's senior VP for communications moved over to GE to become the top PR rep there. **Cassie Canter** takes over her duties at the Peacock....NBC is the only tv net to make a profit in '98. It won 13 of the past 14 Neilson sweeps....The Internet is stealing viewers and readers from other media says Strategis Group researchers: 65 percent of 500 net users who were quizzed said they watch tv less, 48 percent said they read less, and 29 percent said they slept less! Long distance phone calls are down 22 percent and the Internet may be blamed for that too....Another research group reports: it took radio 40 years to attract 50-million listeners, 13 years for tv to do that, and only 4 years for the World Wide Web to do the same!!...“Seinfeld” is gone and so are the NBC ratings. Viewing homes were down 20 percent in the June sweeps. Episodes of the series were rerun 32 times during a seven month period on NBC....NBC has developed an Information Security Guide to protect its intellectual material.

### Over the Coals

NYTimes arts critic Caryn James blew Geraldo Rivera out of the water with her August review of his new CNBC show, “Upfront Tonight.” I don’t recall seeing such a public whipping. Here are few excerpts: “Rivera” self-promotion based on little substance”..... “inflated attempts at muck-raking”... “A sound report but characteristically overblown.”..... “Rivera touting some secret source of his own, and usually turning up information everyone else has.”

Critic James observed that she thought it “bizarre to see serious NBC journalists reporting back to Geraldo.” In an aside she noted a Rivera quote in “Playboy” Magazine when he described Barbara Walters as “a very sexy babe.” (nobody ever said that about my grandmother).

The final salvo: “Mr. Rivera gives NBC News ratings: NBC News gives Rivera instant respectability.”

We don’t think she likes him or the show.

All we can add is that the show’s producers should check their dictionary. We think they have coined a new word in “Upfront.”

### Ax Falling at NBC

No matter what the U.S. Labor Department’s weekly job statistics report, American industry seems to be in a slide. Every week there are reports of major corporations slicing the payroll and “taking charges against profits,” for the terminal leave packages.

Now, it is the tv industry’s turn, or is it, the *tv industry’s turn, again.*

Eleven years ago, within weeks after GE bought RCA, the newswriters were the first group to get letters offering them buyouts. (*I accepted!*)

There have been other reductions in staff since then and in addition NBC started using daily hires, a scheme unknown in our day, except for longshoremen and construction jobs.

President Bob Wright is seeking a cut between 4 and 5 percent of the 6,500-member company roster. That could be 325 jobs. It is said “service departments” will be hardest hit. Entertainment and News areas would suffer softer shocks.

In late summer CBS said their ax was falling. Black Rock put the number between 200 to 300 employees. ABC didn’t admit to lay-offs but it initiated extensive “cost-cutting” measures, including no salary increases and no promotions. Disney, the ABC parent, of course, paid multi-multi millions to one departing exec a year ago and that could have unbalanced the budget.

Plus those humongous NFL packages which will cost \$4-billion each to CBS and ABC over the next 8 years. NBC’s big expense is the “E.R.” show which used to cost \$2-million an episode is now going for \$13-million. That’s a belly-ache, even with great ratings.

Finally, one recent night, the combined cable stations garnered a larger audience than the network stations. That



probably was frightening news in the front offices, so perhaps the cuts are a "pre-emptive strike" against red ink.

### Tale of Two Cities

From the West Coast: In NBC's August house organ Don Ohlmeyer said, "We set another record as the only network ever to attract over \$2-billion (in time sales) for three years in a row. We've had the top five shows for three years running and we've been first in longform programming for the past five years. We expect to remain the first place network next season."

From the East Coast: Bob Wright's September "State of the Business Memo." We excerpt, "I have asked each division head to look at resources and determine how to reduce our staff size ... be assured we are working to limit the number necessary."



We never had a cash advance situation in our years at NBC, but the good business crunch is shaping up that area, too. Employees who travel and get "open advances" will have the funds credited to their payroll account, and have income reported to the IRS and taxes deducted, if they don't file expense reports in a timely manner. Additionally, the late expense reports will go to "top managers" at GE, not NBC, for approval!

### Late Breaking

NBC named Scott Sassa as the new president of its entertainment division in late October and Bob Wright, CEO

of the network, quickly introduced him to the tv audience with a Q & A session on CNBC.

Wright was asked why Sassa was named at this time when it appears the network is still number one and making profits. Wright said, "This is the time when the appointment will have the least negative impact on the company." It might well be, too, that NBC has future plans which it is not ready to reveal fully at this time.

Sassa has worked for NBC for the past 13 months and Wright described him as having a creative background. Sassa will report to Don Ohlmeyer and eventually will take over his job. Sassa replaced Warren Littlefield, who has been with NBC for 20 years. According to Wright, Littlefield will move into a producing job.

Among his brief comments during the CNBC interview, Sassa, who probably is the first oriental-America to hold such a high post in USA television, sounded like a rock-solid GE exec when he said NBC programming must be "a balance between the bottom line and the net's social responsibility."

### And Our Thanks

Our customary thanks to Roy Silver for perusing the daily press to make sure we miss no stories you want to read about. □

*Dan Grabel along with wife Pat resides in Scarsdale, NY.*

## WE GET PICTURES - I



A summer gathering  
at the Katzman's  
Florida home.

L to R.

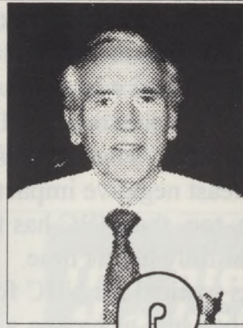
Ann Gerling, Diane Juncosa, Roni Mofsen, Terry Katzman, Barbara Chomsky & June Carleton.

L to R,  
Standing: Frank Merklein, Sid Chomsky, Lee Carleton,  
Harry Katzman, Hank Gerling.  
Seated: Harold Mofsen & Bob Juncosa.

Harry Katzman sent us these pictures via the email.







## P.O. People

**Dearly Beloved:** Boy do dem months pass by quickly! Since Frank has included my epistle of Como's trip to Guantanamo (pg. 20), it's only fitting that I include The Como show's Scenic artiste par excellence, BOB BADER's, recent letter to me.

For those NBC members who worked the Perry Como Show at the Zeigfield Theater, here is a sweet touch of nostalgia.

Bob's letter:

I was going through old personal things in the attic, when I came across a videotape cassette. As I played it for my wife and me, not only did it bring back memories; it brought tears to both of us. It's about SAL DANNA.

Pictured below — Bob and Sal Danna, scenic artists (No relation to Rosanna Danna Saldana.)



Sal lived in the city in the upper 70's on the East Side. One winter day there was a severe snowstorm, with about 20 inches of snow. Transportation from New Jersey was at a

standstill; I could not get to work, so NBC called Sal to cover my job at the Zeigfield Theater on 54th Street and Sixth Ave. Sal walked to get there. He was about 70. Sometime during the day Perry would rehearse his songs with Mitch's 40-piece orchestra. As the orchestra was warming up, Sal stood nearby and started to sing. His voice was deep and pleasant. Perry asked Sal, "Would you like to sing along with me?" Sal, being no shrinking violet, went into it with exuberant gusto. There was this loveable little guy with his shoes spray-painted silver, belting out this song with full orchestra. They had recorded the moment, and a tape was given to Sal. I was also given one. At that time I never realized how important the tape would be.

Sal always thanked me for not showing up and the Red & Tan Bus Company for not running busses that day, for he would never have had his shining moment!

Sal was forced to retire when he was about 80. To look younger, he would dye his hair black. It didn't have a natural look, so we kidded amongst ourselves that he used black shoe polish and then buffed it to a high sheen. After Sal retired, we would visit him each summer. Once we pulled up in his driveway - there he was with a book, studying how to speak Spanish. He was then about 90. He said, "You should never stop trying to learn, no matter how old you are".

One day we got a phone call from Sal's wife, (in her late 70's). "Sal's in the hospital, not doing too well, would you come?" The Baders were there as soon as possible. To this day, I



don't know why I brought the tape and a VCR. We met his wife and daughter there. He did not look too well at all. There was another old man in the next bed that kept his curtain closed.

I played the tape for Al and the family. The sudden rejuvenation in Al was remarkable, it thrilled his wife and daughter and the man in the other bed opened up his screen.

Soon the room was filled with staff who had caught the spirit, filled with happiness and emotion.

He didn't last but a few more days. His wife called. Al had passed away. He was 93.

Best Regards, *Bob Bader*

**CLARABELL, Howdy Doody's Clown.** From the fellow (Tom Smiley) who had played the transcriptions for Howdy's lines and then TD'd Howdy for years, sent us a newspaper story about Buffalo Bob. You by now know all about our friend Bob Smith, but along with the article was this photo of Clarabell during a hospital appearance to Flagler Hospital in Miami. Keeshan, playing a mute, could only get attention with his horn or gestures. So here's Dr. Bruce Witten, an otolaryngologist (you look that up) examining Clarabell for a throat infection. After the examinations, kids cheered,



*A Flagler, FL hospital doctor looking for a voice for Clarabell.*

but Clarabell could still only toot his own horn.

**BEE READ** (Selwyn [Red] Reed's wife) called a few days ago. I had sent a courtesy copy of the Newsletter, which contained a short note about her. Apparently the newsletter does get around, for she started hearing from people that she hadn't heard from for ages. Keep it up folks and send a note to an old friend that you've been meaning for ages to write or call. Remember, your best friends are the old ones.

**HOWIE ATLAS** has kept us informed via the Internet this summer. The following may be old news, but that's all we have. Thanks Howie. P.S. my AOL address is HChrRipp29@aol.com - I used capitols, cause it's easier to remember (for me). If you have anything you'd like the folks to be aware of, send me an "E"!

Looks like this summer has been a "Get a new pair of knees" summer. Roger Tuttle, and Herb Oxman have joined the list (Frank DeRienzo, Fred Wagner, Tony Romeo (only the right knee), to mention a few.

**DOROTHY & GARY IORIO** were rear-ended while stopped at a traffic light. Both of them were whip-lashed and suffered other associated problems.

We don't hear much about Jim Sunder, Walter Dibbins, Vinnie Gabrielle, Jack Keegan, Wes Paulsen, Tony Romeo, Murray Vecchio, Maurey Verschore, but when Bob & Diane Juncosa came by this summer, these all attend a get-together on Long Island. Frank Gaeta and Gary Iorio were meant to go, but alas they missed it.

**WALTER HIMMELBERG** sends us bad news and good news from Colorado Springs. On September 10, in Telluride, CO, their son and another fellow were killed in an accident when their jeep turned over. Their girl companion was critically injured. None wore seat belts. *Our deep sympathies go out to you and your family, Walter and Anita.*

The good news is that Walt has happily settled in Colorado after tasting many parts of the USA, and tired of swimming and golf. He has





found a niche in TV again, this time not in Master Control, but at The Business News Network.

He videotapes the Blanquetta Cullen (BQ) show five days a week from 10am to 1pm for playback later in the day. It originates in Washington, DC. On Fridays, he produces the Futures Exchange Show that originates in the "booth" right there in Colorado Springs, while the two experts are in Chicago. The second show is the D.P.O. Show. The same host, Jay Ricci, is also one of the announcers for Air Force football. The "expert" for this show is in New York, in his office. Guess where? On the Avenue of the Americas, between 50th and 51st. They agreed to meet at Hurley's when Walt visits NY. They do both shows on Friday from 3pm till 6:30, and Walter is "having a ball!" loves it. Says he should have done that a long time ago. The BNN has 198 stations across the country. "Everyone on the crew here is great, reminds him of NBC."

He says hello to all you folks. Call him at 719-636-3104. Or write him at: 1527 1/2 North Royer Street, Colorado Springs, Co. 80907.

BOB & DIANE JUNCOSA had a 45th year anniversary party given to them in Gloucester,



**THE ANNIVERSARY PRINCIPALS.**

*A dress up occasion? Look closely, the look alike tuxes were T-shirts, thusly painted. Fooled ye?"*

Mass. A 10-room house was rented for all for the occasion. Happy Anniversary you two. ROGER & PAT TUTTLE were up Nawth early October. Pat to a high school reunion at the Jersey Shore. Guess how many people she recognized after all those years? None, until they put on the glasses and read their name tag. Then all the hugs and kisses. Roger was demonstrating his ballroom dexterity with his two new knees. (How come these words sound so alike and are spelled so differently?) He flies his self-built airplane all around Wilmington, NC, and going very hi-tech, with his satellite global positioning system (GPS) guiding him all the way. He still has the old fashioned compass etc. just in case. Their boat sat out of water OK at the marina during the recent hurricane. If anyone wants a terrific home in a 200-acre area, next to a golf course, their home is up for sale. They plan to relocate closer to the water nearby. Both send a fond Hello to all PN-ers.

This summer was not a good heart season. TD DAVE LALICATA had a heart attack and shortly after had a quadruple by-pass. Last heard he was doing OK. LEROY BROWN was to go to Yellowstone National Park, but he spent time in a hospital after some problems with an Angioplasty procedure. Was recovering at home. In May (?) Jerry Cudlipp had a heart attack and a by-pass operation, with numerous complications. Last time we talked, he sounded OK and recovering. In Maine, in June, BARBARA RAND, (Mrs. Arnie Rand) had a triple by-pass. She had some post-operative problems, including mini strokes. Her hospital was some 64 miles from their Maine home, but that has changed to a rehab center 8 miles away. I haven't spoken to any of them, but have not heard any bad reports.

Talked to SCOTTY SCHACHTER a short time ago and am sad to relate that his niece Jana was a passenger on the Swissair flight 111 that went down off Nova Scotia. Scotty said that Delta (an air partner to Swissair) couldn't have been nicer. They flew Scotty, his wife Judy, his brother and his wife (the niece's mom and dad)



to Nova Scotia. There was another trip for them to Massachusetts as well as to a memorial service in California, all expense paid. In addition an information center in Nova Scotia was quickly set up, all of which were, Scotty says, very well handled.

Our own FRANK VIERLING spent the summer in Maine. He brought all his computer stuff with him, and spent mucho time at the keyboard. However, while there, the Vierlings celebrated their 50th Anniversary with a party. Daughter Elizabeth and granddaughter, Elena, were there from Tucson, AZ and son Don from NJ (He's the one that takes all the photos at LaMag that wind up in the Newsletter). Frank's brother and wife came in from Damariscotta, ME, with their daughter who lives nearby in Maine. Also a cousin of Lois' that has a summer place on Frye Island in Lake Sebago and five summer couples - totaling 20.

Frank's wife has AD, so they take it a day at a time. Frank takes a before-breakfast swim most mornings, with a lake temp of 78-80 degrees! (Says, "That's my total lake activity, besides looking at it.") The boats and dock are now well tucked away and they are all back in Oradell, New Jersey.

GENE MARTIN & JENNIE are back from their trek to Europe, which included Germany, Austria, and France. I'm waiting to see the photos. This summer, we had a mini, mini lunch. BOB VAN RY, Gene and I coerced SNL director DAVE WILSON to try to get up before noon. This actually happened, and big Davey actually met us at a classy Parsippany diner and had a great reunion. We talked about everything since David's appearance on Ed Herlihy's kiddie TV program to Phil Hymes' pedigree dog-raising experiences. ROBERTA WILSON didn't make the luncheon - and No, she wouldn't have to cook! VAN RY still controls the floor during SNL in 8H for Lorne Michaels. Gene keeps the weeds out of his backyard mini farm and plum trees and we manage occasionally, to get to the IHOP for a brunch. He got into Lucent at the right time, and I

think into Merrill Lynch not at the right time. For me, this summer saw more use of the boat on Lake Hopatcong. Especially, as it turned out, Chris managed to get away from the real estate office by six, and we'd have dinner in our favorite cove, taking a swim before. The main roar of the over-powered boats by then had diminished, and we'd make our way back to the dock in the dark. The entrance to the Marina docks could hardly be seen, so I bought a couple of blinker lights that bike riders use, from Radio Shack and gaffer taped them to the dock entrance, and had my own GPS lead me right to the spot.

Something different for me was that I upgraded my Yamaha music keyboard. This one has more realistic instrument sounds than any others I've tried. I recorded a demo disk for our church organist, who kept saying. "Oh MY! Oh My!" during the playing. Some symphonic, some religious, and a boogie with a pot-pourri of instruments. This week marked my debut at the "Our Savior Lutheran Church", with a short medley of songs, with an orchestral feeling.

For you computer buffs, the Yamaha disks are 3 1/2 inch floppies you use in the A drive — they can be formatted by the computer. Then one records the music in the keyboard to a built-in disk drive. The songs can be copied, erased, put into order of appearance etc. on the PC. Well, enough of that.

Some of you may remember ED LEDDY from the 40's. Ed writes he lives in Brevard, North Carolina, the next town from Hendersonville, where Buffalo Bob lived. "I worked with Bob before Howdy was born, when Bob was on the *radio* back in the dark ages of 30 Rock, in studio 8B or 8C, when he wasn't broadcasting from his home. After Howdy started, I watched the show on the Master Control Room monitors quite often." (Ed was in audio MCR and I at that time worked in Television Master Control. (Guess who TD'd the premiere Howdy Show in 8G, with a bunch of field gear?? and the "Network" inaugurated the GE station in Schenectady





WRGB? - Yep, yours truly) "Bob was a great guy, Ed continues, and I'm sorry to see the old timers go." "After I left NBC in 1958, I worked for GE the next 30 years."

From GARY & DOROTHY IORIO, a note of remembrances. "After talking to Pete, the conversation included friends, now Silent Keys, Bob Smith, then Shari Lewis and Perry Como's wife. This gave us cause to think of the past."

"I TD'd the Shari Lewis Show for many years. (Even started talking like *Lamb Chop*. OK, I wrote that. H) One day during an ON-AIR show, Shari made a remark to the control room. She said, "Gary, the camera lights are jumping from one to another. I don't believe we rehearsed it that way." A voice went over the studio talk back, "Don't blame Gary, I did it." Shari recognized that unmistakable voice. "Is that you Jerry Lewis? Come down and join me." It was a most hilarious show — one of the best Shari ever did, and Jerry reminded her not to blame me for the blinking tally lights. — Oh, oh, I'm smelling a deep aroma of my own macaroni sauce, a nice plate of angel-hair macaroni. Gotta go. — My very best to all. See you at the next get-together. *Gary*

As usual I manage to make an error writing about MILT WYATT. Last issue I mentioned Milt going to visit his daughter in New Hampshire. There is no Milt's daughter there, but he goes there - to visit his granddaughters. Sorry Milt.

Milt did send me a copy of the ugly Howdy before Howdy came out of his face-lift bandages and was running for President (1948).



Remember our wonderful country farmer TD, Hank Bomberger's election slogan? "Howdy Doody

for President and Vivian Ferassi." (Gee a pre Clinton slick Willie.)

IRV MESSING, ace 3B-TODAY SHOW Electric chief. Irv is the President of the Friends of the

Fairlawn (NJ) Book and Paperback sale. Wife Dollie is the maven for this operation, Irv is the Assistant. If anyone out there who have books or paperbacks and wish to donate them, they'd be happy to pick up same if you all are somewhere in the Fairlawn area. Irv also mentioned that he talked to BILL KLAGES in late July. Everything is Super, very little lighting, but much consulting. Regards to all.

DAN GRABEL sent me a note from GLORIA CLINE, signed Schultzie. It was part of a eulogy 12 years ago to a news guy, DREW PHILLIPS, who had died. He was very well liked and his "drinking" pals had a celebration for him, not the usual wake. Here's the Note:

When they said THESE ARE the Good Old Days, whoever "they" were, were WRONG. OURS were the good old days, the days when NBC News was the last to leave the air on election night and the last to leave the Bar to catch the plane to the next Primary. We indeed had a special group of comrades.

Bill Howard sends us greetings and includes two pictures. Bill and Opal suffered through the summer scorchers - he writes August 5th: "We got a break in the weather yesterday, it was only 95!!!!"



BILL HOWARD AT HIS OFFICE DESK IN WESTMINSTER MANOR AUSTIN, TEXAS.

Bill is proud as a Peacock with his collection NBC Logos. Bill collected them wrote the article "NBC Engineering — a fifty year History," published in the *RCA Engineer* in 1977 and



republished in Peacock North in 1996. This displays all Logos that were used by NBC with the first Logo in 1926 just to the left of the framed Logos and the current Logo just to the right. The desk light in the photograph came from Johnny Carson's office when he moved from New York to Burbank. Some of Bill's Certificates are also displayed on the wall.

This display attracted the attention of the University of Texas Engineering Dept., friends and Broadcast Engineers in Austin.

Since retiring Bill has taken up the hobby of photography with a special interest in Texas wild flowers. Some of his pictures grace the wall.

Bitten by the computer bug he spends a lot of his time with his Macintosh Power PC Computer.



#### NBC MOBIL UNIT AT THE ONION CREEK GOLF COURSE AUSTIN, TEXAS

In the 1980's NBC and Liberty Mutual Insurance Company started the *Legions of Golf Tournament* at Onion Creek Golf Course just south of Austin, Texas. That's Bill Howard in his Marshals uniform with Knickers, necktie and all.

An NBC crew and mobile units did the pick-up for several years in Austin. Bill marshaled at these tournaments for six years.

Bill did the cost estimation on these mobile units before his retirement in 1979.

Pete Peterson had a nice conversation with Bill O'Connell (Monitor Radio). Bill lives in Worcester, NY. He dropped out of PN a few

years back and wants to rejoin his old friends. Welcome back, Bill.



Former Peacock North Prexy Vinnie DiPietro has an ever-present reminder of his days spent at NBC. That *Ave of the Americas* sign has been transported to Sherman Oaks, CA where he and Marie live in retirement. □

*See you all next issue. Heino*

#### Florida Retirees Set 1999 Reunion Date

The NBCFR 1999 reunion has been set for April 6 to April 8th.

After 14 years of holding a cocktail party one afternoon and the reunion luncheon the next, we will try a completely different format. Our group will have the privilege of spending 3 days and 2 nights at the elegant "Cape Coral Golf & Tennis Resort" on Florida's West Coast.

First-class rooms, golf and tennis, 2 breakfasts, 2 dinners, 2 cocktail parties, sight seeing trips for the non-golfers, tax and gratuities are all included — all this for under \$ 200 per person. (*A charge of \$10.00 entitles golfers to a cart and 18 holes on their champion course.*)

Arrangements for Limo service to and from the Ft. Myers' airport is available and single room supplements, as well as doubling up in rooms can be arranged.

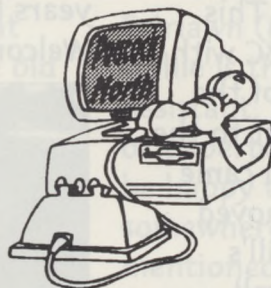
More details, registration forms, and a colorful resort brochure will be forthcoming.

Hope to see many of you there, *Harry Katzman*





## E-MAIL

Addresses  
KEEP IN TOUCH

Arber, Ken  
 Aronson, Richard  
 Asman, Bob  
 Atlas, Howie  
 Balderson, Walter  
 Basil, Peter  
 Berman, Rick  
 Berquist, Bruce  
 Blumenthal, Norman  
 Brotz, Herbert  
 Brown, Leroy  
 Burkhardt, John  
 Caro, Rick  
 Chomsky, Barbara  
 Chomsky, Sidney  
   also at  
 Daniels, Dick  
 Decker, Bob  
 DePietro, Vinny  
 Dichter, Ralph  
 Drier, Bob  
 Farrenkopf, Leo  
 Flynn, Peter  
 Frisn, Gene  
 Gerling, Hank  
 Gilligan, Mike  
 Grabel, Dan  
 Hench, Judy  
   also at  
 Huestis, Hank  
 Higgins, Robert  
 Hochstein, Mort  
 Howard, Bill  
 Hoyle, Bill  
 Jacobs Furey, Marilyn  
 Johnson, Mary Sue  
 Juncosa, Bob  
 Kasoff, Jan  
   also at  
 Katzman, Harry  
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   also at  
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 Merklein, Frank  
 Miller, Bill  
 Miller, Walter  
 Mofsen, Harold  
   also at  
 Nelle, Tony  
 Oxman, Herb  
 Peterson, Pete  
 Polak, Herb  
 Pores, Ed  
 Proner, Arnie  
 Rand, Arnold  
 Ring, Florie  
 Ripp, Heino  
 Roeder, Paul  
 Rogg, Greta  
 Rossi, Ed & Linda  
 Rudick, Stu  
 Salviola, Dom  
 Schachter, Scott  
 Seipt, Ginny  
 Smart, Jim  
 Smith, Al  
 Straub, Herb  
 Sunder, Jim  
 Swicker, Dick  
 Tamburri, "O"  
 Tornabene, Russ  
 Traiger, Aaron  
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A REMINDER - 1999 DUES ARE DUE JANUARY 1, 1999



# Features







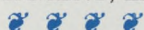
## THE EAR BENDERS

By Dick Dudley

### First a bit of news—

Lillian Hickson, after 29 years is retiring from NBC where she organized the telephone system and nursed and scheduled announcers, ADs and floor managers. I called her our mother hen and will do all I can to get her to come to our next brunch.

*ENJOY YOUR RETIRMENT, LIL - and sleep late.*



Fred Collins and Vic Roby have to eat special diets, Harry Fleeiwood has replaced some of his joints and I am more lame than ever. Arthur Gary and Bill McCord have had a hospital stay but are fit again, except for the slings and arrows of outrageous aging. But then, what would we have to talk about were it not for our maladies? — Here is how our telephone conversations go:

A— I've got a hangnail.

B— I have a bashed finger.

A— I have osteo arthritis.

B— Mine is rheumatic and hurts.

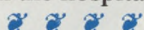
A— My prostate gets me up 3 times a night.

B— I sleep in the bathroom.

(A then delivers the BIG BLOW.)

A— I died two weeks ago and you didn't come to my funeral.

B— Gee, Sorry, I was in the hospital.



Gene Hamilton set me a picture of his desert home in Arizona, obviously snapped from an airplane — the picture not the house. The house is surrounded by cacti and rattle snakes...Mel Brant left his winter place in

Florida in time to miss a hurricane...Roger Tuttle moved to Carolina in time to go through 2, so far; hope his hatches are well battened down.

There is more to mention — Don Pardo has a blister on his thumb from counting his money.

I have become a great TV viewer. All day I glance at CNBC to watch the stock market ebb and flow. My right ear has lost its hearing, but I can hear Chris Matthews, on "Hard Ball" very well. He can always get a job calling trains — or hogs. There are certain commercials that are repeated until they become annoying and the ego ads, (when the officers of the company perform [sic] them) have given me the cryptic ability to tell which ones are nerds and which are crooks. Why don't the men in ads who want you to pay them to tell you how to best the market, use their own advice and become millionaires?

If I should ever become president, God forbid, I would pass a bill to change 30 Rock back to the name, "RCA Building." I would veto laugh tracks, and bring back "Philco Playhouse," New Years Eve and the NBC Symphony. I would balance the budget by taxing ministers who play politics and doctors who spend their time recommending Tylenol.

TV doesn't seem to be growing in excitement — it grabs Princess Di's unfortunate demise and President Clinton's folly and forgets the rest of the world. Sane heads appear giving their pros and cons — what do they know that we don't?

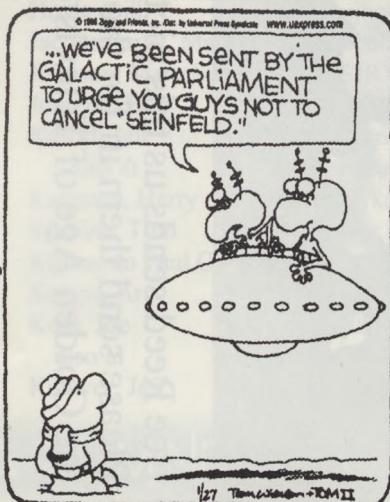
Sometimes TV is so dull that children are doing their homework — unless a baseball record is being broken.

But I will still be watching and taste the vintage of "Meet the Press" and doze in the mornings with the "Today Show."

The only comedy show I watch is the telecast of Congress on C-Span.

Dick Dudley, retired announcer and stamp collector, hangs out in Willow Street, PA.

ZIGGY by Tom Wilson



*Each new day is a gift... That's why it's called the present!...  
...And each tomorrow is another present we haven't unwrapped yet!* Tom Wilson

A DESK IS A WASTEPAPER BASKET WITH DRAWERS.

**If at first you don't succeed, sky diving is not for you.**

There is so much bad in the best of us,  
And so much good in the worst of us,  
That it doesn't behoove any of us,  
To talk about the rest of us!

Annon





## Elmer Gorry Reflects

When I attend the annual luncheon at La Maganette, invariably someone will always say that there is life after

NBC. Well, I would like to mention a little of my life before NBC. (Here's your chance to fast forward because of the boring next few minutes.)

During World War II, I was a teenager. Summer jobs were hard to come by, there were no Golden Arches or Taco Belles' to ease the situation, so because of a devious connection, I got a job as a longshoreman, or as some people would say, "stevedore." It became my Yale Drama School education. The men gathering outside the pier at 8am is called a "shape." Everyday you had to "shape" to get work and there was **no** guarantee. What you saw in "On the Waterfront" was legit as far as the shape was concerned. To "shape," you hung out across the street, and in my case, that was across West Side Highway at Pier 57 at 17th Street, until the dock boss came out at 7:45am and blew the whistle for the shape to form. While waiting for the shape to begin the men were exposed to young college girls handing out the Daily Worker. Needless to say, the young ladies were open to various forms of verbal abuse.

You might wonder why I reminisce about my longshoreman years. Well, I will tell you why. There is a direct correlation between longshoremen and stagehands. If you were left out of a shape, which was an 8-hour workday, there was always a chance, if you decided to pass up a dozen gin mills, that you could go 5 or 6 blocks east, go uptown to the theater district and maybe catch a 4 hour call loading or unloading a Broadway Show. Some longshoremen eventually became stagehands. In fact there was a stagehand in the RCA building by the name of Enrico Caruso who was an ex-longshoreman (I kid you not). Since I am of Irish extraction and Rick, as we called him, was of Italian extraction I used to tease him about the fact that the Irish ran the West Side piers, and had all the cushy jobs. The Italians, if they were hired, on the other hand, worked in the ship's hold.

One day Rick says, "Let me tell you a story about the smart Irish and their cushy jobs on deck." It seems that on this one day, this Irish guy cups his hands around his mouth and yells down to me, (I'm in #3 hatch and lower hold) he say, "Hey, how many guys youse got down there?" And I cupping my hands around my mouth yells up to him, "Tree." And he yells down to me, (after cupping his mouth) and says, "Send half of them up!"

Moving on, many of you might remember Irv Gitlin, documentary producer. Irv wanted to do a story on the NY waterfront. I was assigned with a writer/segment producer who happened to be from the Mid West. A meeting was scheduled with the ILA Union president on a typical workday at an early hour to insure the union president was available for any hiring problems that might arise at 8 am.

Anyway, it was agreed that the focus of the story would be on a colorful character by the name of Tom Barkley. The writer/producer (I forget his name) and I went down to Pier 57 where Barkley was a Hi Lo driver. We stood on the fringe of the "shape" watching the goings on. At the end of the "shape" the dock boss, whose name was Brother Devers, said, "That's all," and started to walk back onto the pier. So I yelled, "Hey brother, where's Barkie?" and without even turning around he yells over his shoulder, "Where the hell's Judge Crater?" I turned to the writer and said, "Did you catch the quick come back?" I said you can expect a lot of that, because longshoremen are basically very hip and funny. He turns to me and says, "Who's Judge Crater?" (Moral: Don't let Mid-West writer do stories on NYC's waterfront!)

Forgive me, I digress. Dan Grabel had a column in the last issue — Whatever Became of .. *Part 2*. In the column he mentions many nostalgic items including one that wondered whatever became of the Dugan bakery home deliveryman. That's me, Dan. I got promoted from longshoreman to a Dugan man. My route was a low to middle income housing project in Queens. The year was 1951 and my years as a longshoreman were behind me. This was a new adventure. In those days a one-pound loaf of bread cost 17 cents. However, every Wednesday we were to "push" a jellyroll cake the size of a pound of butter for 65 cents. In this project people just didn't enjoy this kind of luxury. Wanting to impress my new employers, I tried my ingenuity, better known as BS. I would run up to the garden apartment and ring the doorbell. The woman of the household would answer the door (and if it was in the morning, chances are she was still in her nightgown). Since I had to put the basket down, she would have to bend over in her nightgown. Some of the drivers considered this the "perks" of the job. I for one considered it an obstruction to my daily rounds or sometimes a double obstruction as it were! She would invariably ask, "What do you have today Dugan man?" (it was the same everyday, except Wednesday's) and I would say, "You can have anything you want, except the jelly roll." She wanted to know why she couldn't have the jellyroll. I explained that it was a special order for her upstairs neighbor. That was it. Now she wanted it in the worst way. I reluctantly sold it to her with the proviso that from now on she had to order it in advance, and secondly and more important, don't tell your upstairs neighbor!

After a year of donuts and jellyrolls, a friend of mine got me a job in the NBC mailroom. After 3 years in the mailroom, I was promoted to office boy in the Unit Managers department. Another year went by before I was promoted to Unit Manager. Since I was still going to college at night, it was very apropos that I was assigned to a show that could enhance my studies. The show was "Ding Doug School" with Dr. Francis Horwich, a delightful lady. □

*Elmer Gorry, retired Unit Manager lives in Freeport, NY with his wife, Helen.*



# getting a lot off my mind and chest & other matters.

by Joe Mehan

I don't know if I could prove it or not but it seems to me that the kind of spirit and closeness that makes *Peacock North* such a wonderful success now won't be possible in years to come.

Everyone concedes that local TV and radio are the sleaze champs of the media world. Wherever you go, whether in Dubuque, Iowa or Conway, New Hampshire it is the same: murder, rape, fire, sick stuff.

A local TV anchor guy wrote recently in one of the important media journals that his nightly newscast was so filled with garbage that he had to take a shower afterwards to begin to feel clean again.

On the other hand, the enthusiasm that greets every issue of our Newsletter and the spillover, always-growing turnout for our lunches aren't just an accident. These can only grow from a mutual feeling of respect, from a certainty that what we did together was legitimate and important, and that there was some national purpose other than making money in our joint efforts. (In fact, the nets didn't make money, as we know; they lost it in large handfuls.)

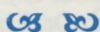
The values and the standards we had back then are complete strangers to young people going into TV and radio today. Since the game has become entirely the showing of a profit, no matter what the atrociousness of the material, there isn't time for the dedicated effort to produce programming which was beneficial to the audience and gratifying to the people who put it together. I can't believe there is the camaraderie that there was in the old days because the stories are so disgusting, so one-dimensional, that it is the old "slam, bam, thank you, ma'm", and on to the next one.

I have a hunch that those who work in TV and radio now, on both the local and network level and in cable, are not terribly happy with what they are doing. If that's the case, they're not going to be very anxious to join or form a group like *Peacock North* because why bring back unpleasant memories?

What, for instance, would they talk about?

"Hey, remember that great murder we had on a year ago?"

"Yeah, complete chopping up of the body, terrific!"  
Somehow, that doesn't strike me as the kind of material around which you build a reunion.



About those relationships we formed in our active years. They were not the same as normal or ordinary people experience in their business offices or at places where you merely make a living. We were extraordinarily lucky

because the activity we were engaged in together was something intense, demanding, exciting and had a very important purpose. Networks were a towering force in America from the 1950's through the 1980's and anyone who played a role in this action then however large or small, was part of an indispensable, crucial process — making an informed American democracy work effectively.

That's why this country and our society are in so much trouble today. Americans are among the poorest-informed populations in the world. And yet we have the most sophisticated, advanced and expensive media technology anywhere. It doesn't do much good, however, if this technology is used primarily to cover the latest stabbing on the block, the most sensational violence and trash you can lay your hands on.

The waste and the loss are staggering. Neil Postman wrote a book called "Amusing Ourselves to Death" and he wasn't kidding. He was referring, of course, to the Americans who watch TV a world-high total of six to seven hours a day. With that much pollution in their minds, it is no wonder that opinions and preferences are so messed up. We all have our ongoing friends and contacts from the 30 Rock days. I'd like to mention two of mine because they are very important to me but they also probably correspond to ones you have.



*John Rich and Joe Mehan at last summer's annual reunion at Hannaford Cove, Cape Elizabeth, Maine where Joe grew up and, after a half-century detour on behalf of NBC, now lives again in retirement.*

The first is John Rich, NBC's longtime overseas correspondent, best remembered for his decades in Tokyo, but who was reporting to the network from many other places before then. The particular circumstances of our friendship began when we were filming a documentary in 1966 in Hawaii and later Japan (and also all around the globe) on the 25th anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Over maitais one night in Honolulu, John said: "Hey, I have two cottages on Cape Elizabeth, Maine and we only use one of them. Want to use the other?"



Well, that began a 30-year annual trek to Maine. My kids think of those years, and the Rich family, as among the happiest times of their growing-up period. The kids have gone away now but my wife and I continue the annual pilgrimages, enhanced because John and Dee are also retired and there are the wonderful grandchildren to enjoy.



*John Rich, the ever-ready Grandpa  
with Peg Mehan*

If it weren't for our NBC News connection, the relationship could never be.

The second one is my friendship with, Frank DeFelitta, the very much beloved "Mr. D." I don't know anyone who ever worked with Frank who didn't love the guy.

Everyone learned from Frank. He was not a newspaper or wire service-trained person. Frank came from The Movies, Hollywood, so that he was very different in how he approached filming. His documentaries were always gorgeous, and doing them, he used techniques and approaches that were entirely new to all of us who came up through more conventional channels.

Frank did documentaries that were off the beaten path — things like

hunting ghosts in "The Stately Ghosts of England," with the great Margaret Rutherford as his jolly on-camera pursuer. E.J. Marshall, another great actor,



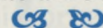
*Frank & Dorothy DeFelitta and Joe & Peg Mehan, at Franks' home in Los Angeles.*

narrating his "American Art" shows.

But there were also the gutsy, down to earth "Mississippi; A Self Portrait," which had ordinary people in that state telling their feelings about race; "Emergency Room," done with Shad Northshield, gripping and dramatic; and "The World of The Teenagers," one of the documentaries I was fortunate enough to work on with Frank.

We, too, have had a friendship now of more than 30 years, thanks also to NBC News. Frank lives out in Los Angeles but he and Dorothy come here or Peg and I go there fairly regularly, but not regularly enough.

Frank, not incidentally, wrote novels after he left NBC, only 15 of them, including the highly successful "Audrey Rose" which was made into a movie.



Lastly, a thought that has dwelled in my mind for several years now.

The creative geniuses who have made the *Peacock North Newsletter* such a smashing success did not have their credits at NBC read "Writer" or "Producer."

Those editorial types are supposed to be the ones who turn out the irresistible reading matter and gorgeously designed and executed publication that we have.

The PN staff will never take the credit for themselves that they so richly deserve. They dove into strange waters and came up champions. It is an incredible and remarkable accomplishment.

I would not have been surprised a while ago to see the headline:

### **PETE PETERSON REPLACES TINA BROWN AS EDITOR OF THE NEW YORKER**

Well, Si Newhouse passed up a good deal when he didn't make that move. But we are very lucky and thankful that he didn't. □

*Joe Mehan (retired news writer) & wife, Peg,  
live in Stamford, Connecticut.*

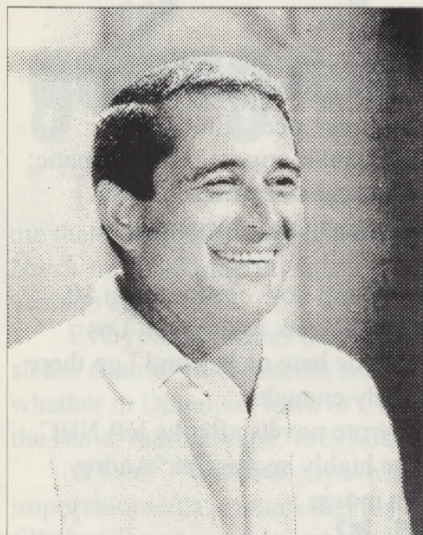
## **Mini Lunch in West Palm Beach**

**February 12, 1998**

*Joe Bacierto, Joe Maietta, Hank Gerling, Howie Atlas, Sid Chomsky, Chris Sanis and Dom Salviola.*  
(Pix from Hank Gerling via Howie Atlas.)







*I want to thank the cast and crew and other personnel that helped put the show on in CUBA, who loaned their own photos to CHARLIE TESSER, who, with AL CAMOIN put together an album from whence these pictures came. Heino*

# Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall

## Entertains in Guantanamo

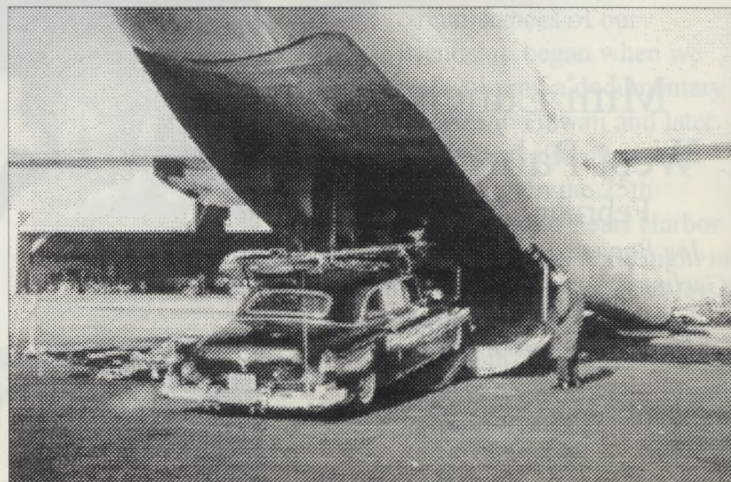


A group of our Engineering crew along with Jim Fox, Unit Manager, arrived at a remote location at "Idlewild" airport (now JFK) on a damp foggy morning. This C-133 Air Force Cargo plane didn't arrive 'til almost noon-ish. Seeing a TV Mobile Unit, Caddie "Flash Unit", over 20 people, plus Air Force men, 2 full size mike booms, some 20 hampers filled with thousands of pounds of TV gear, plus umpteen pounds of jet fuel, many were doubtful that this would ever fit into this plane, No less get into the air! They were almost right.

Once the huge rear door was lowered to become a ramp, the Caddie Mobile Unit went in. Next some equipment hampers. Jerry Caruso crawled under the Caddie to chain down its axles so it wouldn't shift. So far, so good!



The chief, Perry, the Missus and the rest of the entourage traveled in style on TWA.







Now, since the Caddie went in OK, The next item drove towards the plane, here surrounded by more hampers yet to go in. Notice all the crowd trying to keep warm.



By this time, the "Load Master" had electric winches in position, to drag the Mobile Unit into the Giant plane. As you can see, the clearance was very close. Lowering the nose wheel and other hydraulic miracles let us proceed.



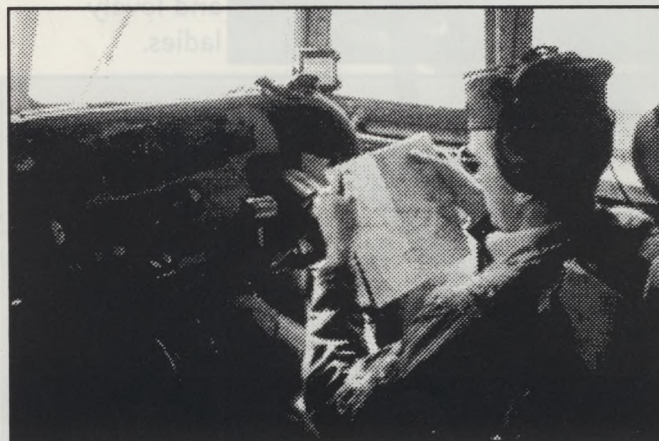
As it proceeds inward, the ramp forced the top to rise. The bulkheads that supported the airframe were in the shape of an upside-down "U", and the TV Unit's Box was square. Can't put a square peg into a round hole! Hours later into the night, one found a weary gang sawing off - yes we sawed off

the top left and right part of the Mobile Unit's roof and letting some air out of the tires till it finally was safely tied down in the plane, with only inches to spare under the hydraulic lines which control the flight rudder, elevators, etc. Also most of us were almost deaf by now, for the planes electric supply which came from a roaring jet engine that ran the generator and screeched all night.

The loading ramp was raised up, closing the plane's fuselage. Inside they installed some 20 crude chairs on its floor facing forward.

As the plane crept forward for takeoff, everyone thought that our life was over, cause it went ever so slowly. Finally just before we ran out of runway, we were airborne. We flew rather low - under 20,000 ft and occasionally we'd peek out wishing we had larger windows.

As we approached Cuba, I listened in to the intercom, where I could hear the pilot's transmissions. There were dialogue like: COPILOT: "Do you know where the hell we are?" PILOT: "No, I've never been here. Is that Cuba down there? Call Guanto Tower and see if they see us on Radar" The

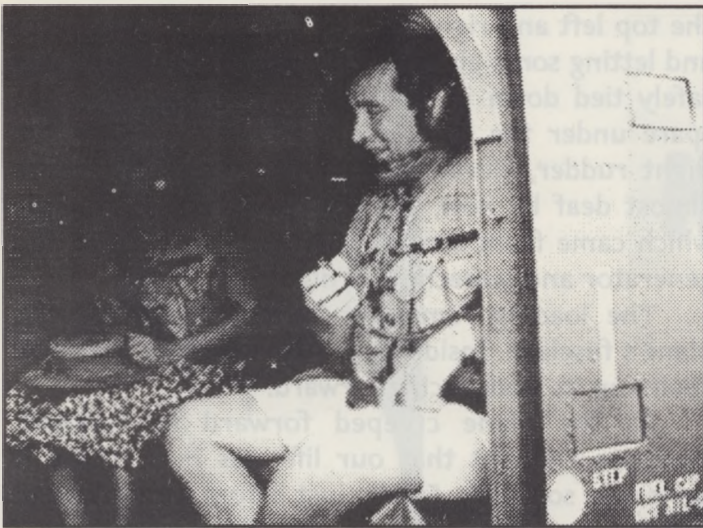


Copilot (shown above, a gentleman of the ripe old age of 23 years) called. The tower asked them to describe what they could see. Copilot did that. Tower responded, "You guys are 40 miles into Cuban territory. Make a 180 over the ocean - and so it went. We soon came to our airfield, landed with fighter planes lining the runway. When we finally got to turn around to taxi, I noticed that this end of the runway had about 100 feet or so left before there was a giant drop to the water.

Getting the gear out of the plane was another adventure, leading us into the night. I was given a phone number if we needed transportation. That turned out to be a Navy Lieut. with a helicopter.



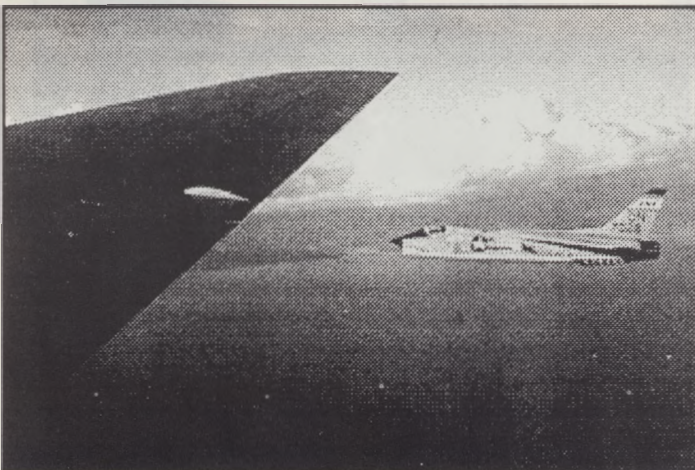




Yes, even Mr. C. enjoyed the chopper rides. (I think).



Of course leave it to Carmine Picioccio (L) and Charlie Tesser (C) to find food, wine and lovely ladies.



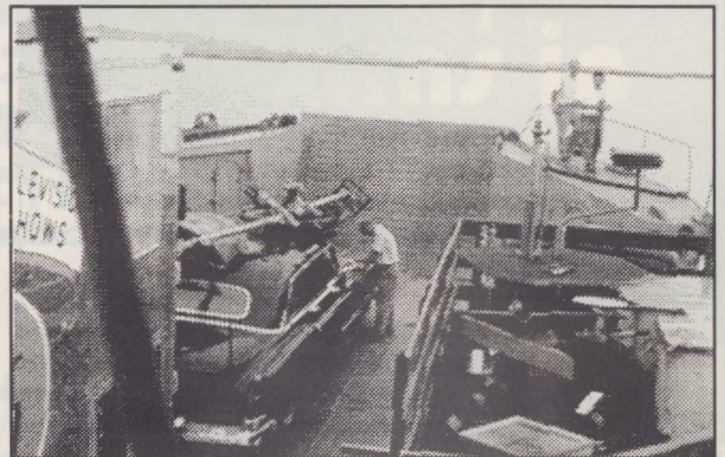
To make sure that there was no hanky panky from Carmine and Charlie, and in case Fidel and his pals got raucous and out of hand, the Navy (or Air Force) sent aloft one of these to each side of the TWA airliner with live ammunition. Nice to have friends in high places!

Now back to the story: Myself and some others were billeted in the transient pilot's area. I was led to a lower bunk in a dark room. Glad my night vision was OK. I put my suitcase under the bunk. Never unpacked anything. Never saw the person sleeping above me. To find my bed, I counted steps.

There was quite a bit of logistics involved. In order to get back and forth between the performing and sleeping area, we had to cross some water.



The Cast, above, all went First Class.



- - but then again, so did the technical equipment.

And while all this was going on, and while the TV gear was being set up, Mr. C. and the entire cast went touring the base performing for the Sailors and Marines.



Ah! A field for a theater and the troupers performing for the troopers. All delighted to have the Como group perform. Many of these guys spent days & nights in underground bunkers while Fidel's armed troops kept their vigil a short distance away.

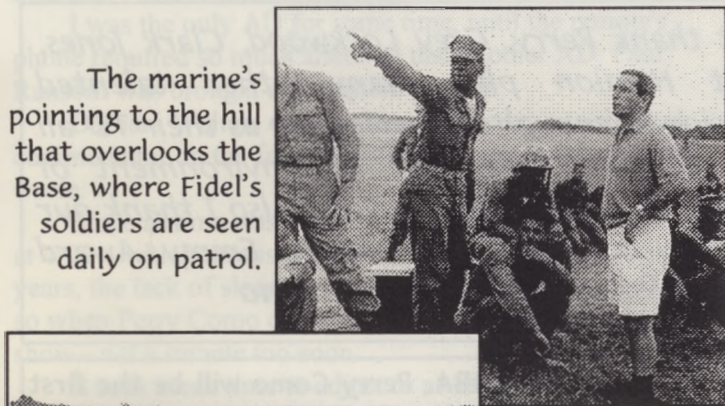




The guys and gals were having a great time - ever dance with high heels on a dirt road?



Senor Wences giving the guys a few laughs. Giu lik? Eye Lik! - Saw-rite?



The marine's pointing to the hill that overlooks the Base, where Fidel's soldiers are seen daily on patrol.



Perry with Mitch Ayres (R. Frame) schmoozing with the Marines.



Perry and the cast were shown everything.

Yes, everything! Here Mitch is descending into the bowels of a submarine.

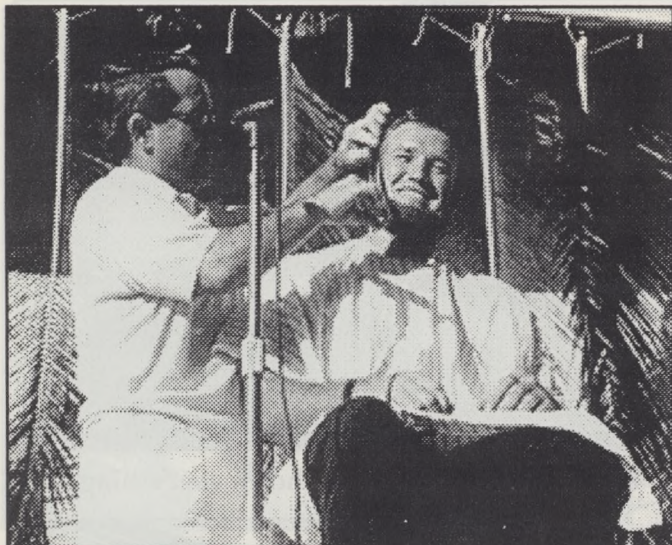


Al Camoin on the center camera platform looking to find where last night went!

Ray Charles, our choral director, in the white shorts, checking for his wallet after visiting the sub. The sailor at right looks as if he's doing an Irish jig. Say Ray, give him a wun-anna-two-anna...







Dorothy Collins of Hit Parade fame performed in the hot December sunshine.

Perry reverting back to his old trade, clipping a serviceman from the audience. - And Perry didn't even charge him. Should have seen the line that formed for a clipping!



Choir lady Jinx, being chased by a gorilla while dancing with the sailors.



This chopper carried the pilot, cameraman Gene Martin, microwave panner Al Camoin, and transmitter/video engineer, PN's Frank Vierling, and lots of equipment for some aerial shots. Frank asked the pilot to hover. Pilot said, "Hover hell, I'm having trouble just keeping the darned thing in the air!" Como shoo'd it away - too noisy.

#### THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES!

Wrong theme, but right thoughts.

This is Jinx, a Ray Charles Choir lady. Also our "Color Test Pattern" gal we used to match the color in the cameras. The last Como Show was in Brooklyn.

Hope these photos bring back nice memories.



*I can't thank Perry, Grey Lockwood, Clark Jones, Dwight Hemion plus many other talented professionals enough for having me as their TD all those enjoyable years, in an environment of delight every day I came to work! Also I thank our tech crew for all their superb Emmy Award winning efforts. Bless you all. Heino*

Kay Gardella wrote in her Daily News column: COMO FLIES TO CUBA. Perry Como will be the first entertainer to fly to Guantanamo Naval Base, Cuba to entertain the U.S. Navy and Marine personnel stationed at the base, NBC announced yesterday. - - - He's scheduled to leave Dec. 4, accompanied by members of his TV troupe. With him will be: Dorothy Collins, Ray Charles and his singers, the Peter Gennaro Dancers, announcer Frank Gallop, Mitchell Ayres and his orchestra plus technical personnel.

His appearance is in answer to a request made by Defense Secretary McNamara to the USO. They'll tape the Dec 12 telecast with a GI's audience. (And the question is - What year was that?)





*Lillian Russo, way back when.*

## Lillian Recalls

My first introduction to TV was on the HOWDY DOODY show. It was a wonderful show for children, expertly Produced by Roger Muir and Directed by Bob Rippen. I enjoyed working with

them, and found it a pleasant, happy and educational intro into the TV world.

From Howdy I went on to BROADWAY OPEN HOUSE, a completely different show in content, with the beautiful voluptuous Dagmar and the quick witted impish Jerry Lester.

When BOH went off the air, we were assigned to a show that was conceived by Pat Weaver. It was to be a magazine type, with news, weather special guests, remotes, and commercials that could be fed to both coasts. The Producer was Mort Werner; Dave Garroway was host; Jack Lescoulie, sports; Jim Fleming, News; Estelle Parsons' weather; Jac Hein Director; Lillian Russo, AD. We were to broadcast for three hours live — from 7 to 10AM. The first two hours fed the East Coast and the second and third to the West Coast.

There was much anticipation and excitement as we all started pre-production work on the 28th floor of the RKO building, for approximately 9 months. In the meantime as ideas were being worked out and discussed, the "powers that be" were looking for an appropriate name for the show. One day I sort of said "while we're looking for a name we'll just refer to it as the Today show, temporarily. Needless to say by the time we went on the air, the name stuck.

They also brought in an alternate director, Mike Seamier. Mike and Jac alternated hours on the air.

I was the only AD for some time, until the remote's phone required so much attention that another AD, Paul Ransom was brought in to handle that job.

Barbara Walters came in shortly after as a writer and commentator on the fashion shows and also produced and wrote.

Since airtime was 7:00am, we all had to report to work at 4:00 — which means waking up at 2:30. After a couple of years, the lack of sleep was beginning to show on all of us — so when Perry Como came to NBC I was assigned to his show — not a minute too soon.

It took some time to adjust to awakening with the daylight. More than once I would wake up and cry out, "My God the show is on the air!"

One week on "Frontiers of Faith" we were doing the Catholic series with Monsignor Dougherty of Seton Hall. After one of the rehearsals, Director Martin Hoade gave me some notes to give to the Monsignor. As I looked into the studio from the control room, I saw him leaving the studio.

In my haste to stop him, so that I wouldn't have to chase after him to the dressing room, I hit the PA switch and said, "Monsignor, honey, don't go away I have some notes for you." Ralph Douglas, the Stage Manager cracked up. He thought it was so funny, he spread it all over the building.

One of my vivid memories was a medical show we were doing from St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx. It was an experimental procedure to relieve the symptoms of Parkinson's. The doctor was a Dr. Cooper, and the patient was a 60 year-old man.

The surgery was to drill a hole in the man's skull, insert a long needle called a "canula" to an exact spot in the brain, through which some form of nitrogen was fed to freeze that portion of the affected brain, which would stop the tremors. During this harrowing procedure, X-rays were taken several times and adjustments made accordingly. Dr. Cooper would, ask the patient to squeeze his hand to see the results.

Several times it was determined that the canula probe being used was defective. It was withdrawn and another painstakingly inserted.

The patient who was on a local anesthetic and aware of all that was going on started to yell, "Get me out of here, I've had enough."

This experience was a very fascinating one for me; I was not unfamiliar with doing surgery on cats, etc. during my science courses, however some of my colleagues in the Engineering crew were getting green around the gills. I felt sorry for them. □

Retired AD, Lillian Russo, writes to us from Port Washington, New York.



*On the "Watch Mr. Wizard" set, Director, Marvin Einhorn, child actress, Don Herber &, Lillian Russo.*



*Lillian & Vic Gerson in the film area and (left) Lillian & Hugh McDermott at the Waldorf setup for the Pope's visit in 1965.*



## KEN'S

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by  
Ken Arber

## ALICE FAYE

Los Angeles - Alice Faye, whose lilting songs, blond beauty and sunny personality brightened 20th Century Fox Musicals of the 1930s and the 1940s, died of cancer. She was 83 years old.

Ms. Faye died at Eisenhower Medical Center in the Desert Community of Rancho Mirage. Her daughters, Alice Regan and Phyllis Harris were at her bedside when she died.

During World War II pinup-beauty Betty Grabel became the favorite of studio boss, Darryl Zanuck, and Ms. Faye retired from films.

She remained active in Radio, starring with her bandleader husband on the successful Alice Faye - Phil Harris Show.

I had the pleasure of working on her show in the late 40s, doing audio on a radio show that came from radio Studio 8G. 8G was a lot different then from the way it was when I retired almost 25 years ago.

The back of the studio faced south or where the corridor that passes the present dressing rooms of Studio 8H, and the audio control room for was in the back of the audience. The audience seats were upholstered, and the stage backed up to a wall next to the freight elevator.

At this time, as I remember it, NBC had installed what was called a "Glass Curtain" on the stage to isolate audience noise from the radio microphones.

The glass curtain consisted of several large panes of heavy glass on rollers fitted into tracks, similar to what we have now in our homes. These panes fit into pockets on either side of the stage. A button in the control room, operated by the engineer, would open or close the glass curtain. They would be open during the rehearsals and closed during program airtime.

The audience, for one reason or another disliked them,

and eventually they were discarded.

On one of the Alice Faye shows, her guest was a very popular entertainer, by the name of Rudy Valley. The audience was thrilled when they saw him, but I felt they were disappointed when the glass curtains closed. I knew the audience felt eliminated from the personal contact they had when the curtains were open.

I might add a humorous note (it could have been tragic) to this story. I recall the day Jim Coleman was on his hands and knees cleaning the glass curtain tracks. Jim was a former electrician under Frank Heitman - the chief electrician. Jim asked to have the curtains closed a little. Suddenly the right and left curtains started to close on his head.

He frantically waved to the person controlling the curtain to stop and reverse the system. Happy to say Jim was not injured.

Jim later became a very good radio engineer for many years.

(Alice Faye material from an AP obituary.)

## FRANK SINATRA - OLD BLUE EYES.

I was sorry to learn that Frank Sinatra had passed away on May 13th. from a heart attack.

I always considered him a neighbor because we both were residents of New Jersey, he of Hoboken and I of Bogota.

I once had the opportunity to meet Frank in person while I was working at NBC in Radio City. I would like to recount my memory of that occasion.

I first came to learn about Frank, when he started his career at the Rustic Cabin, near Englewood, NJ. It was a place where young people gathered. The Rustic Cabin had entertainment, good food that appealed to the crowd, and of course, Frank Sinatra was often singing there.

I recently learned that Hank's Folkert's brother Bill had been there with his wife Anne, in those days and she asked for and received an autograph from Frank, which she still has.

I was present at the Paramount Theatre many times before the war, and saw the crowds of screaming young girls waiting to get see the Sinatra Show.

During the war and after, it was always the same.

While I was at the psychological warfare radio station in Algeria, we would often pick up a radio signal from one of the New York radio stations and feed it to the troop's entertainment radio station run by Andre Baruch in Algiers. We would listen in our studio as well. When Sinatra sang, all the girls, American, English and some French would respond the same way the girls did outside the Paramount.

When I returned to NBC after the war, I once again was in radio, and assigned to different shows by Paul Gallant.



Paul asked what I did during my time in the war. I told him I did the same things I had done at NBC, except I also learned how to play records. Of course this was something that none of us did while working for NBC, except to play transcriptions, which were acetate on aluminum or glass backed discs.

After landing in North Africa, as psychological warfare station operators, our captain, Andre Baruch, changed the station over from Psychological to troop entertainment, and we obtained many records to play. Consequently I learned how to cue records, as they did in the radio stations in the states. My teacher was a fellow army buddy, Howard Ialberg, who had been working at local stations in the New York State area, WOLF and WAGE.

Paul Gallant was happy to have an engineer who was familiar with playing records, and assigned me to a famous record disc jockey named Robert Q. Lewis. (*Believe it or not, I recently saw him on TV after all these years.*) We are now getting close to my meeting Frank Sinatra.

Around this time, Martin Block, the top-notch disc jockey, was working at WNEW on Fifth Avenue around 44street. He was also producing the Chesterfield Supper Club on NBC that featured Perry Como. To do his radio show he needed to be near studio 6A, where the Supper Club originated. NBC provided him with a small room, known as



Ken at the turntables.

the Green Room, where he had a couple of phone lines, the WNEW broadcasting equipment, room for his WNEW engineer and his producer. The radio show was called the "Make-believe

Ballroom."

Martin was made aware that he would not be allowed to play his own records, as he had been doing at WNEW. The NBC engineer's union contract stipulated that only NABET engineers played records.

It goes without saying that Martin Block was very unhappy with this arrangement.

When I was assigned to play the records, I knew that whatever I did, he would not be satisfied. I told him I would do my best, and if he was not satisfied, he could ask for another engineer; he could keep doing this, and NBC would keep sending new engineers, but under no circumstance, would the union permit him to play his own records. He agreed, and it went well with no complaints. I worked the show for almost two years, when I asked Paul Gallant if I

could get off the show and go back to being an engineer on regular radio shows.

Early on in Como's Supper Club stint, he became ill, and unable to perform. Frank Sinatra volunteered to do the show for Perry. It was a gracious thing for Frank to do.

A few days after this, Frank came into our little studio, and Martin Block introduced him to us, and at that time Martin thanked him for helping out on the show, and presented him with a beautiful pocket watch, which had some unique features.

Martin went out to the studio, and Frank sat there shooting the breeze with us. He came over to me and said I should look at the watch that Martin had just given him. I did and congratulated him on what a great gift it was. It had two regular hands, like a normal watch, but also had three other hands. Each time the winding stem was pushed down one of the three hands would stop. By doing this it was possible to time the win, place and show horses in a race. It was a real beauty for some one who went to the racetracks.

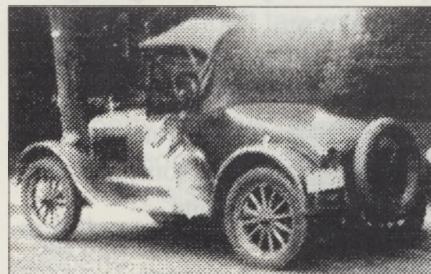
Little did Frank know that Martin let me look at it a couple of hours before Frank came in, and I think I fooled Frank by being surprised when he handed it to me. At that time, I turned the watch over and saw that the back of the watch was inscribed "To Frank - from MB." I asked Martin did the MB stand for Martin Block or did it stand for Make-believe Ballroom. His response was, "Let him figure that out."

Frank was a pleasure to meet and get to know, and like so many others, I feel we have lost a real friendly guy.

### CARS

This is remembering all the different makes of automobiles over my 87 years, and photos of my first and second cars, a Ford and a Chevrolet.

I would like to describe what my first car, a Ford Model "T" roadster looked like, and how it operated. The car was a 1927 Ford that I bought used in 1929 for the magnificent price of \$65.00. That was a large sum for me, considering I would be only graduating from Bogota High School in 1930.



My first car.

The car, or roadster, was a snazzy vehicle to my eyes. It had natural wood wheel spokes that were varnished. There were side curtains and glass wind deflectors on each side of the windshield. A type of

chrome like plated radiator had a motor-meter for reading the water temperature of the cooling system, and there was an inside gasoline gauge that resembled the water



glass in a home furnace. This could be done because the gasoline tank was located under the hood, in front of the windshield.

There was no electric starter; it was necessary to crank the engine with a hand crank that was part of the car. When the car was started, the crank handle would disengage from the engine, and hang there for the next start of the engine.

To assist in the starting of this four-cylinder engine, a long thin wire attached to the carburetor extended through the radiator core. This enabled you to adjust the amount of air entering the carburetor, thereby forming a combustion mixture of air and gasoline to enter the cylinders.

Inside of the car there were three pedals on the floor, as well as two levers mounted on the steering wheel column, one was the gas throttle and the other the spark control.

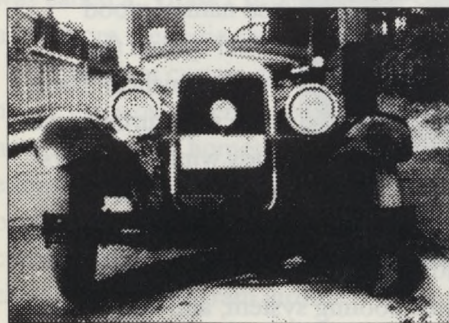
The left pedal was the clutch, the middle pedal was the reverse pedal, and the right hand pedal was the foot brake, this arrangement was known as a planetary drive system. These three pedals were connected to bands that look like the brake bands we know on the wheels of today's cars, and as foot pressure was exerted on the pedals they clamped on drums that were rotating. If I remember correctly, the rear wheels turned together, forward or backward, not like today's cars that have a differential between the two drive wheels.

After starting the engine, the left foot would be depressed, and the car would move forward, after it moved you would let the pedal come up, and the car would be moving at full speed, depending how the gas lever on the steering wheel was advanced.

To stop the car one would press the left pedal halfway down, to disengage the engine from the transmission, and the right pedal would be depressed, which would brake the car to a stop. Remember that there were no brake bands or pads on the two back wheels.

To reverse the car the left pedal together with the middle pedal would be depressed and by advancing the gas throttle the car would move in reverse.

Sorry that my description of the Ford Model "T" is so long, but it might come in handy, should any of you "Old timers" run across one in some antique museum.



*My second car.*

My second car was a 1928 Chevrolet two door sedan that was ULTRA modern, what with a self-

starter, stick shift, and foot operated gas pedal. These advances came fast, but no balloon tires yet.

### *A LIST OF THE MANY NAMES OF CARS I REMEMBER:*

- #1 Ajax
- #2 Atlas made by Nash
- #3 Auburn made by E.I. Cord
- #4 Cole made by Hudson Cole (president name).
- #5 Crosley
- #6 Dart
- #7 Durant
- #8 Star made by Durant
- #9 Essex made by Hudson
- #10 Diane
- #11 Moon made both Diane & Moon - first color cars.
- #12 Franklin air cooled engine
- #13 Graham Paige
- #14 Ford made Mavric, Lincoln, Mercury, Edsel and Models T, A, and B
- #15 Chevrolet made by General Motors
- #16 Cadillac
- #17 Chrysler.
- #18 Dodge
- #19 DeSoto
- #20 Plymouth the above four built by Chrysler
- #21 Terraplane, built by Hudson
- #22 Hupmobile
- #23 Rickenbacker named for America's WWI ace.
- #24 Stutts Bearcat
- #25 Stearns Knight sleeve valve engine
- #26 Willys Knight sleeve valve engine.
- #27 Kaiser - two models
- #28 Veile
- #29 Maxwell, Jack Benny's car.
- #30 Packard General Eisenhower had the Patrician model in North Africa.
- #31 Javelin made by American Motors
- #32 Stanley Steamer
- #33 Studebaker famous for the Golden Hawk
- #34 Jeep made by Willys after the war
- #35 Oldsmobile by GM.
- #36 Pontiac by GM

*What ever became of so many words that were so popular awhile back?*

*Knee Action, Dynaflo, Free wheeling, Fluid Drive, Rumble Seat, Electric Shift and Slant Engine.*

**IRAQ BOMBED.**

*(From an AP story in the Palm Beach Post, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>.)*

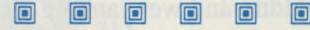
- News rehearsal of Iraqi bombing transmitted.
- To the best of CBS's knowledge Dan Rather rehearsing



officials were red-faced Friday after a practice news report about a US bombing of Iraq was inadvertently transmitted to television stations by satellite.

- A technician at a West Virginia station was stunned when he was checking satellite transmissions and found CBS anchor Dan Rather describing the aircraft used in a bombing run on Baghdad.
- "It looked like a real broadcast of what was going on," said Bill McClure, master control operator at WTAP-TV in Parkersburg, W. Virginia, an NBC affiliate. WTAP officials hurriedly called The Associated Press to check if Iraq had been attacked. It had not.
- Dan Rather and CBS correspondent David Martin in Washington were practicing in case US led forces bombed Iraq and the network is called upon to deliver a special report, spokeswoman Kerri Weitzberg said.
- The network planned to use a fiber optic link that would ensure the test report would only be seen in New York and Washington newsrooms. But for 20 minutes, it was mistakenly sent to a satellite where it could be picked up by anybody with special receiving equipment - usually only at television stations.

- "CBS received a handful of phone calls from people confused by the transmission," Weitzberg said.
- Back in 1938, a radio transmission of the H.G Wells novel, THE WAR OF WORLDS, about an invasion of Earth by Creatures from other planets, set off a brief panic in the New York area by people who thought it was a live news report.



In my over 40 years at NBC in both Radio and Television, I never heard of the company rehearsing any thing like the above. Maybe in the higher echelon at NBC it might have been discussed, but if so it never leaked down to the troops.

It reminded me of the expression, "What if you started a war and no one came?"

CBS seems to be in a quandary with its operation. It was absorbed by Westinghouse, it is letting Tom Snyder go, is hiring Howard Stern, and hired Bryant Gumbel - now and unknown quantity. □

*Ken writes to us from Boynton Beach, Florida where he and wife Jaye live in retirement.*

## Are NBC & CBS on the Sales Block?



*By Dan Grabel, rewriting Jon Elsen of the NYPost*

**I**t came as a shock to me and others I've spoken with, but could NBC actually up for sale by GE? Writer Jon Elsen wrote a piece in July in the NYPost, quoting nobody. He didn't even bother to say there were anonymous sources, trade sources, insiders — the usual stuff you get in these stories.

Elsen wrote that "NBC is finally acknowledging that the numbers are not in favor of the nets anymore." That conflicts with information we have that NBC's sales department expects next season's income to be about the same as this year. And the

NBC claim that with the US population up, the size of the network audience has not shrunk. Also, the lavish pay increases given to some of the news department stars. If the net is hurting, wouldn't it be more parsimonious?

Elsen wrote that GE has talked with USA Networks — the most likely buyer, he says — about a merger but nothing materialized. Barry Diller is the big matcher at USA but Edgar Bronfman of Seagram and Universal owns 45 percent of USA and he has veto power.

Elsen says GE's price tag for NBC is \$20-billion.

Other likely suitors — Viacom and Liberty Media. He says talks are underway with them. Sounds strange. You don't talk with two prospects at the same time, do you?

Next, Elsen speculated that John Malone of the Liberty Network could buy NBC and create an instant media empire.

He also worked up a case for CBS to sell itself and then declared it was not such a desirable property.

It is summer folks, dog days, as we write this. If you're a columnist, you gotta put out a column. □

# 1999 dues are due January 1.



**Buffalo Bob Smith,** Howdy Doody creator. Buffalo Bob, who never punched a cow, and got his nickname from his home town of Buffalo, New York, died of cancer in Flat Rock, NC, where he was living in retirement, in July at age 80.

Bob Smith and his puppet were institutions in America's kid culture and were among the first great successes in television entertainment. While Smith's tv triumph ran from 1947 to 1960, he survived because the kids who grew up on a diet of Howdy Doody time, never wanted the charisma to depart from their memories after they became adults.

It was the first daily shows NBC produced in color and the first to have live music. Like the Milton Berle Texaco Star theatre, in the early days people who did



not own tv sets gathered in the streets outside tv shops to watch the show.

Smith was working as a disc jockey for NBC's WEAf, New York, when he created the idea of a half-hour afternoon kids' show with a live audience of 3 to 8 year olds. The audience was part of the show, singing the opening number with gusto. Howdy, the puppet, wasn't that much of a talker. All the conversations between Bob and Howdy were pre-recorded, with professional puppeteers working the ever-smiling, freckled face dummy.

Eddie Kean was the show's writer, and Bob Keeshan, later Capt. Kangaroo on CBS, was the first ever-silent Clarabell the Clown. (DG)

(PNers: Did you work with Buffalo Bob? Send us your anecdotes and personal photos which we'll use in next issue).

**Shari Lewis**, who was part of television and the entertainment world for half a century, died at age 64 in July, just 6 weeks after she became aware of and began treatment for uterine cancer. The realization that Shari Lewis was an American treasure becomes apparent when listing her accomplishments: 12 Emmy Awards, a Peabody, The Kennedy Center Award for Excellence & Creativity, 60 books for children, recordings, film strips, 24 home videos, wrote one episode for Star Trek (along with husband Jeremy Tarcher), performed in Las Vegas lounges, roadshow editions of Broadway hits including "Damn Yankees," "Funny Girl" and "Bye, Bye, Birdie," a weekly Sunday night show on British tv for eight years ('68-'76), and on-again, off-again on the tube here for 50 years!

Back in 1952 she won first prize on Arthur Godfrey's "Talent Scouts" tv show, did a guest spot on "Captain Kangaroo" in '57 and almost immediately landed her own show on NBC. PBS, which resurrected her show in 1980, also gave her another series last January, "The Charley Horse Music Pizza," which she was in the midst of taping when she died.

The most famous

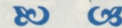


Lamb Chop & Shari.

prop of the ventriloquist/puppeteer was "Lamb Chop."

She developed her skills at the High School of Music and Art, the School of American Ballet, acting at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and even attendance at Columbia University. On several occasions she conducted symphony orchestras in the U.S, Canada and Japan.

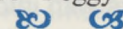
Shari once said, "I never play teacher. I never play parent. I play older playmate." (DG)



**Maureen O'Sullivan**, Actress. Ms. O'Sullivan, whose seven children included actress Mia Farrow, died in June at age 87. The Irish-born beauty starred as Jane in a string of Tarzan films. Her career included some 65 films, 7 principal New York stage appearances, and Television as a "Today Girl" in 1964, the TV movie "The Crooked Hearts" and "The Great Houdinis."

Her more prestigious films included "Anna Karenina," "Cardinal Richelieu," "Pride and Prejudice," and "The Big Clock," directed by her husband John Farrow.

She appeared along with daughter Mia in Woody Allen's 1985 "Hannah and Her Sisters," playing the mother of her daughter's character. Two notable late film appearances were: "Never Too Late" (a role she originated on stage), 1965, and in 1986 "Peggy Sue Got Married."



**Joe Dixon**, jazz musician, played with some of the greatest bands of his era during a 50-year-career, died in May at his home in Oceanside. He was 81.

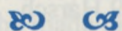
By age 8 he was playing the clarinet and performing at 12. By 21 he had played on more than 100 recordings.



He joined Tommy Dorsey's Orchestra in 1936 and later played with Bunny Berigan and briefly with Fred Waring's Pennsylvanians.

While in the Navy during WWII he played with Eddie Condon's band and after the war in Condon's Manhattan nightclub.

In 1977, Dixon became director of jazz studies at Adelphi University. He directed the Nassau County Jazz Festival and organized the Nassau Neophonic Youth Band. He also played with the CBS staff band and the NBC Orchestra.



**Jack Haskell**, 79, singer and TV Announcer died on October 3 at the Actors Fund Nursing Home in Englewood, NJ.

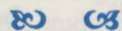
His TV career spanned some 30 years. He was the easygoing sidekick on "Dave Garroway at Large," a Chicago TV show and moved to New York when Garroway hosted the original "Today" show.

He also worked with Jack Paar, substituting for the announcer Hugh Downs on occasion, and was a guest and subbed for Ed McMahon on Johnny Carson's "Tonight." His credits also included "The Ed Sullivan Show," "The Mike Douglas Show," "The Bell Telephone Hour," "The Garry Moore Show" and NBC's "Monitor."

Jack put himself through college by working at radio stations in Chicago while attending Northwestern University. After graduation he served as a navy pilot in the Pacific during World War II.

Jack was also a singer, performing with bands in the Chicago area during his college years, and after graduation he sang with Doris Day and the Les Brown Orchestra. He also performed in summer stock musicals such as "The Pajama Game" and "Brigadoon," and in supper clubs like the Cotillion Room of the Pierre Hotel in New York. He appeared on Broadway in 1962 in the Irving Berlin musical, "Mr. President," starring Nanette Fabray.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, and a son, Thomas, both of Darien, CT, and a granddaughter.



**Henry Saperstein**, Producer, died in June of cancer at age 80. He was the producer of such beloved television shows as "Ding Dong School," "Mister Magoo," "Dick Tracy," and "The Gerald McBoing Boing Show."

He produced films including Woody Allen's 1966 debut feature, "What's Up, Tiger Lily?" In partnership with Toho of Japan, he produced several science-fiction films, including "Godzilla," with Raymond Burr. He was a consultant for the current "Godzilla" film.



**Roy Rogers**, 86, cowboy star, died July 7 of congestive heart failure at his home in Apple Valley, California.

Born Leonard Franklin Slye in Ohio, the family moved to California in 1930 and worked as migrant fruit

pickers. Roy entertained the workers at evening campfires on the guitar and eventually performed with western bands. By 1934 he had gained radio



popularity as lead singer with "The Sons of the Pioneers" and recorded their theme song, "Tumbling Tumbleweeds."

He took the name Roy Rogers in 1937 and signed with Republic Pictures where he made 87 films. With his cantankerous sidekick, George "Gabby" Hayes

he triumphed over scores of evil villains. He rode a palomino named Trigger, (formerly Golden Cloud, ridden by Olivia deHavilland in "Robin Hood." He was quick to sing a song, never started a fight, never lost one, and never kissed a woman.

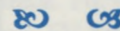
Roy got his big break when Republic was having a contract dispute with Gene Autry. Gene announced he was quitting films just as they were ready to shoot his new picture. Roy was cast in Gene's lead and the title changed to "Under Western Stars." It received rave reviews and was the first "B Western" ever to be shown on Broadway.

Dale Evans joined Roy in 1944 in the first of their 35 Republic films — "The Cowboy and the Senorita." They were married in 1947. (Trigger was always billed above Dale in their pictures.)

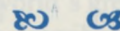
When their film careers faded in the 50's they had radio and television programs. "The Roy Rogers Show" ran on NBC television from 1951 to 1957. In 1962 they hosted "The Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Show," a TV variety show on ABC and co-hosted several Kraft Music Hall shows on NBC-TV from 1967 to 1971.

Roy made his last movie, "Mackintosh and T.J." in 1975. He did the film because it was good family fun. Openly critical of the violence and explicit sexual scenes in contemporary western films, he commented, "Today, there are some movies I wouldn't take Trigger to see."

*Edited from an AP story.*



**Mark Harrington**, tv executive. Harrington died at 51 in June after a long bout with cancer. He was VP and general manager of MSNBC, having been there since the cable operation was launched in 1996. Prior to joining NBC, he spent two decades at CBS News as London Bureau Chief and as senior producer for the "Evening News." (DG)



**Alan Shepard**, astronaut, led the U.S. into manned space flight and premiered a series of spectacular telecasts of NASA's "Man In Space Program." He died July 21 in a



California hospital from leukemia. He was 74.

On May 5, 1961 the nation and the world watched his history-making launch on live television. Atop a Redstone rocket Allen lay on his back in the cramped capsule for over four hours while Mission Control checked and rechecked flight data and solved system "glitches."

Impatient to speed up his flight countdown, Allen quipped, "Why don't you fix your little problem and light this candle." It was finally lit and Friendship 7 was boosted into sub-orbital flight for a total of 15 minutes.

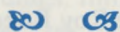
One of the seven original legendary astronauts selected for the Mercury program, he was the first American in space and the fifth human to walk on the moon in the Apollo 14 mission — January 31, 1971.

His flight and those that followed spawned a new generation of scientists, astronauts and space dreamers.

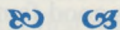
Shepard was weightless for only 45 seconds. Looking through his periscope at the world below he exclaimed, "What a beautiful view!"

When he finally reached the moon almost 10 years later, he said he wept at the sight of the fragile planet Earth seen from the surface of the moon.

His wife, Louise, two daughters, and six grandchildren survive him.

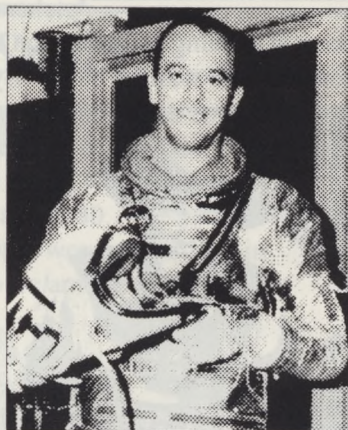


**Louise Shepard**, Allen Shepard's widow suffered a heart attack August 25th on a flight from San Francisco to her home in Monterey. She was returning from a visit with a daughter in Colorado. It was just a month after Allen's death.



**Martin Stone**, 83, "Howdy Doody" producer. A broadcasting exec and resident of Pound Ridge, NY, died while attending a grandchild's graduation in Washington, DC.

In the 1940s and '50s he produced "Howdy Doody," and "Author Meets the Critic." In the '60s he helped establish local radio stations in the metro area and he was an entertainment industry lawyer whose clients included Howard Cossell, Merv Griffin, and Gabby Hayes. (DG)



*Freedom 7 astronaut Shepard.*



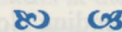
*Martin Stone*

**Joseph C. Harsch**, Newsman. The

NYTimes described Joe as "dashing." He was certainly predictive prolific, and peripatetic. Harsch, who died at age 93, in June, had the knack of being on the scene when a story occurred. He worked for the Christian Science Monitor for 59 years as reporter, columnist and editorial writer, and concurrently for NBC from 1949 for many years, and also for CBS and ABC.

He was in Washington during the '30s Depression. In 1939 Harsch was in London when Prime Minister Chamberlain declared war on Germany. He was in Berlin in the days before the US entered the war. In 1941 he was in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He was in Australia when Gen. MacArthur declared, "I shall return." (to the Philippines, in case you've forgotten). Back in wartime Europe, he was on the scene when the British captured Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, in a castle bathroom and Joe acted as translator.

Harsch was a newlywed when he died, having married his long time editorial assistant only weeks before his death. (DG)

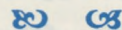


**Robert Young**, died while recovering from heart surgery. He was 91. He was the understanding sage and perfect father in "Father Knows Best" and compassionate doctor with the perfect bedside manner in "Marcus Welby, M.D." "Father Knows Best" ran from 1954 to 1963 on CBS, NBC, and ABC. It was a role he originated on NBC radio.

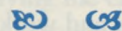
He gave his last fatherly advice in the 1959-60 season.

Reruns aired in prime time for another three years. "Marcus Welby, M.D." ran from 1969 to 1976. Bob won two Emmys for "Father Knows Best" and a third for "Marcus Welby."

Prior to television he had a prolific film career. His movie co-stars included Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Myrna Loy, Katharine Hepburn, Greer Garson, Norma Shearer, and Jean Harlow.



**George Neumann**, NBC NY Film Technical Director passed away on July 5th. He was 80 and was living in New Milford, Connecticut. He is survived by his wife Harriet.



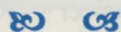
*Joseph C. Harsch*



*Bob on the "FK'sB" set.*



**Paul Klein**, programmer. Klein, who died suddenly at age 69, came to NBC in 1961 as VP of audience measurement and later went into programming. He worked for NBC from 1961 to '69, and again from '76 to '79. He pioneered the concepts of pay tv, and pay-per-view. (DG)



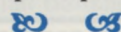
**Don Dunphy**, a Hall of Fame announcer was for decades the voice of boxing on NBC radio and later ABC tv, died in July following heart surgery. He was 90.

He broadcast almost every major sport in a career of more than 50 years, but he made his name in boxing. He got his radio job winning an audition conducted by Gillette, the NBC sponsor. Would-be announcers were taped calling the Gus Lesnevich-Anton Christoforidis light-heavyweight title fight. In his book, "Don Dunphy at Ringside," he joked he got the job because he was the only one who could pronounce the fighters' names.

The Louis-Conn fight his first championship fight (June 1941) and the first of Gillette's NBC weekly boxing series that ran into 1960 and included fights featuring Rocky Marciano, Jersey Joe Wolcott, Sugar Ray Robinson, Rocky Graziano, and Tony Zale. Beginning in 1960, the fights moved to ABC, with Dunphy providing the tv voice.

Dunphy appeared in six movies including the 1981 Academy Award-winner "Raging Bull."

Don is survived by his wife of 56 years, Muriel, and two sons, Don Jr., a vice president with ABC News, and Bob, an independent TV sports producer and director.

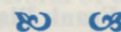


**J. Clifton Stieglbauer**, scenic artist. Cliff passed away on June 2 at the age of 80 in Fort Myers, Florida.

During WWII he was an aerial reconnaissance photographer in the Air Force. He returned to Terre Haute, Ill. and married Alyce 50 years ago.

Cliff came to NBC in 1949 as a scenic artist and worked on the Hallmark, Kraft and news shows among others. He became Manager of Design, Art and Scenic Services. He worked with the engineers on coordinating the original color testing in the studios. Cliff was instrumental in the design and execution of General Sarnoff's famous lectern and traveled with the General to various shareholder meetings.

Cliff was dedicated to his work and his employees. The scenic designers, costume designers, graphic artists, prop men and construction crews and his office personnel salute him. (Gloria Settle)



**E.G. Marshall**, actor. Marshall, who died at his Mt. Kisco, NY home in late August at age 84 once said, "I've only been unemployed when I wanted to be." Few actors could make that statement. But Marshall, who first trod the boards in the 1930s, was still playing selected roles when he died. Movies, theatre, tv — he worked frequently in all of them,

and appeared in major shows for 6 decades. Movies: House on 92nd St., 13 Rue Madeleine, 12 Angry Men, Caine Mutiny and last year, Absolute Power.

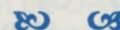
Broadway: The Iceman Cometh, Skin of Our Teeth, Goddot, The Crucible, The Little Foxes. TV: He had appeared in 400 tv shows before he was cast in "The Defenders," from 1961 to 65. It was his biggest success. He did Kraft Theatre, Hallmark, Playhouse 90, Philco Playhouse and the important role of Dr. David Craig in NBC's "The New Doctors," from 1969 to 1973.

Born in Owatonna, Minnesota, he considered studying for the Episcopal ministry when he decided he was really an agnostic.

And those initials, E.G., caused some wonderment for years. Marshall sometimes used the name Everett. While his Norwegian parents named him Edda Gunnar Marshall, he decided life would be easier using just E.G. And that's what he did. (DG)

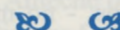


*E.G. as Dr. Craig.*

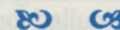


**Bob McAllister**, TV host of the popular "Wonderama" show died in July, he was 63.

On a trip to New York in 1953 to honor his high school graduation, Bob slipped out of his hotel to stand outside the "Today" show window with his ventriloquist dummy. Dave Garroway was so impressed he summoned Bob into the studio. Dave got Bob a spot on Ted Mack's "Amateur Hour," which he won.



**Robert Waring**, Engineering, passed away August 16 suddenly from a heart attack. He was in his middle 70's. For many years Bob was a TV Field Technical Director before moving into 30 Rock where he worked in TV Master Control as a Group 6. He is survived by his wife, Celia, and two sons.



**Wanda Toscanini Horowitz**. The woman who was the daughter of one of the world's great conductors, and also the wife of a musician once described as the greatest pianist of all time, died in her NY home in late August. Wanda Horowitz was 90. She met Vladimir Horowitz in Milan





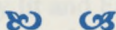
when he gave his first solo performance with Toscanini in 1933. They married soon after.

While most remember him as an enormously successful and talented performer, Horowitz suffered the musician's equivalent of "writer's block" from 1953 to 1965 and refused to play the piano. Wanda sold their impressionist paintings to keep them afloat. His greatness came later.

Mrs. Horowitz was closely involved in the pianist's career, in the same manner that her mother was the important adviser to Toscanini. She once said, "My father made me neurotic and my husband made me crazy." (DG)



**Walter Himmelberg, Jr.**, son of PNER Walter (Engineering) and Anita Himmelberg was killed in September in a Jeep accident in Colorado. He was 41.



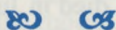
**Anne Taffe**, widow of PNER Ed Taffe, Engineering, died in late September. Anne will be remembered as one of the greeters at many of the Florida Retiree luncheons.



**Ron Mitchell**, Engineering, suddenly of a heart attack this past summer. Ron started his NBC career in TV Field operations and retired from Studio Ops.



**Ted Seiter**, Engineering. Ted's wife Rose informs us of Ted's death on October 20. Ted was a Ham (W2FJH) and a top-notch supervisor in Electronic Maintenance in NY.



### Stage, screen, radio and television

lost a number of other luminaries since our last edition:

**Gene Autry**, 91, the original singing cowboy made 91 films and off the screen he was a shrewd businessman. For many years he was listed as one of the richest men in America. It was Will Rogers who encouraged Gene to try his luck in radio. **Win Elliot**, 83, announcer — Rangers hockey, boxing, horse racing and quiz shows. **Roddy McDowall**, 70, after years cast as a juvenile, gained major roles in such films as "Cleopatra," "The Longest Day," "Planet of the Apes" and "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and played a year on Broadway in the musical "Camelot." **Hugh Reilly**, 82, father in the "Lassie" series and many other tv roles including "Playhouse 90." **Penny Edwards**, 70, appeared in 68 motion pictures and over 500 television programs, among them "Wagon Train," "Bonanza," "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" and "Perry Mason." **Jeanette Nolan**, 70, remembered for her roles in television series such as "Laredo," "Gunsmoke," "The Virginian" and "Wagon Train." **John Holliman**, 49, newsman - covered '91 Baghdad attack for CNN - in a car crash — **Bob Dixon**, 87, announcer and TV Cowboy on CBS. **Tony Marvin**, 86, announcer, best known as Arthur Godfrey's "sidekick." **Joan Hickson**, 92, played Agatha Christie's Miss Marple on BBC TV and seen in the US on PBS stations. □

*We extend our sympathy and condolences to the families of our departed friends and coworkers.*

## by Don Gracia **Pink Ghetto**

A writer for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel did a roundup about women in the big jobs in tv and came away with the feeling that there aren't enough of them up there in the biggest jobs and they are not visible enough in the cream on-camera assignments. One could dispute some of the points by reporter **Catherine Fitzpatrick**.

Some of her conclusions: - no major network has ever appointed a woman as president of the news division. - CBS Board of Directors: 10 men, one woman - At CNN, which, she writes, has a good record, there are 66 vice presidential spots and women hold only 23 - In 1970, NBC had only 5 women among its 56 correspondents, and ABC had only 2 women among its 42 correspondents. - Today, women hold 30 percent of the correspondents jobs - Enrollment in the mass communication programs today at American colleges average 60 percent female. And then she pulled out a 1971 quote from **Reuven Frank** — "Audiences are less prepared to accept news from a woman's voice than from a man's." "I think the news business is no different than any other part of our culture and my view of it goes back half a century when, sure, you only saw a few women in the newsroom at the NY Daily News editorial room and certainly none in the printing or delivery operations. But it was the same in business all over America."

Slowly, with the feminist movement and two-job couples, America changed and so did the news business, with more and more women coming into writing and production jobs - probably more in news and administration than in engineering.

I recall **Beth** and **Melody** in EJ, **Louise Malcolm** in transcriptions, **Helen Marmor** in News, **Catherine Falconer** and **Cappy Petrasch** in Monitor, **Pauline Frederick** at the UN, **Doris Ann**, the religious show producer, that documentary producer **Lucy Jarvis**, who generally wore a hat around the studio, and produced some extraordinary shows from Russia, **Jo Moring** who stepped from Monitor Radio to become Vice president in charge of "A" News. And they soon had their "old girls network."

I'll bet if you took a head count today at NBC, you'd see the job distribution was pretty even. Fortunately, I think there's no way anyone can dispute that conclusion, so, I'm safe!

Male-ists (that's the opposite of feminists) could argue that men have steadily been losing jobs in broadcasting. When I worked on "Today" in the 1950s, the show had **Dave Garroway**, **Jack Lescoulie**, **Frank Blair** and **J. Fred Muggs** in the important chairs. Now? The three men are down to just one, **Matt Lauer**, and the chimp is probably unemployed and holed up at some zoo looking at people all day!

Finally, Ms. Fitzpatrick claims that the lady correspondents are caught in a "pink ghetto" — they're not visible enough! I look at the tube and disagree.

What do you think? □



# Power football

by Don Ellis

*"Walk this way, folks,"* I announced to the small band of tourists as we entered the elevator on the mezzanine level. It was the beginning of another of the regular "behind-the-scenes" tours offered daily at NBC back in the 1950's. We would stop in the viewing room above one of the third floor radio studios and turn on the speaker to listen to comedians Bob & Ray in rehearsal for their show, or if the timing was right, catch sight of the actors and sound effects engineer "on-the-air" with a soap opera. Our view of television then came from the 9th floor viewing window into studio 8G. Rhoda Mann and other puppeteers for Howdy Doody and the gang operated from a platform just below the window. Beyond the lights and wires we could see the cameras and crew in action. Between tours I would flirt with Jeanine Dykstra, one of the guidettes in our Guest Relations group. We shared cucumber sandwiches for lunch and after work 15-cent beers in Hurley's. Television was black and white. Lenses were flipped, not zoomed. The network didn't connect stations beyond the Midwest. Jean and I dated by going to the Hit Parade to watch Snooky Lanson and Dorothy Collins or maybe take in The Big Show in the Center Theatre with Talullah Bankhead and a cast of stars. Kate Smith was urging the moon to come over the mountain and we had dinners at Horn & Hardarts Restaurants. This entailed putting money into a slot and opening a window to free up a sandwich or slice of pie for your meal. Jean was promoted to the ticket office working for Jim Gaines and later moved into client billing. I was promoted to clerk for Rita Young and Vince Mitchell in the operations department scheduling office. When Fred Rawlings hired me as a Broadcast Coordinator, it was the break of a lifetime for it eventually led me to assignments as an AD on sports events among other programs.

Little did I know on December 28, 1958 while standing in the broadcast cage working (and attending) my first National Football League Championship Game, that the game - along with two others I would later help cover would become pivotal in changing the landscape of sports on television forever. Neither did I imagine the potential for disaster that lurked in the world of television coverage of events.

Lindsey Nelson and Red Grange were broadcasting from an overhanging cage somewhere above the Yankee bullpen in the stadium that Ruth built. It was not built for football but that was where the championship between the Eastern Conference New York Giants and the Western Conference Baltimore Colts were playing the game. The

temperature was cold and the wind drove that point home. I stood behind the announcers handing them cards with cues and other needed information. The Giants' players struggled to take a lead on a Pat Summerall field goal only to lose it by the strong play of Colt quarterback Johnny Unitas and receiver Raymond Berry plus the running of their fullback, Alan "The Horse" Ameche. In the fourth quarter Chuck Conerly, Giant quarterback hit Frank Gifford for a TD to make it 17 to 14 Giants. With two minutes to go Unitas moved the ball to the 13 yard line and with seven seconds remaining Steve Myhra booted a field goal to tie the game sending it into the first "sudden-death" overtime in NFL Championship game history.

This is when the power went out! Fans climbed out of the stands to get onto the field closer to the action. Several used our television power cable to help lower themselves, disconnecting the source of electricity in the process. Everything shut down, mobile unit, cameras, microphones and monitors. Members of the crew pushed their way through the throngs to get to the power box. Our sideline coordinator, Stan Rotkewicz, grabbed the Referee and explained the situation to him. The announcers flashed concerned looks at me as we waited along with the 64,185 fans in the stands and the anxious players along the sidelines. A dog dashed onto the field. The officials chased after it. I was rooting for the dog. Some folks later accused Rocky of sending the dog into action. Imagine the first sudden death overtime in NFL Championship History and the television audience may not see the ending? Producer Perry Smith and Director Harry Coyle were in the truck, expressing, shall we say, some concern. At last, the picture started rolling on the monitor, we had power back. Play began on the field and at eight minutes and 15 seconds into the overtime period Alan Ameche punched his way into the end zone for a 23-17 Baltimore Colt victory in what was called the "greatest game ever played." The power of television and sports reached a new level with NBC's telecast. The following year the American Football League was born and 10 years into the future, for NBC television and that new league, there would be another visit by the gremlin of television during another football game featuring the New York Jets and the Oakland Raiders. An event etched in history as the "Heidi game." But that is another story. □

*Don and Lois Ellis retired to Osterville, Massachusetts.*

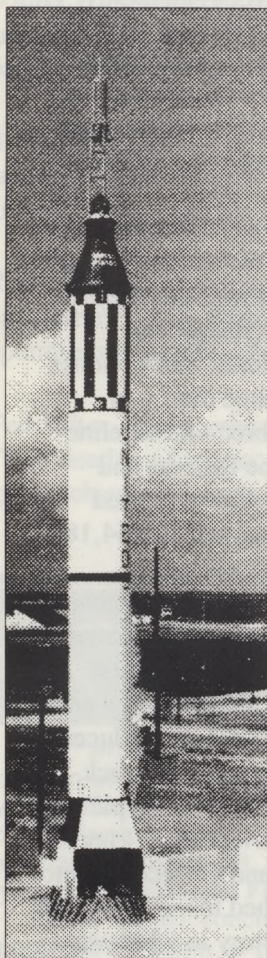


# Fading Mercury Memories

by Frank Vierling

**The** recent death of Allen Shepard stirred up a few recollections. Through the haze some fading and a few more recent memories came to the surfaced.

When NBC made the decision to cover the "Man Shoots" from Cape Canaveral there were many decision to be made. One apparently was to do it at the lowest possible cost. Well in advance of Shepard's inaugural man-in-space flight, two old disreputable looking tractor trainers were delivered to our tv mobile unit garage in Long Island City.



*Freedom 7 liftoff.*

Warren Phillips was the manager in charge of the engineering end of the project. Clay Ackerson, Dave Hubby, Ed Proctor, and I made up the design and construction crew, with Clay our leader. Ed and Dave were primarily concerned with the design of the video side and Clay and I designed and built the audio portion. In the course of our work we often crossed into each other's territory.

One trailer was turned into a control room, Stoddard Dentz was the TD for the Shepard launch and the audio duties fell to Phil Falcone. The second unit, the transmission trailer, housed the equipment necessary for not only NBC's unilateral operation but also the distribution of pool audio and video to all comers, both radio and tv. To that end, a small house trailer was

also equipped with distribution equipment and manned on the air by Freddy Fervent.

When I mentioned, inexpensively as possible, I meant that no equipment was to be purchased for the project. Even petty cash purchases were strictly held in check, and Warren Phillips was not noted for doing that.

Radio City's discarded equipment came out of Lew West's storage and was pressed back into service. Equipment racks were bolted to the trailer floor and tube powered stab-amplifiers, distribution amps, sync generators and all the



*President Kennedy presents NASA's Distinguished Service Medal to Shepard after Freedom 7's flight at a White House ceremony.*

other adjuncts needed were mounted in place. (This was the beginning of the transistor era, but the only transistor equipment we had was a few audio amplifiers and the control room switcher borrowed from another project.)

We fabricated hundred of interconnecting

cables to join the equipment into a working system. A giant cables harness connected the control room to the equipment trailer. The units were parked side-by-side with a bridge connection to their side doors. At the Cape a tent covered the two units to shield them from the hot sun and ease the air conditioning load.

When we arrived at the Cape, we found the trailers in place near the original Mission Control. NASA gave us a short introduction to the Cape facilities and then our work began connecting to NASA's audio and video distribution. Other NY engineers joined us to set cameras and all the other preparations needed for air day. Tension and anticipation mounted as we looked forward to the history-making event.

We were quite envious of our CBS counterparts. Their equipment was shiny new and all transistorized. Ours was nearing antique status. But it was reliable and did work. One air day we had an emergency visit from CBS. They were in desperate need of a stab-amp (used to stabilize jittery pictures). We checked out one of our spare "boat anchors" and sent them off with an instruction manual. I don't think they got it to work because later someone overheard them telling their supervisor, "Those NBC guys must be real engineers to get that (expletive deleted) junk to work."

NASA security was tight. We were transported between our motel and the base by Air Force bus. ID badges were individually checked each time we traveled. No travel on the base was allowed without a NASA escort. No photographs were allowed.

Several times there were timeouts to watch a test launch. One spectacular event was an aborted launch and destruction



of the missile just off the pad. The explosion was awesome. Then, thousands of feet in the sky a parachute opened and the test capsule came floating to earth. It had been ejected from the missile a split second before the explosion.

There was anticipation and great excitement as launch day approached. What an historic event to be a part of. I had an added interest because one of the seven astronauts, Wally Schirra, came from my hometown of Oradell, NJ. He was two years ahead of me in school, but we had been Boy Scouts together.

The launch went without a hitch. Our only problem was with the mike to pick up the blastoff sound. A mocking bird perched on it — it wouldn't get off and wouldn't stop singing.

Glenn's flight is notable for two reasons. First — on launch days we had midnight calls and for many nights we shaped up in the motel lobby only to find the launch had been scrubbed due to bad weather. It rained for days. The second notable event was that I wasn't there the day Glenn took off on February 20, 1962. I had returned home for the birth of our son, Donald. Don was born the day before Glenn lifted off. *(Donald is known to the La Maganette luncheon goers as PN's roving photographer.)* Frank Magee announced his birth to the world the day of Glenn's orbiting flight.

On another trip to the Cape I had the pleasure, quite by accident, of meeting Wally Schirra over a coffee shop breakfast and reminiscing about our hometown days.

Another lasting memory is the Carpenter flight when he missed the landing target area by many miles and was out of contact with all the tracking stations and rescue ships. There was high tension and a real fear that he might be lost. The incessant plea to make radio contact with him brought that fear home to those of us who had the facility to monitor those urgent calls.

Of note to stamp collectors, *(take note, Dick Dudley)*, the Oradell post office cancelled a stamped envelope in honor of Schirra's orbiting flight. Later during Carpenter's orbit I was able to have five of the seven astronauts autograph that envelop. The two missing astronauts were Carpenter (then in orbit) and Cooper who was off at a tracking station.

Following Glenn's flight, Jim Smart and I were atop the Capital building in Washington with microwave equipment covering Glenn's parade and then on to his hometown of New Concord, Ohio, where his neighbors honored him with another parade. I couldn't get my schedule arranged to be at home when Oradell honored Schirra with a great homecoming celebration.

About two years ago Walter Schirra was the guest speaker at the Aviation Hall of Fame 24th Annual Awards Dinner honoring air pioneers into the Teterboro, NJ, Air Museum. I had the pleasure of attending that

event. As I was parked my car, I wondered if I would have a chance of meeting with him just as he pulled up and parked next to me.

In his speech he told several stories about his early life and space experiences. I repeat two — one that displays his playful adventurous self (he was his school class practical joker), and the other his response to an often-asked question about his space travels.

Oradell's elementary school had a fine manual training program in which Wally built a kayak. A park separated Wally from the Hackensack River, Oradell, but is off limits to adventurous boys. In the dark of night, Wally would go down to the river and make enough noise and commotion that residents on the far side would call the police. By the time they arrived on the scene, Wally was back at home — waiting. Knowing Wally had a boat, the police would go to his house and ask him to take his kayak and investigate. And thus, Wally would get police sanction to boat on the river! In response to the question — "What was the most beautiful sight in your orbital flight?" — Wally responds, "The sight of the parachutes opening behind me that would safely lower me to earth and splash-down."

The day following his dinner speech, Wally came to Oradell for the unveiling of a plaque in his honor to be displayed in Schirra Park — just up the street from where he grew up and near the river. □



Wally and plaque in Schirra Park.



The original 7 - Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, John Glenn, Virgil Grissom, Walter Schirra, Allan Shepard and Donald Slayton. All but Slayton rode into space within 26 months. Slayton was grounded with erratic heart beats. It was 14 years before he made it into orbit, Mission 58, 15 July 1975..



# THE WRONG APPROACH

## THE NBC/RCA COLOR VIDEO TAPE RECORDER-PLAYBACK SYSTEM

by Ray Lafferty

In the archives in a complex of buildings once known as the RCA Princeton Laboratories, later as the Sarnoff Laboratories, and now by another name which is unknown to me, there may be several racks of electronic apparatus which comprised the first color video recording equipment. It was well built with care and precision, but unfortunately it didn't meet the requirements of a workable system for TV broadcasting.

The development and construction of this equipment at RCA was under the direction of Dr. Harry F. Olson, and supervised by William Houghton. The system was delivered to NBC in 1956 and installed in room 579. I was asked (told) to get it in shape for a demo broadcast son as practicable. Arnold Proner was assigned to assist me with the project.

The video data was imparted directly to the tape in much the same manner as it was for audio, with two major exceptions; the air gap in the recording/playback head, and the tape speed. The tape speed was 200 inches/second, or 1000 feet/minute. The reel held 10000 feet of tape -- enough for a ten-minute recording.

Because constant speed was essential, the sides of the tape reel, which were in place for rewinding the tape, were removed for playback to avoid air turbulence. This left 10,000 feet of about 3500 layers of unprotected tape resting layer upon layer, rotating at approximately 360 rpm, held in place only by the whim of some TV god.

Arnold and I recorded color programs from the West Coast almost every afternoon and played it back to a crowd of one or two NBC/RCA brass the following morning. Our time to try to improve the quality of the images we were producing was after the morning viewing and before the

afternoon recording. Obviously, not much was accomplished; nor would it have been had we more time. It was just the wrong approach. A few years later Ampex showed the way with rotating heads and 2-inch wide tape.

Nevertheless, NBC had to put up or shut up and a spot on the Jonathon Winters show was scheduled. Winters had a fifteen minute show on Mondays around 7 p.m. The plan

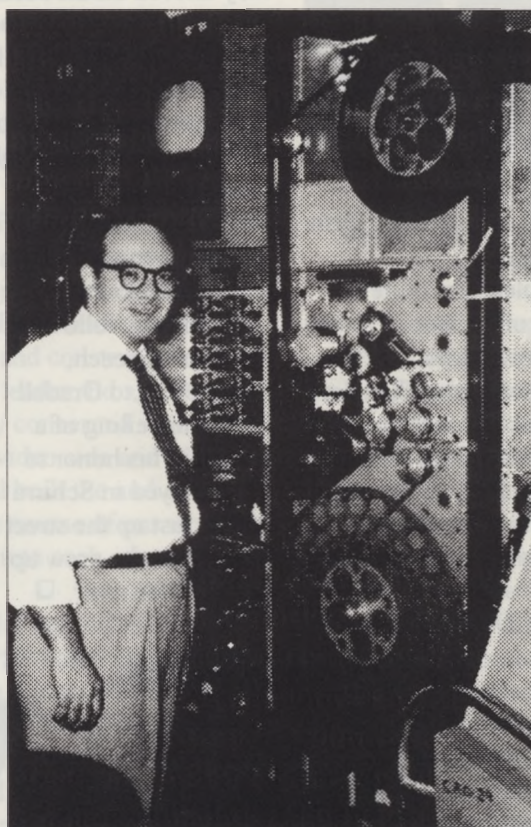
was to have Dorothy Collins appear on the show in a red dress. It would then be announced that she had recorded a song on the previous Friday wearing a green dress and we would then play the tape.

It sounds simple, but there was a potential hazard. No provision had been made in the initial design to bring the tape up to speed in a specified time period, and the necessary modification to the drive mechanism was too extensive for our facilities at NBC. The procedure we used was primitive, but it worked most of the time. We would start the tape and as it got close to normal speed the picture would slowly roll vertically. When it was properly framed the operator would close the servo loop and lock the picture. The definitive word is "slowly". If the picture was rolling too fast, closing the loop would impart a shock to the system and the driving motor would start to hunt. In almost every instance the tape would depart from the hub

and wind up on the floor.

This was hardly the performance we wanted for this auspicious occasion. We warned all concerned of the real possibility of this potential disaster and I don't know what plans were made for this contingency...maybe a quick change of clothes for Dorothy. In any event the tape came up to speed and locked in and the terror was over.

A part of the story that only a few knew came out the next day when Dr. George Brown, a brilliant RCA engineer and a noted wit, came into his office. Doc said he had watched the show, stating that he had switched on his set but did not turn up the volume since he was only interested in



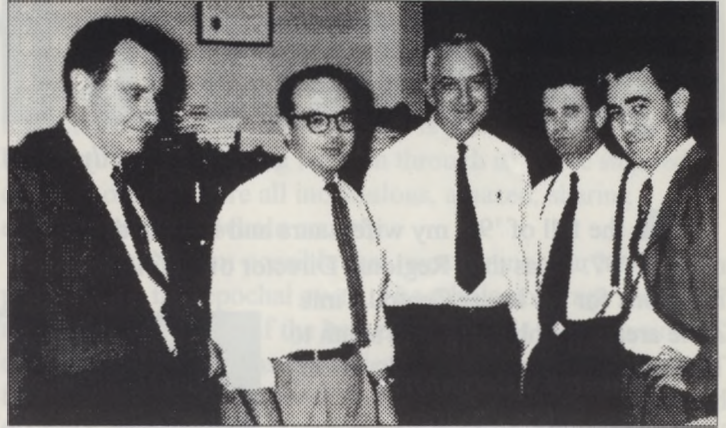
Arnold Proner - note the reel side is off.



the quality of the picture (and, of course, didn't hear the dialog about the red and green dress). He said the quality was good except for a few minutes in the middle of the show when some trouble developed and there was a lot of snow and the dress color changed! □

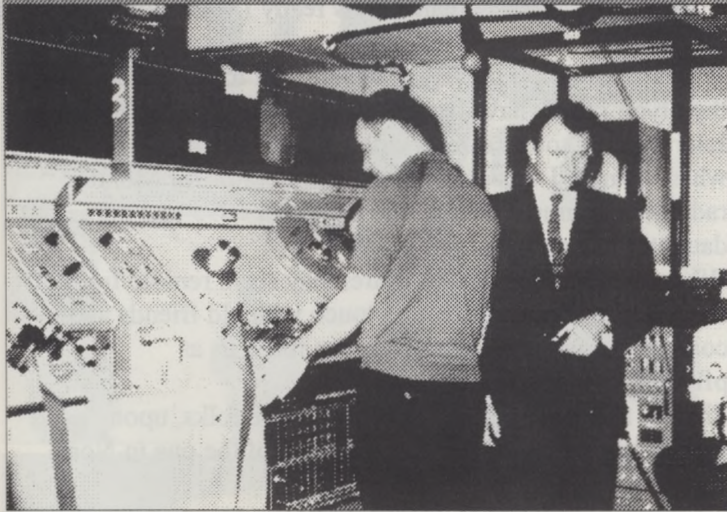


*Proner & 10,000 foot tape disaster.*



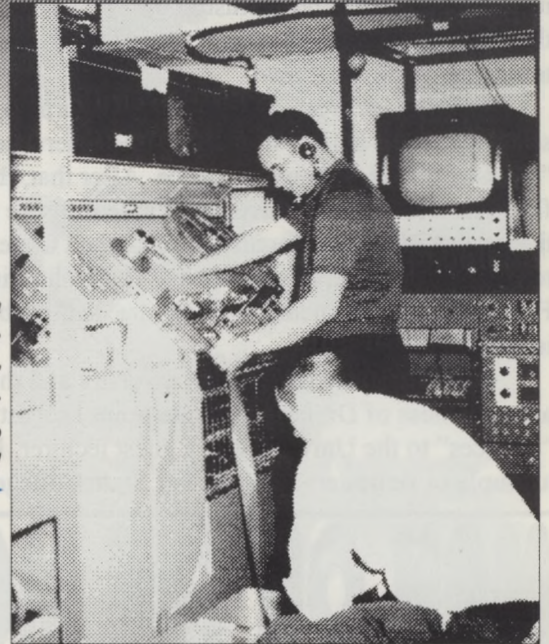
*Brain Trust - Ed Bertero, Arnie Proner — two unidentified RCA engineers — and Bill Houghton, RCA engineer.*

# Video Tape In-A-Box



*Bill Rose recording hockey. AD, Don Ellis, coordinating.*

*Bill keeps an eye on the tape as Bob Shaw guides the tape into the box. No snags please!*



**How** do you cover an event, like hockey, when there are no time-outs? Let some recorded tape accumulate in boxes.

The hockey game video tape recording was started 5 minutes before actual use on the air. Tape from the recording machine fell into a series of boxes. From these, now delayed by the length of tape in the boxes, it was fed to the playback machine for airing.

The playback machine was stopped during commercial breaks while the record machine continued recording the non-stop game.

Bill Rose and Murray Vecchio came up with the solution that allowed hockey to air with commercials while not missing a single play. □

*(Pictures from Ginny Seipt's album.)*



*High Tech boxes.*



# Flynn Moves to the Other Durham

By Peter Flynn, as told to Dan Gabel

**I**n the fall of '96, my wife Laura and I decided we'd retire in '97. I was then Regional Director of Affiliate Relations for the lower Central Time Zone area (roughly Nebraska south to Texas) and she worked locally in our hometown of Montclair, NJ. Where to go? We had roots in the northeast, especially in New Hampshire, so that was a hot prospect for us in retirement. Laura had summered in the state's Lake District all of her life and I was raised in a small rural town in upstate New York along the Vermont line.

No sudden and total immersion in the boonies for us, however. We wanted to live in or near town -- no new developments, no seclusion by the pond, no farmstead where it was 15 minutes by telephone to the next town.

One day we were driving through Durham, NH and it seemed to have a nice "at home" atmosphere, so we did a "walk-in" at the Century 21 office. After that, the agent faxed us with a prospective home at least twice a week, until the perfect place was found -- a renovated Cape Cod in the town where the University of New Hampshire is located. For us, that would mean some culture, and probably interesting neighbors.

Aside from the energy, the diversity and the plain attractiveness of Durham, at some point I might offer my "services" to the University as a guest lecturer. I did this for a couple of semesters at Montclair State College in Jersey. It

was downright fun and fulfilling. Fact is, I even taught an informal class at NBC in a 46th floor conference room. We put our Montclair home on the market and got a buyer in just three months. Came March and we closed on New Jersey and also on New Hampshire in three days! Laura, our son Jack and I and our Jack Russell terrier became New Englanders.

We took the monthly payout as part of the retirement package and thanks to Lilo Rowan, Peg McKinley, and the treasurer at NBC that has worked out fine.

I had immense satisfaction in my 40-year career at NBC. And although I didn't think I was ready for retirement, it turned out that I didn't realize how ready I was! Don't miss



*The Flynn's of their Durham.*

diddly!

We value our days at NBC - actually, all four members of the Flynn family have been NBCers at one time or another: Laura was in sound effects with Clem Walter in the 1950s when we met. I was commercial coordinator for Monitor radio at that time. Our son was a page in 1995 and our daughter had a similar job in 1997.

While Durham, New Hampshire, may seem remote from 30 Rockefeller Plaza, we keep in touch with old friends and colleagues via the Internet. You can reach us at [pflynn@acornworld.net](mailto:pflynn@acornworld.net)

Finally, about the "other" Durham. Some folks, upon hearing we've moved to Durham think of the one in North Carolina. We ain't there. □

## MAN ON THE MOON

### LANDING RECALLED

By Peter Flynn

My wife and I have argued over how NASA designates flights. I say it's by Roman numerals, she says by Arabic. Do you know? [Pictures show Astronaut patches were in Roman while flights were designated by NASA in Arabic - you're both right. ED]

**A**t about 9:30 on the morning of July 16, 1969 — almost 29 years to the day that I write this and recall an exciting episode in my life — APOLLO XI was launched to

put the first man on the moon.

NBC's television coverage was anchored in Studio 8H at 30 Rock. Actual size replicas of the orbiting command module and the lunar module were positioned in the northern end of the studio. They were used throughout the coverage to show viewers exactly how the astronauts were moving about the vehicles during the mission.

The Apollo XI crew consisted of civilian Neil Armstrong, command module pilot, Air Force Colonel Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., lunar module pilot, and Air Force Lt. Colonel Michael Collins, who orbited the command module while the other two were on the moon.

The flight was scheduled to run 8 days, with landing on the moon July 20 and the splashdown back on earth, in the Pacific near Wake Island, on July 24.



Our family had a special interest in the mission since my wife Laura was a classmate of Aldrin's at Montclair, NJ high school.

The anchormen for NBC radio were correspondents Jay Barbree, Dean Mell and Russ Ward. For television the team included Jack Chancellor and Frank McGee, as primary anchors, assisted by Frank Field, Roy Neal (on the west coast) and Peter Hackes who conducted tours of the space craft replicas.

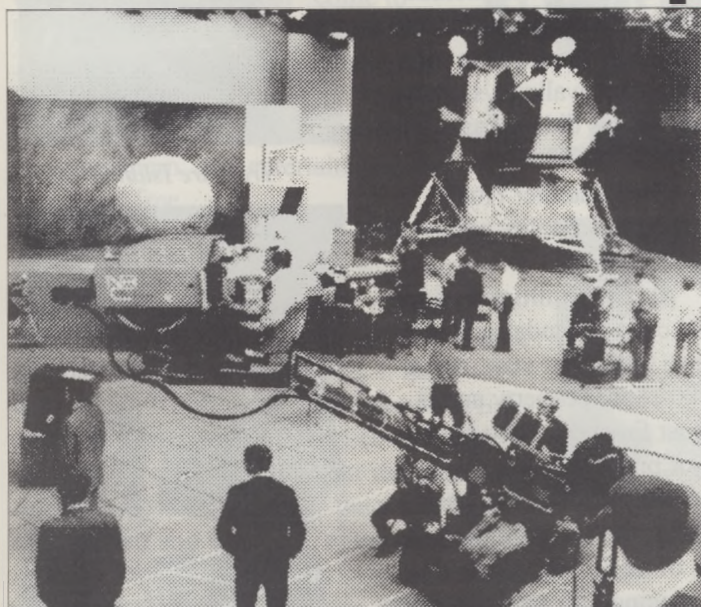
As Manager, Program Operations, for the Radio Network, part of my job was to create a minute-by-minute coverage plan with the News producers. I was stationed in studio 5B, Monitor Control. Al Reyes was our director in Houston.

The clearest memory I have of the whole coverage was,

of course, the landing itself. We watched the flickering black and white image of Armstrong descending the ladder. The control room became dead quiet. I had a thought: what if he steps on the moon and finds it is just a big puff ball...and he keeps going right on through it! As he stepped on the moon we were all incredulous, amazed, sharing emotions with the whole country.

It doesn't seem possible that twenty-nine years have passed since that epochal event. The whole coverage was the result of many hours of the best professionals in the business doing their thing. It was a wonderful time in my life...and the memory of working with those greats at NBC News at the time, both in front of and behind the camera, will remain with me always. □

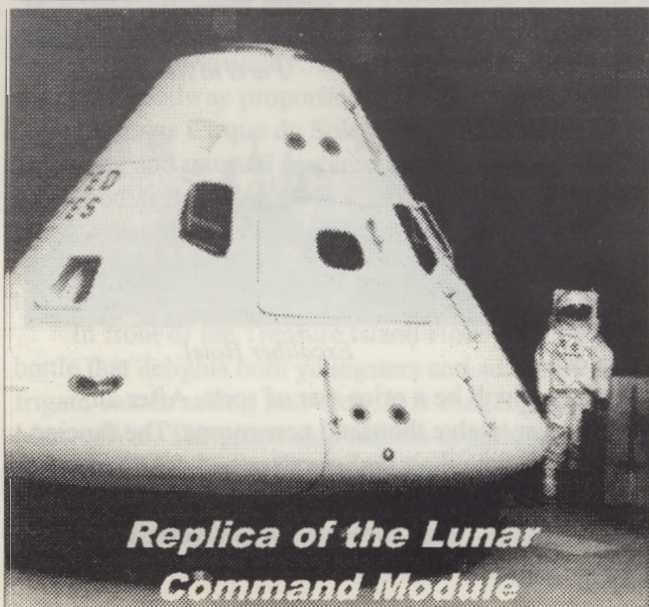
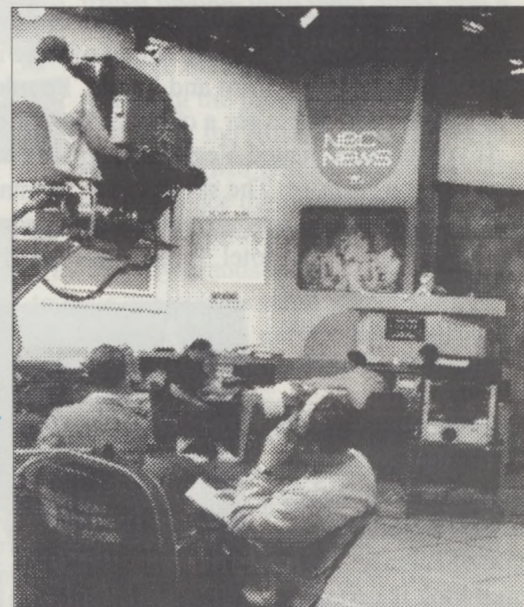
## APOLLO 11 - July, 1969 - Studio 8H



*Mock-up  
of Lunar  
Lander.*



*John  
Cancellor  
at the  
podium.*

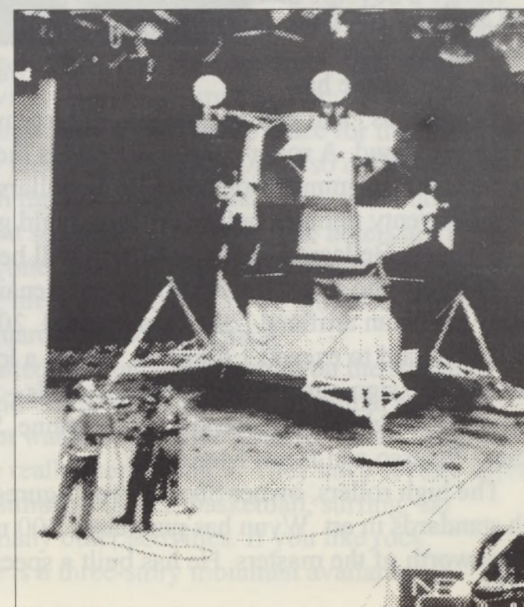


*Replica of the Lunar  
Command Module*



*Frank Field  
& Make-up*

*Peter Flynn sent along these  
pictures - thanks, Ed.*





# LAS VEGAS • 1998

by Don Luftig.

**New hotels** in Las Vegas are going up faster than quarters get pushed down into slot machines. That was obvious when my wife, Sandy, and I took a quick trip to Las Vegas in August with our daughter's family. We had a two-day stopover in Vegas en route to Lake Tahoe. We wondered if our two teen-age grandsons would enjoy themselves in a town truly fashioned for the gambler. We'll get to that later and include comments from our 13-year-old.

The Las Vegas casinos have been trying to attract the family trade for years. From what we've seen, they have succeeded. The streets and casinos are now jammed with baby strollers and fathers back-packing their infants.

The temperature in the triple digit area doesn't faze anyone. Staying outside for any length of time is an endurance test. The air is hot and humid. People dash in and out of casinos and stores for a quick oxygen pick-me-up.

If you haven't visited Vegas in the past few years, you're in for a surprise. The skyline is in constant change. The most entertaining new arrival (about a year old) is the New York, New York Hotel. It has a simulated New York look and dominates the view. The Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, lower Manhattan along with a water-spouting tugboat sitting in a small harbor mix with a giant size Statue of Liberty. The overall look is certain to put a smile on the face of any native New Yorker. The inside has "neighborhoods" that will remind you of Greenwich Village and Coney Island. A roller coaster surrounds the whole complex. A four-minute ride costs seven dollars. There was a wait of twenty minutes before the kids could get on.

The new Bellagio Hotel and Casino will be open by the time this gets into print. It's a 3,000 room Renaissance fantasy set on an artificial Lake Como with 1,200 fountains. The cost is said to exceed 1.6 billion. That's a lot of quarters. The sign outside the hotel now reads - "Coming soon - Van Gogh, Monet, Renoir and Cezanne. Special guests - Picasso and Henri Matisse."

The high rollers, owner Steve Wynn figures, will enjoy high standards in art. Wynn has purchased 300 million dollars worth of the masters. He has built a special gallery at

the hotel to display them. Just remember that Wynn was able to buy these paintings with the profits made from his other casinos: The Mirage and Treasure Island. You paid for it, folks.

The Paris Hotel, with 2,914 rooms, is scheduled to open in 1999. An Eiffel Tower is being constructed to rival the one in France.

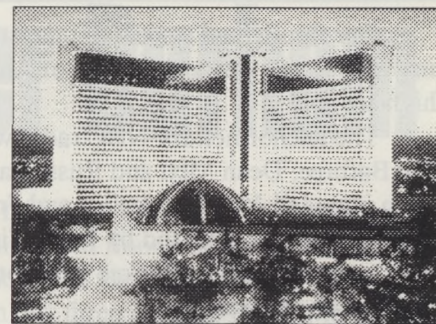
An Italian-theme hotel, the Venetian, is rising, across the street from the Treasure Island casino. It will include waterways with gondolas and a Venice-like atmosphere with cobblestone walkways. How many rooms did you ask? The answer is 3,036.

The Excalibur Hotel expanded its facility adding more rooms.

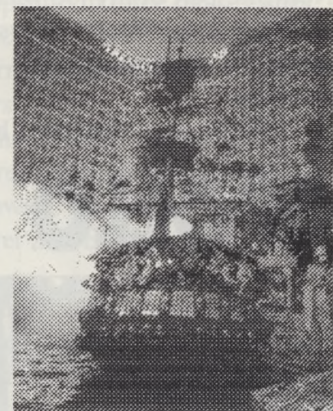
An \$850 million casino-hotel called Mandalay Bay is due to open next year. It is a 3,700-room property and is almost finished. They have a major problem - the Mandalay's tower has been sinking into the ground. At a cost of about \$8 million they are placing 250 steel supports under the tower, but what the hey, it's only money. Add a few more blackjack tables and the cost is back before you can say twenty-one.

Room costs a night vary from \$49 to \$499. Once all the hotels are up and running, you can win a bet that there will be a price war of sorts. After all, they're adding over twelve thousand new rooms. The fancier hotels will still maintain their higher prices and get them from the people who want more than just a place to sleep.

Are they going to fill all these rooms? We don't know about next year but we were in the lobby of the MGM Grand



*The Mirage.*



*Treasure Island.*



*New York in Nevada*



*Paris in Nevada.*



*Excalibur Hotel.*



Hotel on a Sunday night and overheard the concierge telling one would-be guest that the hotel was full. The concierge added that he didn't know where a room could be had on the strip. The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce is jumping with JOY.

The MGM Grand has taken away the purple old lion it had in front and replaced it with a gold plated lion. There's gold in them thar slots.

Caesar's Hotel has been expanded and their indoor mall is incredible. There is sky-domed ceiling that changes from daylight to night.

The stores range from high fashion to tourist souvenir shops. You can dine at an outdoor cafe and feel that you are in Rome. Giant statues with constant water flowing fountains are feet away from you. The only caveat is the high sound level. Speaking of statues - they look like they're carved out of stone. It isn't so. Statues located in various parts of the mall "come to life" every fifteen or thirty minutes. They "speak" - they move realistically. The animation is remarkable. Fire and water displays make you think Disney designed them. It is entertainment that is fun and free.

The outdoor shows should be on your must see list. Outside the Mirage Hotel, a volcano "erupts" every fifteen minutes. It is a symphony of sound, water and fire. Check the inside of the Mirage Hotel. It has a unique rain forest decor. A tremendous fish and shark tank behind the check-in counter can't be ignored. As you enter the hotel via a moving sidewalk, you pass the white tigers of Siegfried and Roy. The tigers are usually sleeping in their visible den, but don't forget they were working last night in the show. Productions in Vegas are lush and lavish. Name stars front extensive and expensive revues with some nudity. The prices for the shows have reached Broadway proportions. The one show I highly recommend is Cirque du Soleil. Incredible physical balancing and unusual costumes and dancing. It has been described as poetry in motion. It is a delight to watch. Humor that the kids will enjoy will make you forget how much it costs. Tickets are hard to get unless you call for them three days in advance. Do it.

In front of the Treasure Island Hotel, there is a ship battle that delights both youngsters and adults. A pirate frigate comes sailing into view. It is challenged by a British Man-o-War. The pirate ship refuses to surrender and a battle ensues. Cannon shots fill the air. Parts of the sails and rigging fall away as they are hit. Seamen clutch their chests and fall into the water "fatally" injured. Fires break out. Finally, the pirate ship is riddled with holes and there is a

cry to "Abandon ship!" The men jump overboard and swim to safety as the pirate ship actually sinks out of sight! The secret is a hydraulic lift that lowers the ship so that only a mast remains above water level. This happens three times a night at 7, 10, and 11:30 PM. Get there early if you want a good vantage point. The crowds are tremendous.

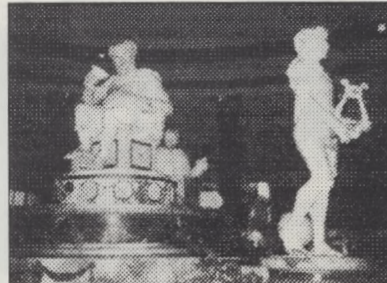
The streets seem like Times Square on New Year's Eve until the early morning hours. Despite, or maybe because of the crowds, there is a comfortable feeling of safety.

Buffet dining is the main style of eating, but there are restaurants to fit any pocket. The food is filling and plentiful. A Buffet breakfast at almost any hotel for \$6.95 is well worth the price.

How do you keep the teenagers occupied? At the Hilton Hotel there is a Star Trek exhibit. It includes costumes,



*Grand gold lion at the Grand Hotel.*



*Speaking statues.*

pictures, memorabilia and a simulated ride in space. It was exciting and you applaud the three dimensional effects which include both outer space and a trip through downtown Vegas. While we were there, a camera crew was recording the presence of Anatoly Solov'yev, the Russian astronaut who was on the Mir and has recorded more time in space than any other man. It

lent an air of excitement to the visit. On the way out, my grandson Noah and I paused to have our picture taken with a Klingon who just happened to be beamed up in the lobby. The price to visit the exhibit was high -- \$14.95 a person.

One of the places the teenagers did enjoy was the Circus Circus Hotel. There, everyone could see trapeze performers and other acts. The boys, Dan and Noah, had a

great time on the midway. They squirted guns to fill balloons to the breaking point and won prizes and enjoyed a variety of challenges. A couple of hours passed at a cost much less than if we were at a blackjack or crap table. The family walked away with a handful of stuffed animals. (No one thought about how they would find a place for the trophies in their already crowded luggage.) Dan also collected coin containers from the slot machine areas in a dozen hotels. They made great souvenirs at no cost. The hotels are fairly strict about anyone under 18 years old being in the gambling areas. At night, the boys watched as we played slot machines until security guards moved them away.

We visited the Gameworks store on the strip near the MGM Grand. They have hundreds of virtual reality games. You can water ski or drive a racing car and feel as though you are really there doing it. They have several sports machines that simulate soccer, basketball, surfing, ski boarding and many other activities. If you like rock climbing, there is a three-story mountain available.





year old reached the top and received a round of applause from the watching crowd.

Next door is a chocolate store. On the second floor, M&M has a display to delight the heart of any chocoholic. You can buy varied colors of M&M's that you can't find in your local supermarket. They come in white, black, purple, teal, pink, and you name the color. Make up your own package or buy them in tins or in five pound bags. Not cheap - they go for eight dollars a pound. When we came home we regretted not buying more to give as gifts. But, it is fun. Here are some observations from our 13 year-old grandson:

***Las Vegas: Over-Rated for the Under-Age***

*by Noah Dobin.*

*Though Las Vegas is a hopping, excitingly lit-up city, it still is the home to only one major past time, gambling. With the law prohibiting 13 year olds, like me, from gambling, Las Vegas can be frustrating. Not being allowed to gamble is one thing, but it's annoying trying to duck security guards long enough just to watch your parents. So, parents, if you want to gamble, you need to find something for your kids first. That's where the problem comes in, there just isn't much for a kid to do.*

*Along with a casino, some hotels also have a boardwalk-style arcade. These, though exciting at first, are a lot easier to get tired of than the slot machines. Aside from that, you can feed just as much money into the arcade as a slot with even lower odds of winning a stuffed animal. Also, the arcades may appear to have tons of games, but looking closer, you soon find many slightly altered versions of the same basic games. If the arcade is the experience you're looking for, I'd strongly recommend almost any boardwalk, where there is a larger and less expensive variety of games, over the scaled down version in Las Vegas.*

*There are a few other activities available to the cardless. At the Las Vegas Hilton is a hallway devoted entirely to Star trek, and a virtual reality ride call the Star Trek Experience. For a Trekkie, the winding hall must be*



*Don, Noah and Klingon friend.*



*Daughter Bonne, husband Hank Dobin, with our grandsons Noah and Dan with their prizes.*



*Squirting ballons - Bonnie, Dan &*



*M&M's available in rainbow colors.*

*amazing. There are displays of every costume, weapon, and character (human and extraterrestrial) ever to appear in the Star trek series. There is also a timeline of all events in Star trek history. A non-Star Trek fan, however, can become totally lost as to what everything is. Once in the Experience, everyone enjoys a hokey, but still a fun virtual ride on the starship Enterprise and outer space.*

*Most of the hotels, like the Hilton, are trying to build theme parks; the Luxor has an Egyptian theme, New York, New York is a scaled down Coney Island, and Circus Circus has circus acts. But, at the end, regular theme parks are just more fun.*

*One other thing a kid can do in Las Vegas is shop. On the hotel strip, there's a store devoted to M&M products, where you can make a collection of M&M's in colors you can't get in a normal bag of M&M's. Though I had fun collecting these rare multicolored chocolates, I wasn't too happy when I had to cough up eight dollars for just a pound of them. Right next door, there is a similar store devoted to Coke products that are equally as expensive. Also there is a very large luxurious shopping mall in Caesar's Palace. We teenagers love to shop, but is it really worth a trip to Las Vegas just to shop? So, despite the hype Las Vegas is trying to build as a family place, it still is really an experience best left to people over 21. When children come of age, they'll probably enjoy Las Vegas, but until then, a real theme park and a real boardwalk make better places for a family vacation. I hope I get to go back in eight years.*

*From Las Vegas, we flew to Reno, and then went on to Lake*

*Tahoe for a wedding of a family friend. It was our first trip to Tahoe and we hope to return and enjoy the area in a more leisurely fashion.*

*As always, it's good to get away and great to come home. □*

**Don is a retired NBC Director, Writer, Producer.  
Don and Sandy live in North Caldwell, New Jersey.**



# REMINERS OF THE PAST

**NBC NEWS**  
DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION / 1968  
FRANK VIERLING

**NBC NEWS  
ELECTION  
NIGHT '68**

**NBC NEWS**  
REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION / 1968  
FRANK VIERLING

*Visas*

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ORBITAL FLIGHT

FEB 20 1962  
VALUED AT CAPE CANAVERAL, FLA

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KENNEDY SPACE CENTER  
Frank Vierling  
NBC  
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**APOLLO 8  
PRESS**

**NASA**

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER  
AIR FORCE EASTERN TEST RANGE

NAME FRANK VIERLING  
ORGANIZATION NBC

**APOLLO 4  
PRESS**

TECHNICIAN TO BE ESCORTED

NAME FRANK R. VIERLING

No. 1186

DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION 1968

**Q**

NASA - DOD  
**PRESS**  
TO BE ESCORTED  
F. VIERLING  
T. V. POOL  
SATURN - GEMINI  
MAY - JUNE, 1965  
KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, NASA  
NASA MANNED SPACECRAFT CENTER  
AIR FORCE EASTERN TEST RANGE

**NASA**

**APOLLO 12**

F. VIERLING  
NAME NBC NEWS, N. Y.  
ORGANIZATION  
KENNEDY SPACE CENTER MANNED SPACECRAFT CENTER  
**PRESS TECHNICIAN**

**NBC**  
**SPORTS**  
NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
1968

FUNERAL MASS  
Senator Robert F. Kennedy  
**PRESS**  
122

*Events of a lifetime. Much of the memories are gone - only the badges remain to remind.*



# A Message From

Pete Peterson .....



Looking ahead, we here at PN headquarters have been elated by the continuing positive response from the membership and readership of the newsletter. We're also pleased that we have rediscovered some of our past members who have re-located and were temporarily lost between the cracks and have now rejoined the ranks. They will be rewarded by the excellent works of Rippy, Dan, Frank and the large

group of contributors who make this newsletter the enjoyable success that it is.

We've had some losses too. The most well known of course would be the passing of Buffalo Bob Smith, and that lil' darling of great talent, Shari Lewis. They both brought much fun and joy to the studio crews as well as to the TV audiences. Back in the 40's, and in my radio days, I had the jolly time of working the Radio City control studio of Bob Smith's morning radio wake up show that emanated from his home in Westchester county. Bob was playing piano, singing and telling little funny stories along with the news events of the day. He treated everyone with respect, and it was no wonder his "Howdy" show was a success. I later enjoyed working on the "Howdy" show when Bob came to TV. The show was done in studios 3H, 3A, and later in 8G. His kidding on the air continued on just as well. While narrating a film clip, he would be naming the Kops in the Keystone Kops clips with the names of the crew members working on the show that day. Up above, near the studio lights was the puppet bridge where some talented puppeteers were operating the puppet characters. (Several puppets were named after studio people too, (that could be a trivia question for some). One cute GAL puppeteer was Rhoda. She was excellent in manipulating the puppets' strings. Unfortunately, she was forever defending herself from the tantalizing personal manipulations of another puppeteer, Dayton Allen. He would be sharing the tight space with her on the narrow puppet bridge. He was a hilarious comic too, known on comedy TV shows as? .....?! Bob Smith would incorporate into the narration the adolescent actions above on the puppet bridge into the film clips on the air and would also pepper them with some double entendre jokes that would make the crew laugh. Kids in the peanut gallery would wonder why all the crewmembers were chuckling so often throughout the show. We'll all miss Bob. Yes, I took family children to the studio to sit there in the peanut gallery too. Didn't everybody.

In the same studio, 3H, some dozen or so years later, it was fun time again. There was an attractive little NY type gal who was uniquely talented — Miss Shari Lewis. Full of fun and ideas, it was a pleasure to see her invent comedy, write scripts and perform admirably before our eyes. Her genius was and is still unmatched. So much talent for the "GOOD" embodied in one

person! She brought fun and joy to the studio crews as well as TV audiences. Everyone enjoyed her down to earth friendliness. I don't think anyone ever heard a harsh word or discouraging remark from Shari. Her hand puppet names were captivating. Who can ever forget a name like "Lamb Chop"? She was indeed, a tender lamb herself. Her sudden passing was a shocking loss. TV and we have lost GOOD clean fun for America's kids and grownups.

It is sad too to learn again, of the losses of some of our PN members. One notable PNER that I worked with was Ted Seiter; he was a very reliable and proficient engineer. Ted served his time at NBC in the Electronic Maintenance department. His dedication and responsibility was to keep the various engineering plant facilities he was in charge of working at their highest and best cost effective efficiency. NBC was fortunate to have men of such capabilities. At that time the technology had not been so advanced as to the state of equipment reliability that there is in today's solid state high tech chip equipment. The challenges facing the electronic maintenance staff of engineers was a Herculean task, often overlooked and under appreciated. We'll miss Ted. Others too, listed among the most recent Silent Microphones were those of a generation of men and women, who put their complete selves into making NBC rise to its best possibilities. The recent introduction of the "Six Sigma" concept for NBC and GE by Jack Welch is commendable. It incorporates the very idea and structure of our earlier generation that came through a depression, were devoid of affluence, and had no substance to give to waste. They had an inherent desire to attain a higher quality along with measurable improvement. We were a marching army of six sigma's best aspirations. It remains for those in power today to give more than a passing glance and give improved recognition that the group deserves. Many of this group were vets of World War II. They were the kind of men portrayed in the recent movie "Saving Private Ryan", with a call to dedication and duty beyond the expected. There are some additional discoveries that Mr. Welch may encounter. With time, greater ideals become more transparent. They can lead to enhanced revelations.

I was fortunate to have some nice phone conversations during the summer with some of our members. They offered to share some of their interesting anecdotes with the membership. Thanks to Lillian Russo, Don Ellis, and Elmer Gorry for their fun conversations and their articles that they submitted for this edition. Joe Mehan's contribution is greatly appreciated by all of us, and reflects on the total PN membership. Thanks from yours truly for the kind words, Joe. His remembrances of his NBC friends John Rich and Frank DeFelitta are what our newsletter and organization is all about. Our regulars came through again in fine style. Thanks to Ken Arber, (Storyman Emeritus), bringing back Radio Days, to Dick Dudley for that erudite intellectual grasp of comical disclosures, and Don Luftig, for that exciting inspirational visit to Las Vegas. I'd like to go there again soon. It's having a rebirth every year. "Bellagio," is the latest hotel and casino, remarkably in a class by itself. They have the best stage shows in the world there in Vegas. Forget about the gambling part that can be found now in attractive nearby Indian outposts. Don's grandson Noah, put it in an interesting perspective for teeners'.

During our La Maganette luncheon last June, I had a



chance to meet up with Peter Flynn. He has been relocating from North to South to North in retirement. His family has been "VERY NBC," with all the immediate family working in various departments over the years. We hope Peter finds his NH home fulfilling his retirement dreams. His article in recollection of the launching of Apollo 11 with the first walk on the moon was an exciting reminder for me. I was privileged back then to be assigned as the Senior Color Video engineer on the NBC unilateral feed at the Cape that famous day. I have pointed out those replayed launch pictures played occasionally on TV to my grandchildren as one product of my working years at NBC. You can see by my recollections above that there isn't anything any one of our PNers writes about or mentions in our group that doesn't ring a bell in memoryland. It's a lot of déjà vu and a lot of 'Been there-done that!' I'm sure it rings bells for all of you as well as it does for me. So...therefore, please send in your anecdotes and tid-bits of yesteryears funner days and about the people with whom you shared working time, just jot it down and send it in. Our good guys here will dot the EYES and cross the TEA'S for U.

We're coming into the Holiday season. Much has happened to our group even while using time productively in retirement. The world around us keeps changing, and it's complicated to keep up with it all. Perhaps a respite during the holiday season may have a calming effect on the societies and the markets. We can hope for greater stability so that our group can enjoy these so called Golden Years. Our PN headquarters staff wish you all the happiest of holidays starting with Thanksgiving, through the Christmas and Hanukkah celebrations and for others' special seasons' events, and into the New Year. You are all champions of a great group. Let us then, go into the New Year confident, as we near the crest and heading for the millennium. We are hoping to see everyone's happy faces again in 1999. Our tentative date for our LaMaganette luncheon is Sunday, May 23, 1999. Please keep that date open.

Love you all,

Regards, *Pete*

P.S. Dues for 1999 are due Jan 1, 1999, but if you desire, you can send in your \$20 earlier. Thank you!

## NEW MEMBERS



Peter Groom - Woodland Hills, CA

Robert Harasek - Port St. Lucie, FL

Robert Jones - New York, NY

Cindy Mercer-Hier - New York, NY

Bee Reed - Exiter, NH

Barbara Reisenbach - New York, NY

David Schwartz - Canoga Park, CA

Mary Stoltz - Croton-On-Hudson, NY

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Gloria Clyne Tony Nelle

Dick Dudley Roy Silver

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*And a special thanks to  
Peg Peterson and Lois Vierling*

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