



2023 Issue 2

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Jim Bell is our Luncheon Speaker



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Marilyn's Page

A Walk Down Memory Lane



I am writing this page on Super Bowl Sunday LVII. 34 years ago, on Super Bowl Sunday XXIII, January 22, 1989, I was the Technical Director of the B unit which handled replays and the halftime show. It was my first Super Bowl and to add to the march of progress, my Audio Person was Cathy Jenks Worster. We worked with John Gonzalez, Director and George Finkel, Producer. Our own Lenny Stucker was TD in the A unit with Teddy Nathanson directing his final Super Bowl broadcast. It was the most nerve-racking and exciting sports show I had ever done, and by then I had done a few, but not with this cachet. It was heady to say the least and turned out to be a real nail-biter of a game! The 49ers were lagging in the 3rd quarter 13-16 but in the final 3:10 of the game Joe Montana made a 92-yard push with his last play scoring a TD, to beat the Bengals 20-16. Quite a memory. Dick Enberg and Merlin Olsen were the broadcasters. Bob Costas and Gayle Gardner were pre-game hosts. Pre-game analysis was by Paul Maguire and Don Shula. The Nielsen rating was 43.5 (81.6 million viewers) with a market share of 68. The cost of a 30-second commercial was \$675,000. This year the cost of a :30 spot was between \$6 and \$7 million and beyond. Viewership was 113.1 million. Super Bowl LVII was the most

streamed Super Bowl yet, hitting an average of 7 million streams across the services showing the game.

On a totally different subject, NBC had quite a large group of people raise their hands to take advantage of the current buy-out offer. A swathe of institutional knowledge left NBC but not without a well-deserved party. I would like to give a few shout-outs to friends of mine who have been part of my life for the entire length of my career and continue to remain friends in my retirement:

Steven Cimino retired from SNL after 33-½ years as its Technical Director. More time to ski and be an active grandfather.

Judy Farinet, AD extraordinaire. Her run at NBC goes all the way back to the Huntley/Brinkley Report. Good luck in your next chapter. More time to fraternize.

Joyce Hurley, whose counting forwards as well as backwards was one of her fun AD habits. Good luck and safe travels as you continue to explore the world around you.

Sam Sambataro, Engineer, whose culinary skills at cooking for major BBQs hosted on remotes and at LIC are only outdone by his brilliance and kindness of heart.

My best wishes to everyone who recently joined the ranks of the NBC retirees. Hope to see all of you down the road.

As we go to press we have just learned that NBC Burbank-based engineer John Bevard passed away on February 7th. He started his NBC career in 1983 at KNBC Los Angeles as an ENG News crew member. In 1988 John left KNBC to work freelance for NBC Network News and was hired back in the late 90's as a staff news field sound engineer. We will have more information in our next issue.

The Sacred Heart University Peacock North Archive is now on line and ready for use.
It captures all 35 years of our quarterly publication.

Check it out at
<https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/media-nbcpeacock/>

**I want to remind you that the 2023 Spring Luncheon
will be held on SATURDAY, April 22nd at Sardi's.**

**Please keep the people of Ukraine, our crews, and correspondents on the ground,
in your thoughts, prayers and charitable giving.**

And now to the good stuff, the rest of the magazine...

What's Now!

About Jim Bell



Hoda Kotb, Giada De Laurentiis, Jim and Kathie Lee Gifford

Jim Bell is an executive/producer who has been trusted with some of the most iconic brands in media, including “The Today Show”, “The Tonight Show”, and NBC Olympics. He has won 24 Emmy Awards for his work in News, Sports, Primetime, Daytime and Spanish Language, and also has a Peabody Award for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Jim was the Executive Producer of the 2012 London Olympics, the most-watched event in US television history, and the 2016 Rio Olympics, the most-profitable Games ever for NBC. While at Today, Jim created 4th hour of “The Today Show” with Kathie Lee Gifford and Hoda Kotb. He also oversaw the first-ever live episode of “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon”, as well as its critically acclaimed show from Puerto Rico for hurricane relief in 2019. In 2018, Jim served as Executive Producer for Telemundo’s World Cup coverage from Russia.

Jim is currently the Head of Strategy for Silicon Valley startup News-Break, a local news aggregating app and platform with over 10 million daily active users.



NEWS BREAK

Local Information For Better Life

After graduating from Harvard, Jim played and coached American football in Spain, where his 30-year career at NBC started in Barcelona when he was assigned to take care of senior Olympics executive Randy Falco, who was in a wheelchair recovering from Achilles tendon surgery.

Jim, originally from Branford, CT, lives in Greenwich, CT with his wife Angelique, whom he met while they were working on the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. They have 4 sons, Jimmy, Lucas, Emmett, and Nick, and 3 dogs, Apollo, Hercules, and Teeny.

Peacock Family

New NBC News President



NBCUniversal has appointed Rebecca Blumenstein, a deputy managing editor at The New York Times, as the president of editorial for NBC News, as part of a far-reaching reorganization of the division.

Ms. Blumenstein, 56, has overseen The Times's recruiting efforts and operations as part of the newsroom's top management team and advised the paper's publisher, A.G. Sulzberger. At NBC, she will inherit many of the responsibilities of Noah Oppenheim, who has been president of NBC News since 2017. He has struck a production deal with NBCUniversal, working on film and TV projects for the company. With the appointment, Cesar Conde, who oversees NBCUniversal's news division, is turning over major parts of his marquee news brand to a highly decorated print and digital journalist, but one with little experience in television.

Ms. Blumenstein, a Michigan native, is a former foreign correspondent who served as deputy editor in chief of The Wall Street Journal before joining the senior leadership of The Times in 2017. She will take charge of the network's sprawling reporting operation as it seeks to expand its digital audience amid a long-term decline in broadcast TV viewership.

During her tenure at The Times, Ms. Blumenstein helped develop new formats to cover big breaking news events in real time, part of The Times's aggressive expansion of its digital journalism. She led the evacuation and resettlement of the company's Afghan employees and their families in the wake of the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021.

In a statement on Wednesday, Ms. Blumenstein said that she was grateful to Mr. Sulzberger and Joe Kahn, the executive editor of The Times, for their "commitment to independent journalism." "The news landscape is rapidly evolving," Ms. Blumenstein said. "I look forward to building on the deep journalistic foundation at NBC News to help the organization achieve its ambitions."

In a reorganization led by Mr. Conde, who as chairman of NBCUniversal News Group also runs CNBC and MSNBC, Ms. Blumenstein will oversee household brand shows like "Meet the Press" and "Dateline." Some significant parts of NBC News overseen by Mr. Oppenheim will now report directly to Mr. Conde, including the network's flagship program, "NBC Nightly News," and the lucrative "Today" franchise. The cable channels MSNBC and CNBC do not fall under Mr. Oppenheim's portfolio and will continue to be led by their own presidents. The "Today" franchise will continue to be led by Libby Leist, a long-serving steward of the morning franchise. "NBC Nightly News" will continue to be led by Janelle Rodriguez, another NBC veteran who will also continue to oversee NBC News Now.

Excerpted from a story by Benjamin Mullin and Michael M. Grynbau, © The New York Times, January 11, 2023



Peacock Family

The Roker Report



Al Roker experienced several major health issues this winter which prevented him from appearing on the Today Show, The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and his other professional gigs from mid-November until early January. On December 13th scores of his NBC colleagues appeared on the sidewalk in front of his Manhattan home to serenade both Al and Deborah with Christmas carols. He said that the lift to his spirits was incalculable.



He returned to Studio 1A on January 6th, to the great joy of viewers and his Today Show colleagues.



Deborah and Al pose with Death of a Salesman star Wendell Pierce at their first Broadway outing.

*Peacock Family***Kerry Sanders Retires**

On January 17th, long time correspondent Kerry Sanders announced that he was retiring after a 32-year career with NBC. Sanders, a University of South Florida alumnus, got his start in local news at First Coast News as an intern. His Facebook page describes his role at WTLV Jacksonville as "Former Inexperienced Everything" which included script jockey, Xerox repair guy and weekend interviewer.

He joined NBC as a correspondent in the 90's and — according to TODAY — reported from all 50 states, 65 countries and every continent. The show poked fun at his state connections, announcing on Twitter that "Florida Man Retires." Sanders' reports ranged from light scuba-diving pieces to coverage of elections and closely watched legal cases like the Casey Anthony trial. "The amazing thing about this job is that I got a chance to go everywhere," he said.

The job also kept him away from home for most of each year. Sanders said he and his wife, Deborah, spent much more time together during the height of the pandemic — leading to a big decision.

"We realized that we do really good together all the time, so maybe that's what we should do now," he said.

TODAY weatherman Al Roker said he was "kind of choked up" about Sanders' retirement. "Kerry is such a special guy," Roker said on sister station WKYC's morning show. "I've covered storms with him. I just love the guy."

By © First Coast News Staff, January 17, 2023

*Peacock Family***Nightly News Retirees Party
By Mike Sarno**

The Nightly News folks had a nice get together on December 23rd for nine of us who are retiring from NBC. I was the youngest one in the picture with 30 years of service. Some of the people in the picture have been with the company 59 years, 57, 55 and so on down through the forties - years of service. Not a misprint! I'm sure gonna miss it and miss all my friends here! This picture was taken in Studio 1A, and Lester Holt gave us all a nice champagne toast.

Here are the names of the retirees. I'll start with the Nightly News folks: Judy Farinet, Joyce Hurley, Jeff Samaha, Mike McManus, Susann Thomas, Howie Hirsch, Terry Tousey, Susan Itkin, Mike Sarno. On the engineering and Implementation side: Frank Keffas, Bill Spaventa, Mike Duffy, Brad Sauro, Ed Cohen, Lloyd Prezant, Joel Budnick, Tom Cappo, Andy Hope, Jim Ondris. Those are all the names I know of, and I don't think I forgot anyone... I hope. The photo also includes some people who are continuing on at the company.

Of course this list doesn't include folks from MSNBC or the 5th floor.

Peacock Family

Just after the 59th anniversary of November 22nd, 1963, we present memoirs from two of our members.

The Day JFK Was Assassinated - Remembered by Allison J. Davis



Many people remember the exact details about where they were and what they were doing on the day President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Unfortunately, I remember little about that day. I was only 10 years old and in 5th grade. I think we were sent home early. I remembered the short walk. I'm not sure if my mother saw me coming through the door. She was glued to the TV. My father worked in Washington, D.C. and came home on weekends. We often tried to stay awake on Friday nights to greet him, but fell asleep, though we'd be certain to wake him up early on Saturday mornings.

However, on this Saturday, a day after the assassination, he got up before us to make his famous pancakes and as we sat in anticipation of this big breakfast, he asked us what we knew about JFK. I think my younger brother said something like, "He is our President". My older, more cynical brother, followed with "yes and he's dead". Being the more intuitive sibling, I don't remember saying anything, but I was aware that my father looked different. "What's wrong, Daddy?" I asked. "You look like a friend of yours died". It was then that he shared a story of an unusual relationship.

My father returned from WWII and got a job as a Skycap at LaGuardia airport. He married my mother and quickly had two children. After my oldest brother was born, my father decided to take advantage of the educational benefits of the G.I. Bill. He carried bags at night and went to Columbia University during the day where he majored in Political Science. I was born two years later and we moved to the Colonial Projects across the street from the old Polo Grounds. My father said he used to carry bags for a lot of famous people, mostly actors it seemed. Among his regulars however —Congressman and later Senator John F. Kennedy, who would often stop in New York on his way to Washington or Boston. My father said he'd greet the Senator at the gate and escort him to the bar where he would later retrieve him to get on his next flight. A grateful Kennedy would thank him and urge him to stay in school. This happened quite often and as the weeks and months went by, the conversations would turn a bit more personal with Kennedy asking questions about his life, his family, his studies and his professional aspirations. At each parting, the Senator would repeat his mantra urging my father to stay in school.

My father graduated from Columbia in the mid-1950s. A member of the Transport Workers' Union, he rose swiftly through the ranks to become its Executive Vice President. He was later tapped by AFL-CIO President George Meany to become the Assistant Director of the Civil Rights Department, a job that would take him to the heart of the movement during its most turbulent and challenging times. It was in that position that he along with other labor leaders were invited to a signing ceremony at the White House. My dad said he stood in the back as President Kennedy signed the document and as the crowd dispersed, the President motioned for him to stay. My dad told us that he never thought President Kennedy would remember him from his LaGuardia Airport days, but he did. "Walter, you stayed in school!" said the President. "Yes, Mr. President. I did," my father responded. There was more small talk about family and the time both spent at the airport and my father said he thanked the President for remembering him and the President thanked my father for taking care of him during his travels. John F. Kennedy was assassinated a short time later. While the nation lost a great leader, I realized that my father's loss was a lot more personal.

We finished our breakfast in silence. CBS and NBC News now had my dad's attention along with the memories of a most unlikely relationship, friendship, and reunion.

We finished our breakfast in silence. CBS and NBC News now had my dad's attention along with the memories of a most unlikely relationship, friendship, and reunion.

Allison J. Davis is the Founder of Coopty Productions, LLC., a minority-owned firm providing innovative solutions and digital tools to not-for-profit organizations.

*Peacock Family***The Debut of Live Extended News Coverage
Remembered by Ken Fouts**

Like most of those in my generation and many generations before me and after me, I know exactly where I was when I heard that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. Walter Cronkite was seen on CBS removing his glasses, nodding his head and holding back tears as he announced live on the network "President Kennedy has died." That was the beginning of around the clock live television coverage of the many events that followed for the next week.

News coverage of World War II was mostly on radio and people like Edward R. Murrow emerged into the news spotlight. The only "video" from the war was on newsreel film which was seen days after it was shot. Korea was covered in only slightly more detail as television had begun to grow. However, no live coverage was possible.

By the early 1960's television had replaced radio as the main conduit for news in America. The advent of video tape made it current rather than having to wait for the film to be processed and edited. Network news had begun to do live coverage of important events and by 1963 when the President went on a whirlwind tour of the US, all three networks covered much of it *live*. Transmission of the pictures to New York was then via telephone lines and could be expensive so news budgets at the NBC, CBS and ABC had begun to grow accordingly. When President Kennedy went to Dallas the networks' live coverage broadcast his arrival and eventual motorcade through the city. All of America and most of the world experienced the moment when our 35th President was shot while riding in his open car in that motorcade.

**JFK and Jackie Arrive in Dallas**

Of course the coverage didn't end there, but continued almost non-stop for that entire weekend and the next week. It was the first time in the history of television news that such extensive live coverage had ever taken place and it ushered in a new era for network news.

On the Sunday following the motorcade I was a college student working at the local CBS affiliate in Lincoln, Nebraska and was on duty that morning as the booth announcer. Our function was to read the station's call letters and location every hour on the hour. This was a holdover of an FCC rule for radio stations. There I sat watching CBS News' coverage of the events in Dallas, waiting to give our station identification. Law enforcement officials were moving Lee Harvey Oswald, the arrested suspect in the assassination of the President, from the local Dallas jail to a federal prison. The scene was a bit chaotic with the press and even some civilians all pushing to get a look at Oswald as he was escorted to a waiting car. He was seen flanked by policemen on each side but none in front of him. As I sat watching in my little announce booth a short, pudgy man in a suit and hat pushed through the crowd of people. Jack Ruby pulled out a pistol and shot Oswald. Within four days, two extremely important happenings in history were seen live on television throughout the country, something that could not have taken place ten years prior.

The network coverage continued almost constantly up to and including the ceremonial interment of the much loved President in Arlington National Cemetery. Because of that live news coverage there are so many images all of us remember from that period, such as seeing young John Jr. standing with his mother and sister, saluting the caisson as it passed the Capital. Cronkite set the tone of the country with his tearing up at the moment of death and the rest of us did the same many times during that week of television history. Yes, we all know where we were when we heard that our President had been shot...it is frozen in our minds forever.

Peacock Family

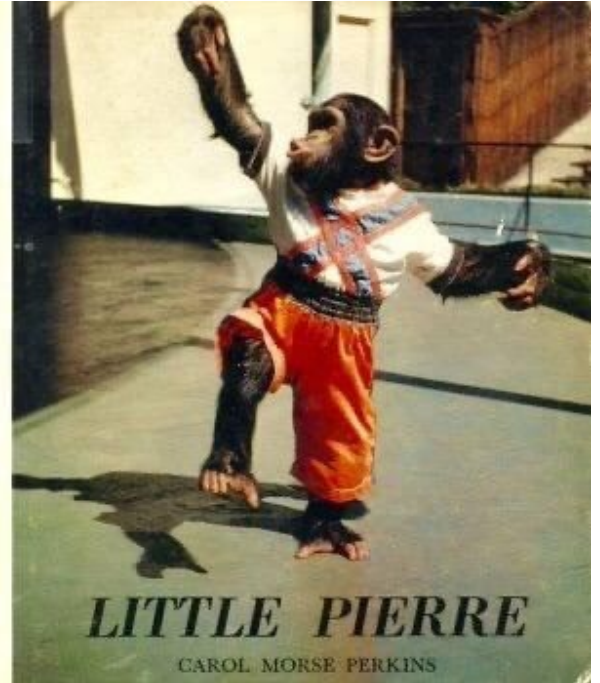
Bob Dotson and The Chimp

DAVE GARROWAY AND I HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON BESIDES THE TODAY SHOW. WE BOTH OWE OUR LONG CAREERS ON THE PROGRAM TO A CHIMP:

70 years ago, my family's television set was a heavy piece of furniture in the living room. In those days, that's where most TVs were: proud possessions to be polished, not moved. Unfortunately, everyone was in the kitchen eating breakfast when the TODAY show came on. So despite its many cutting-edge attractions, the show almost faded in my house, and in many others.

Back then, watching morning television was considered somewhat decadent: like dessert, TV was consumed after dinner. What changed all that was a baby chimp born two months to the day after the TODAY show premiered. A year later, he became Garroway's co-host. Kids like me loved J. Fred Muggs so much we persuaded our parents to leave the kitchen and watch the show with us. They enjoyed what they saw and stayed, even after Muggs moved on.

During the long musical breaks TODAY took back then, my dad would talk about his day at the optical store he owned — the one he hoped I would someday run. My grandfather wanted me to follow him into law. Nearly everyone in the family worried about my poor choice of careers: I started at the St. Louis Zoo, as an announcer for the chimpanzee show.



The Batman TV show was big that season, and trainers dressed one of the chimps, Little Pierre, like the Caped Crusader. The hairy little Batman entered high over the crowd on a wire between the announce booth and the stage.

Unfortunately, a big chimp called Captain Bozo wanted to escape show biz, and the wire, which was permanent, provided a tempting escape route. So the show's director gave me a rifle that fired tiny sponges and told me to shoot Bozo every time he came close to that wire.

"You won't hurt him," he insisted, "but Bozo weighs 120 pounds. We can't have him dropping on the kids." So all summer long I annoyed the big chimp, popping him with the sponge gun. One day late in the season, my sound engineer and I were playing a hand of poker as the show progressed. We knew the routine so well by then that we didn't have to look. "How 'bout a big hand for him, boys and girls!" I shouted into the microphone, slapping down a card.

Suddenly, the audience gasped. There was big ol' Bozo, looking like King Kong, climbing the wire, halfway across the moat that separated the audience from the stage.

I grabbed the sponge gun and leaned out of the announce booth. Pow! Pow! Pow!

Bozo dropped into the water and the audience applauded, as if the popgun fire were part of the act. He bounced back on stage, unhurt, but I could picture the newspaper headline: "Zoo Announcer Shoots Beloved Chimp." That's when I started my long life on the road.

Peacock Family

Martin Fletcher's New Book

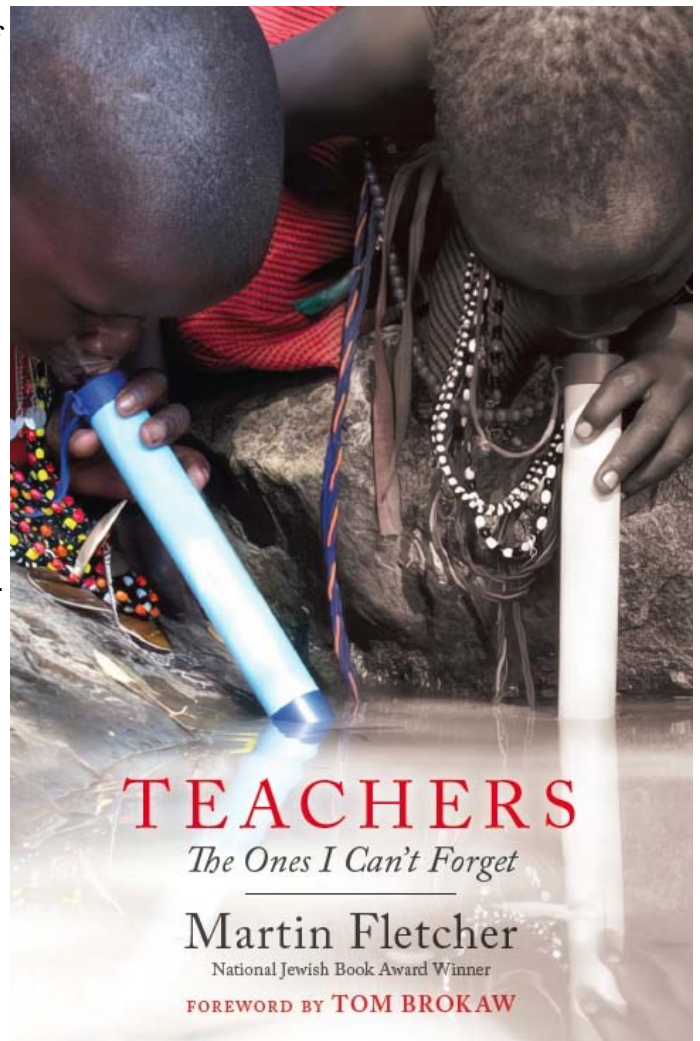


Teachers are people Martin Fletcher met throughout his work as a news correspondent, often on the worst day of their lives. He watched as they picked up the pieces following personal tragedy and discovered the invaluable lesson of carrying on, no matter the circumstances.

Through intimate profiles, Martin Fletcher's "Teachers" details the struggles of everyday people in extraordinary circumstances--war, revolution, natural disasters and yes, life. Fletcher's writing is uplifting as he examines the truth of resilience despite hardship. These are the people he sought out in his international reporting, detailing their woes while celebrating their will to survive and recover.

"Teachers" offers a unique take on reporting, as it features a traveling photo exhibit that Fletcher created to accompany the book. Each chapter is paired with an extraordinary digital montage to illustrate the stories taken directly from his reporting from NBC News programs. At a time when news coverage is often dismissed as fake or biased, "Teachers" is a welcome reminder of the integrity, devotion and empathy that goes into true reporting of the world. As Tom Brokaw wrote, "Fletcher has a calling."

© Morgan James Publishing



Gray Matters by Bill Freeda

The G.E. Spin-offs



By now you should be aware that the General Electric Company is spinning off into three separate corporations. GE Healthcare, GE Vernova, which is a portfolio of GE's Energy businesses, and GE Aerospace, which includes their aircraft engine business.

The first will be GE Healthcare, which becomes effective January 1, 2023. The other two companies will become effective by 2024.

The two questions I receive most often are:

(a) Will the \$1,000 Retirement Reimbursement Account (RRA) per retiree, and spouse continue?

It will continue through 2023. There are no commitments beyond 2023.

(b) What happens to the GE Pension Trust (the plan)?

The assets in the plan will be divided among the three new companies. What I want to emphasize is that these assets must be used for the benefit of the members of the plan. It is not money that GE or the three new companies can use for other purposes. When the three spin-offs are completed, each company will be responsible for managing their portion of the plan's assets. **In short, our monthly pension payments should not be affected.**

I have been told that through 2023 I will continue to have access to same Human Resources personnel that I have relied on for many years. I am sure other questions will arise as the new companies are created. I will ask questions and attempt to get clear and concise answers. I will then do my best to notify all of you.

What's Now!

NBC Digital Workers Stage One-Day Walkout

In January of 2023, NBC Digital News Guild members finally hit a breaking point. For three years, they had been negotiating fruitlessly for what would be the first-ever contract between their union and NBC management. Their efforts even included the National Labor Relations Board upholding their unfair labor practice charge levied against NBC after it cut union members' salaries in 2020 without any bargaining taking place.

Then, in mid-January, the company abruptly laid off seven News Guild members and prompted the union to file yet another unfair labor practice charge against NBC. The layoffs made it clear to many in the News Guild that normal bargaining tactics weren't going to get the company's attention. "People were really fired up after this occurred," Carlin McCarthy, a segment producer for the NBC News Now show "Top Story With Tom Llamas," told the Union Progress. "If we're not going to walk out over layoffs, what are we going to walk out over?"



Photo © Jon Schleuss

On February 9th, more than 200 of the 300 NBC News, MSNBC and TODAY Digital workers represented by the News Guild staged a one-day walkout that included a morning rally outside New York City's 30 Rockefeller Plaza. Their demands: reinstate laid-off workers to their previous positions and negotiate in good faith to eventually codify a contract that will include layoff protections for all News Guild workers. "It feels like a really incredible moment for our union because a supermajority of our union has decided to throw down and say this is serious and our colleagues are worth protecting," said Tate James, an NBC News video editor and the Guild's unit chair. "It's a huge step for our union to take."

The NBC Digital News Guild's big move follows a similarly high-profile walkout at The New York Times in December, the recently settled strike launched by employees of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram in November and, of course, the Newspaper Guild of Pittsburgh strike that has been ongoing since October 18, 2022.

This latest walkout was teased the day before and became an official plan after the Guild held one more round of contract negotiations with NBC that, like the many before it, ended without any tangible progress being made.

"We are disappointed by the News Guild's continued attempts to misrepresent the facts while we work in good faith with them to reach an agreement," an NBC News spokesperson said in an emailed statement to the Union Progress.

James first got to NBC News a little over five years ago and has witnessed both the birth of the Guild and the "slow deterioration" of its relationship with NBC management. He said that when the union first formally organized in December 2019, it didn't do so because of any specific wrongdoings on the company's part. "A big motivator for us to unionize in the first place was that we wanted to maintain the situation we saw and increase the stability," he said. "We wanted to make sure our benefits were not only good, but great and dependable."

Shortly after the union was formed, NBC unilaterally lowered the salaries of about one-third of the Guild's membership, James said. That led to a 2½-year NLRB battle that the Guild ultimately won and resulted in the Company dishing out just shy of \$400,000 to about 50 members in the form of returning their salaries to previous levels and back pay for the money they would have received before their pay was reduced.

Then, on Jan. 12, the Company laid off seven union members and, according to James, also de-unionized [sic] a group of MSNBC employees. "It felt a little like déjà vu," James said. "Even the federal courts can't get NBC to follow the law." For McCarthy, who serves as the Guild's first vice chair, those layoffs were the impetus for why "NBC has left us no other option" than to escalate their bargaining tactics to a walkout. "In the immediate aftermath of the layoffs, it was, enough is enough," she said. "We show up every day to work, we put the work in to make NBC News profitable and renowned the world over. They need to step up and recognize all the ways we contribute and, most importantly, our union."

Excerpted from an article by Joshua Axelrod, © 2023 Pittsburgh Union Progress, February 9, 2023

Tributes to Silent Microphones

Mark Traub



In a touching tribute, the *Today* family remembered the infectious laugh and caring devotion of longtime senior stage manager Mark Traub following his death from leukemia on December 6th.

Traub, who was diagnosed with cancer 18 months ago, was an integral presence on *Today* for 35 years. He received an emotional send-off and a champagne toast live on the show when he retired in 2019 after a 40-year career with NBC that began as a page.

The anchors shared their memories of Traub as a montage of photos played on *Today* December 7th. He was often recognized for his booming laugh that could be heard in the background during silly moments on *Today* over the years.

“I think when you look at these pictures you can see why he is so beloved,” Savannah Guthrie said on *Today*.

“He was so generous with his laugh, and he was so generous to all of us, and I have to say just this morning, our hearts are broken.”

“So many of our crew, their hearts are hurting, too, because he meant so much to us. He was devoted to all of us in a way that was so meaningful. And we needed him.”

During his NBC career, Traub worked on soap operas, sports and *Saturday Night Live* in addition to *Today*.

He loved travel, books, movies and cheering for the New York Yankees and the New York Giants. Traub was also a devoted husband to Lisa, his college sweetheart and wife of 33 years.

“He took care of us,” Hoda Kotb said on *Today*. “You felt cared for and looked after.”

Traub had a particularly close bond with Al Roker. The *Today* weatherman was not on the show Wednesday as he was recovering from some recent health issues, but he shared a heartfelt remembrance of Traub on Instagram.

“The laugh you always heard in the background for years on *Today* was our stage manager, Mark Traub, and when he retired, some of our spark diminished,” Al captioned a photo of the two of them. “Sadly, that light is gone after a long battle. Take care, Mark. You are so missed.”

(Ed. note: The article continues with tributes from Katie Couric, Dylan Dreyer and Deborah Roberts.)

Excerpted from an article by Scott Stump,
© Today.com, December 7, 2022



*Tributes to Silent Microphones***Eugene Garnes**

Eugene E. Garnes, age 67, a resident of Hyde Park, NY, passed away on January 28th after a 12-year battle with cancer. He was born on February 14, 1955, in Bronxville, NY to parents Elmer and Barbara (Kugler) Garnes. His dad was well known to many NBC folks as a television and radio engineer of long standing beginning in 1951.

On August 27, 1988, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Pleasantville, NY he married the love of his life, Melissa Spencer. Gene worked for many years as an engineer for NBC Universal at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, NYC. He was also a union rep for NABET-CWA Local 11, helping promote equality and fairness in the workplace, as well as settling disputes.

His education included a BFA in Communication Arts from New York Institute of Technology, courses in Negotiating and Writing Contract Language at George Meany Center for Labor Studies, and in Industrial Relations at Cornell University. He attended Riverside Military Academy.

Gene was a volunteer firefighter for 34 years, first for the Pleasantville Volunteer Fire Department, and then for the Town of Beekman. He was also the Vice President, on-air talent, and Broadcast and Technical Engineer for his radio station, WBXO Radio, as well as a board member for Pawling Public Radio.

Radio was his passion, and throughout his radio career, he worked with many big names in radio including Soupy Sales, Howard Stern, and Don Imus.

Gene was also a member of the Freemasons. In addition to his beloved wife Melissa Garnes, he is also survived by his loving children: Caroline Garnes-Ahmed and Matthew Garnes; his grandchildren Logan and Ava Garnes; and his siblings Janine Wilson and Glenn Garnes.

Gene was predeceased by his parents Elmer and Barbara, his brother Richard Garnes, and his sister Victoria Harrell.

A special memorial service was held by members of the Fire Department on January 31st at the McHoul Funeral Home in Fishkill, NY.

Memorial donations can be made to the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. www.mmrf.org.

Please visit www.mchoulfuneralhome.com for Gene's Book of Memories and online condolences.

© McHoul Funeral Home.



Tributes to Silent Microphones

Yossi Greenberg Remembered by Martin Fletcher



Yossi and driver colleague Amikam

Sad news to report - another member of the NBC family has passed away. Yossi Greenberg was a strong, honest man who was loved by everyone. Yossi was a stalwart of the NBC News Tel Aviv bureau, my cameraman for two decades, or rather, I was his correspondent, because with Yossi around, there was no doubt upon whom the sun was shining.

Yossi was gregarious, outspoken to a fault (definitely a fault) and one of those men who filled the room. With his shirt tucked tight into his trousers, shoulder and bicep muscles bulging, Yossi's swagger had a simple message: Get out of the way. His T-shirt said it all: No mercy!

Yet he was a rogue with a heart of gold. There was nothing Yossi would not do to help a colleague, friend and even competitor. Everyone who worked with him in Tel Aviv, or passed through the bureau, loved him. But among his greatest admirers were

his competitors in the other American networks, who were his friends in that tight-knit journalistic community in little Israel.

They came together again at Yossi's graveside, to say farewell to one of life's great personalities. RIP Yossi.

Vito Catalanotto

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Vito J. Catalanotto of Massapequa Park, New York, who passed away on January 16, 2023, at the age of 77. Vito was a film and videotape editor at NBC News for many years.

A mass was held on January 19th 2023 at the St. William the Abbot R. C. Church, Seaford, NY.

In lieu of flowers, a donation may be made in honor of Vito to the Sons of Italy, Marconi Lodge in Islip.

Please mail donation directly to:
 Marconi Lodge #2232
 333 Moffitt Boulevard
 Islip, NY 11751



Tributes to Silent Microphones

Jack Allison

On November 29, 2022, the world lost an amazing human. John Allison, “Jack” to most, passed away comfortably, with his family at his side. He was 72.

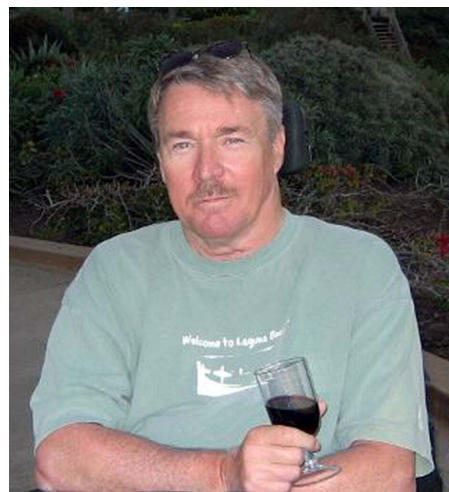
Jack was born November 6, 1950 in Los Angeles, CA to Dorothy and George Allison. The youngest of 6, Jack grew up in Long Beach, CA, surfing and sailing. After graduation from Cal State Long Beach, he continued the family legacy of media journalism. His career began at Channel 12 in Salt Lake City eventually moving on to KPNX Channel 12 in Phoenix. During his time, Jack and his team earned an Emmy® award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. In 1988, he joined KNBC Channel 4 in Burbank. Jack developed stories related to critical events in the LA region including the Northridge earthquake, Rodney King and the LA Riots. He loved being in the newsroom and his passion and talent was evident in the stories he developed.

Unforeseen life events resulted in an early retirement, which led Jack to Mary, “his angel.” Jack and Mary met while both were working for New Start Homes, fell in love and settled in Laguna Niguel. During the next 20 years, life ebbed and flowed, but they lived life to the fullest and rarely missed the opportunity for a new adventure. An avid reader and card player, Jack enjoyed bridge and Scrabble games with his brothers and sister and watching the sun set over the Pacific with a nice glass of wine.

Jack is survived and forever loved by his life partner Mary, his children Catherine (Patrick) Pritchett and Stephen (Shannon) Allison, his ex-wife Renee Allison, his extended children Derek (Cecilia) Wiscomb and Kara (Reno) Medina, 11 grandchildren and his brothers and sister.

Private services will be held on the waters of the Pacific in early Spring. Condolences to the family will be kindly accepted through the Guestbook.

<https://www.oconnormortuary.com/obituaries/john-jack-allison/>



Bob Pook

Bob Pook passed away February 11th at the age of 75. He was one of the original Graphic Designers on SNL. He was there from the start of the show. I loved working with him and loved listening to him tell his stories about the early days. Some of them were unbelievably hilarious.

He also designed and produced the great Letterman bumper graphics when Letterman was at NBC. After leaving NBC he went to work at CBS as the Art Director for CBS Sunday Morning. Pook will be missed.

From Ira Rappaport's Facebook Post.



Two SNL buddies: Dan Aykroyd and Bob Pook

Tributes to Silent Microphones

Eugene Lee



Photo by Tony Cenicola © The New York Times

For decades it was possible for Saturday night theatergoers in New York to get a double dose of Eugene Lee's work, though it's likely that few would have realized they were doing so. They might have taken in "Sweeney Todd," "Ragtime," "Wicked" or other Broadway shows whose striking sets were designed by Mr. Lee, then could arrive home in time to tune into "Saturday Night Live" — a show for which he served as production designer when it began in 1975, and on which he was still working this season. Mr. Lee, an inventive and remarkably prolific set designer, was also known for his decades with Trinity Repertory Company, a respected regional theater in Providence, R.I. He died on February 6th in Providence at age 83. His family announced the death, after a short illness that was not specified.

Mr. Lee won or shared three Tony Awards for his Broadway sets — for "Candide" in 1974, "Sweeney Todd" in 1979 and "Wicked" in 2003 — and six Emmy Awards for "Saturday Night Live," most recently in 2021. In theater, he was known for imaginative designs imbued with authenticity. "Eugene loved real objects, objects with history," Oskar Eustis, artistic director of the Public Theater, who worked with Mr. Lee at Trinity Rep and elsewhere, said by email, "but he'd use them in utterly unrealistic ways onstage."

He was known for reconfiguring entire theaters, as he did for "Candide," the musical based on Voltaire, which was staged at the 180-seat Chelsea Theater Center in Brooklyn in 1973 before moving to the much larger Broadway Theater in Midtown Manhattan the next year. Mr. Lee, working with his partner at the time, Franne Lee, and the director Harold Prince, turned the Chelsea into "a ramped and runwayed circus midway," The New York Times wrote, "surrounded by booths and mini-stages that could be changed, in a twinkling, from a corpse-littered battlefield to a vizier's seraglio." "The audience sat up, down and all around," The Times said, "on stools, benches and ballpark-style 'bleachers,' between the ramps or along the runways or anywhere they wouldn't be in the actors' way."

Five years later, for the Stephen Sondheim musical "Sweeney Todd" Mr. Lee brought pieces of an old iron foundry from Rhode Island and turned the Uris Theater into a stylized Industrial Age scene out of Victorian London". While working on those projects and others, he oversaw the sets for "Saturday Night Live," including creating the basic stage look that has remained largely unchanged since the show began in 1975.

Lorne Michaels, the show's creator and executive producer, said in a phone interview that when he began formulating "S.N.L.," he had recently seen "Candide" and was impressed with the look the Lees had created. "In those days, television was always on the floor," he said — filmed on one level, with a polished sort of look — but Mr. Lee, still working with Franne Lee, had a different idea. "He said, 'Well, I think we should probably build stages,'" Mr. Michaels said. "And that meant we'd build a balcony, basically turn the studio into a theater." "It looked like the city," Mr. Michaels added of the look Mr. Lee created. "Something about it rang true." Whoever was in the "S.N.L." cast in a given year, Mr. Michaels said, owed a debt to Mr. Lee. "He built this place for us to play in and do the show," he said, "and it feels whole when we're in it." In his work on "S.N.L." Mr. Lee encountered many up-and-coming comedians, and he helped some of them branch out, working on the Broadway shows of Gilda Radner, Colin Quinn and Will Ferrell. He also became production designer for "The Tonight Show" when Jimmy Fallon took it over in 2014. "When we were discussing the 'Tonight Show' set, he just had such a clear vision on the look and the stage and the curtain and the color of the wood," Mr. Fallon said by email. "Every inch of it had meaning."



Excerpted from an article by Neil Genzlinger, © The New York Times, February 10, 2023

Tributes to Silent Microphones

Perry Massey

Perry Edward Massey, Jr., age 95, formerly of Old Tappan, NJ (1956-1981), Calabasas, CA (1981-2019) and Pompton Plains, NJ (2019-2023), passed away peacefully on February 4, 2023, at Peggy's House Center for Hope surrounded by his loving family.

He is survived by his three children, Craig Lawrence Massey and his wife Marlene of Rio Grande, NJ, Bruce Allyn Massey and his wife, Lynn of Woodcliff Lake, NJ, and Barbara Leigh Massey of Hudson, NY, three grandchildren, Kate (Hain) Massey, Kevin Massey and Patrick Massey and four great grandchildren, Mira and Ezra Hain and Harrison and Julian Massey. He was predeceased by his loving wife of 65 years, Mona 'Pam' Lyght Massey, his parents, Perry E. Massey, Sr. and Marion Dean Massey, and his five siblings, Patricia (Nealon), Robert, John, William and Dean of which he was the eldest.

Perry was born and raised in Troy, NY. He graduated from Troy High School in 1945. Perry served in the US Army Air Corps. He got his start in radio while stationed at Craig Field in Selma, AL from 1945 -1946. He would go into town and do the announcing on a local radio station. Later, with help from the GI Bill, he took radio broadcasting courses at Emerson College in Boston and by 1948 had his own radio show on the local Boston Station. Perry received a Bachelor of Arts degree upon graduating in 1950.

Perry met the love of his life, Mona 'Pam' Lyght while at Emerson College. The couple graduated together in the spring of 1950 and were wed in the fall of the same year.

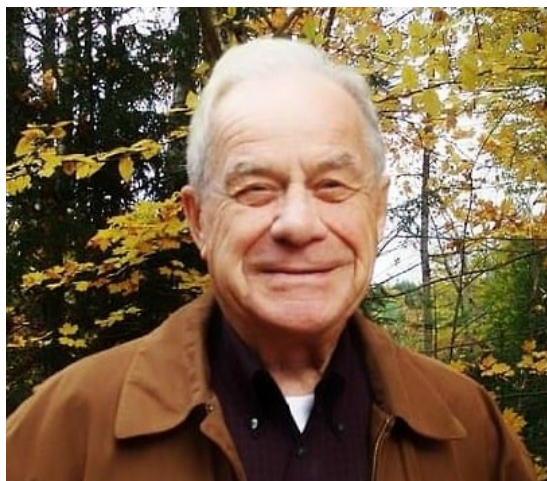
After graduation, Perry looked for work as an announcer at stations near his home in Upstate New York. He soon migrated to the Big Apple and got a job as a Page at the NBC studios in 30 Rockefeller Plaza. He went on to become a stage manager, an assistant director and a producer during the 1950's on The Milton Berle Show, Your Show of Shows with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca and The Home Show with Hugh Downs and Arlene Francis. For nearly 10 years he was a producer of The Tonight Show starring Jack Paar, and later with Johnny Carson. His late wife, Pam, appeared in the live television commercials with Hugh Downs on the Jack Paar Tonight Show.

Perry spent 41 years at NBC (31 in New York, 10 in Burbank, CA) working his way up the ladder to become Vice President of Network Programs Production by the time he retired. In 1991, he segued into a post-retirement job, joining the Screen Actors Guild, getting an agent and doing commercials and voiceover work. He worked for CBS and contributed to the creation of the Game Show Network.

Perry and his wife raised their family in Old Tappan, NJ where he was the President of the Board of Education for a number of years and served as an Elder at Trinity Reformed Church. Upon moving to Calabasas, CA in 1981 for his job, Perry stayed involved with the church, again serving as an Elder and a member of the choir. He coordinated a monthly Prime Timer's entertainment event for the senior members of the congregation and was a key member of the 'Fix It Crew' which became his new job after retirement in 1991.

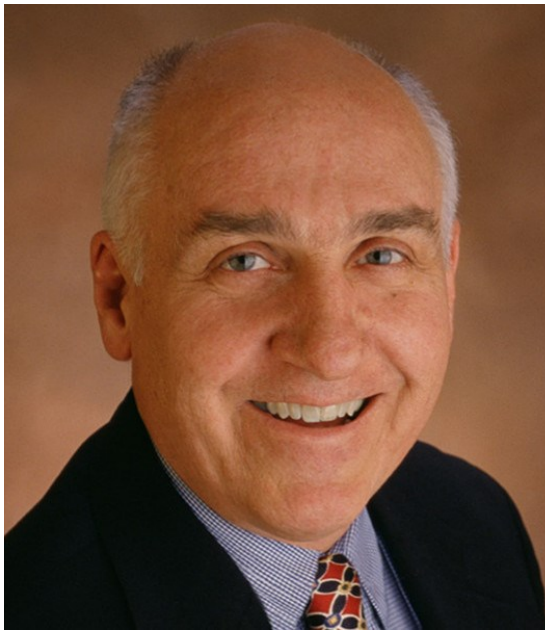
While his career was both exciting and demanding of his time, as important to Perry were his family and friends. He was a devoted husband to his wife Pam and his priority in life was the time spent with their children, grandchildren and, in recent years, great grandchildren. Before returning to the East coast in 2019, Perry made annual trips to visit his family in New Jersey, Upstate NY and Vermont. Always playing the host, Perry set out to entertain you whenever he had the chance. His friends were considered an extension of his family and if ever in need, he generously gave his time to help others. Perry touched many lives in his 95 years and has left an indelible imprint in our hearts. He will be missed dearly and his memory will be cherished. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the American Heart Association, National Center, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231 or www.heart.org.

© Dignitymemorial.com



Tributes to Silent Microphones

Billy Packer



Billy Packer, the sharp-eyed, opinionated lead college basketball analyst for NBC and CBS whose commentary was heard during every Final Four game of the N.C.A.A. men's basketball tournament from 1975 to 2008, died on January 26th in Charlotte, N.C. He was 82. His son Brandt said the cause was kidney failure.

A former point guard and assistant coach at Wake Forest University, Mr. Packer began as a broadcast analyst in the early 1970s as the men's tournament, and especially the Final Four, became the signature sports event known as March Madness. He took to the national stage easily with a fast-talking, straightforward style and opinions that provoked strong feelings among fans. "He had the ability to make every fan base feel he was against them, and he relished that role," Jim Nantz, who became Mr. Packer's partner at CBS Sports in 1991, said in a phone interview on Friday. "He wore the black hat better than anyone I'd ever seen." He added: "North Carolina thought he was in the bag for Duke. Duke thought he was pro-North Carolina. He loved it."

At NBC Sports, Mr. Packer worked with Dick Enberg and Al McGuire, a former coach at Marquette University, forming one of the most popular announcing teams in sports. Mr. Packer and Mr. McGuire had different views not just of basketball but also of the world, and they played off each other well, with Mr. Enberg acting as the straight man. Their partnership broke up in 1981, when the tournament's television rights were acquired by CBS. Switching networks, Mr. Packer worked with several partners, including Brent Musburger and Mr. Nantz, with whom he stayed until he retired in 2008.

Mr. Packer was largely serious on the air, without any schtick, unlike ESPN's exuberant Dick Vitale; he stuck instead to X's and O's and strategy, with a healthy dose of opinion about the game he was watching and the state of college basketball. "The poor guy is so serious about basketball that he can't have any fun with it," Mr. McGuire once said. "It's all life or death. There's no in-between with Billy. If it's on his mind, it jumps out of his mouth. But bless his heart, his mind is just as fast as his mouth."

Anthony William Paczkowski was born on Feb. 25, 1940, in Wellsville, N.Y., near the Pennsylvania border, and moved to Bethlehem, Pa., where his father, also named Anthony, was hired to coach the Lehigh University men's basketball team. The elder Mr. Packer changed the family name soon afterward. Billy's mother, Lois (Cruikshank) Packer, was a homemaker.

Billy played guard at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., and led the team to two Atlantic Coast Conference titles and to the Final Four in 1962, which the Demon Deacons lost to Ohio State. He totaled 1,316 points in his career, finishing second in scoring in each of his three years. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics in 1962 and returned to Wake Forest in 1966 as an assistant coach. He held that job until 1970 while also working in the furniture business. In the early 1970s, while Mr. Packer was sales manager for a radio station in Winston-Salem, a friend asked him to fill in for the announcer of an A.C.C. game being televised by a syndicator. "I wasn't nervous," he told The Chapel Hill News in 1974. "I figured I'd just walk in and tell the people what I saw, and that's it. And that's been my approach throughout."

He became a regular on syndicated broadcasts and was hired by NBC in 1974, putting him in place to be at the center of college basketball for the next 34 years.

In addition to his son Brandt, a golf producer at NBC Sports and Golf Channel, Mr. Packer is survived by another son, Mark, the host of a daily television program on the ACC Network, which covers A.C.C. sports; his daughter, Liz Kimberly; four grandchildren; his sister, Carol Dague; and his brother, Richard. His wife, Barbara (Sucansky) Packer, died last year.

By Richard Sandomir, © The New York Times, January 27, 2023

If any former NBCers want to offer condolences to Bill Packer's son, Mark, and Billy's family they can reach out to him at pack@packsmack.com.

*Tributes to Silent Microphones***Michael Sherlock**

Michael J. Sherlock, 85, of Lavallette, NJ, passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on Friday, December 23, 2022.

Born in Syracuse, NY, Michael lived in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ, for the majority of his life before retiring to Lavallette 25 years ago.

Michael led a progressive 35-year career with NBC in New York City, NY, culminating in his appointment as the Company's President of Operations and Technical Services. His achievements in the broadcasting industry were recognized by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences which bestowed two Emmy® Awards on him. The first celebrated Sherlock's pioneering the first television broadcast in Stereo and the second was for Lifetime Achievement in Technology.

Michael held several leadership roles in the broadcast industry including European Broadcasters Union, National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and SMPTE as an early pioneer of HDTV.

Michael was a dedicated and faithful parishioner of both Corpus Christi R.C. Church in Hasbrouck Heights and St. Pio of Pietrelcina R.C. Church in Lavallette, NJ, where he was a Trustee and served on its finance committee. He also served on Archbishop Gerety's Committee on the Laity and was Co-founder; Co-chair of the Newark Archdiocese Priest's Pension Fund; and was on the Board of Trustees for Felician College. For his lifetime of service to the Church, Michael was appointed Knight of the Holy Sepulchre.

Michael was preceded in death by his son, Michael DeCarlo Sherlock, and his parents, John J. and Mary (Wilson) Sherlock. Michael will be forever held in the hearts of his loving wife of 64 years, Anna (DeCarlo) Sherlock, and adoring daughters, Margaret Sherlock (Kate) of Lavallette, NJ, Mary Del Guidice (Victor) of Mullica Hills, NJ, Marjorie Sherlock of Colts Neck, NJ, and his daughter-in-law, Amy Sherlock of Texas; his brothers, Daniel (Jackie) and Francis (Norah); his brother-in-law, Anthony DeCarlo (Heather); sister-in-law, Patricia (DeCarlo) DeLouis (Ralph), and three grandchildren, John, Titus, and Steel.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on December 30, 2022, at St. Pio of Pietrelcina R.C. Church, Lavallette, NJ. Entombment will follow to St. Gabriel Cemetery & Mausoleum, Marlboro, NJ.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to either St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or Ronald McDonald Camp in his memory. Condolences may be expressed to the family by visiting www.ryanfuneralhome.com. Timothy E. Ryan Home for Funerals 706 Highway 35 North Lavallette, NJ 08735 (732) 793-9000

Adapted from material published by © The Star-Ledger from Dec. 27 to Dec. 28, 2022.



Peacock History

How Groucho Saved "You Bet Your Life"
By Andy Marx



I hate to admit it, but I sometimes find it hard to imagine life without Netflix. Whether it's watching all six seasons of "Lost" in a week or enjoying some cool documentary, Netflix has, for better or worse, definitely become a part of my life. So, you can imagine my delight when I happened to discover Netflix had added the legendary '50s TV show, "You Bet Your Life" to its streaming service. The reason for my delight? The host of "You Bet Your Life" was none other than my grandfather, the one and only Groucho Marx.

It didn't take long for me to devour all the episodes available on Netflix, and as I watched Groucho delivering his rapid-fire quips to the befuddled contestants, I couldn't

help thinking how amazing it was that I was sitting in the comfort of my den watching a TV show that made its debut in 1950, starring my grandfather. But I also couldn't stop thinking about how close every one of those classic episodes of "You Bet Your Life" came to being destroyed many years ago and how my grandfather and I managed to stop that from happening.

The year was 1973 and I was a 21-year-old right out of UCLA film school. Though most of my days were spent looking for a job, I did manage to squeeze in lunch with my 83-year-old grandfather at least once a week.

Lunches at my grandfather's house in Beverly Hills in those days were usually full of surprises, especially since you never knew who might be there. Among my favorite celebrity sightings at my grandfather's house in those days were Alice Cooper and Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood. This particular day, my grandfather asked me to be ready to accompany him on the piano, since he planned to sing for the invited guests: Jack Nicholson, Elliott Gould and the great French mime, Marcel Marceau. Fortunately, I got some musical ability from my mother's side of my family – my other grandfather was the legendary songwriter, Gus Kahn, who wrote such evergreens as "It Had to Be You," "Makin' Whoopee" and "Dream a Little Dream."

As Nicholson began telling everyone about his latest movie, "The Last Detail," which would be released in a few months, the phone rang and my grandfather, never one to have his lunch or a good story interrupted, asked me to answer it.

I walked into the kitchen and picked up the phone. "I work at the NBC storage warehouse in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey," the caller said. "We've got several boxes of 16mm reels of film from 'You Bet Your Life' and we were wondering if Mr. Marx wants any of it. If not, we're going to destroy all of it tomorrow." "Destroy it?" I asked incredulously. "Why would you do that?" "We're trying to clear space for the newer shows. There's a lot of stuff from the '50s and '60s that we're getting rid of. If Mr. Marx would like it, we'll be happy to send all of the reels to him."

I told the man to hang on and ran back into the dining room. "Grandpa Groucho, there's a man calling from the NBC warehouse in New Jersey, who says they've got several boxes of reels of 'You Bet Your Life' they're going to destroy unless you want them." "Tell him to burn them for all I care," my grandfather said, eliciting laughs from his guests. These days it was hard to tell if he was just doing his grouchy act for his invited audience or truly didn't care.

"Grandpa, you don't really want them doing the same thing they did to Oscar Levant's show," I said, referring to what had happened to all the copies of his good friend, Oscar Levant's classic show from the '50s, "Information, Please," when all of the kinescopes that existed were destroyed. "He's right," Nicholson chimed in. "Groucho, that stuff is classic. Listen to your grandson. Let them send the reels to you." "Alright," my grandfather said. "Maybe it'll be fun to watch them again."

Excited, I ran back and told the man to send the boxes to my grandfather's house. And though my grandfather didn't seem terribly excited about the prospect of getting a few boxes of 16mm prints, I couldn't wait. My grandfather had a small screening room in his house with a 16mm projector and I figured I'd spend an afternoon watching the episodes that were now on their way to Beverly Hills.

As it turned out, it would take more than an afternoon to watch the episodes. Two weeks later, I got a call from my grandfather, who sounded more than a little angry. "Get over here right now," he growled. "There are five UPS trucks in front of my house. Each one of them is filled with boxes of 16mm reels of "You Bet Your Life."

I rushed over to my grandfather's house and sure enough, there were five UPS trucks parked in front. Each driver was wheeling dozens of boxes of film into the house.

"Where would you like us to put all of this?" one of the drivers asked me. "There are over 500 boxes and each box contains ten reels of film."

5,000 reels of film, I thought to myself, as I watched the small army of UPS drivers putting boxes in any empty space they could find, including a now-vacated bedroom that once belonged to Groucho's last wife from whom he was now divorced. I couldn't help thinking this was beginning to resemble a scene from a Marx Brothers film, as boxes of film were stacked to the ceiling, literally taking up entire rooms. I also thought back to the man from NBC, who told me there were "a few boxes of film," an understatement if ever there was one.

By the time the UPS drivers left later that day, my grandfather's house – which was quite large – was filled from end to end with boxes of "You Bet Your Life" reels. And even though I knew my grandfather was angry, I was grateful that we had managed to save "You Bet Your Life" from extinction by NBC.

A month later, in early 1974, after checking the contents of the over 500 boxes and doing a little investigating, I had figured out that NBC had not only sent every reel of the original "You Bet Your Life" show, but also all the copies of "The Best of Groucho," a syndicated version that included the show's greatest episodes culled from the show's original run.

Realizing there was a treasure trove of classic TV sitting in my grandfather's house, I had a hunch that maybe other people besides myself would be interested in seeing some, if not all of it. After all, interest in Groucho was at a fever pitch, as the honors and accolades poured in from around the world — the Marx Brothers were even set to receive an honorary Academy Award that year.

It turned out I was right. The next day, I, along with John Guedel, the show's creator and producer were sitting in an office at local station KTLA, where we pitched the head of programming our idea of running "The Best of Groucho" in one of their late-night timeslots. Though the executive loved the idea, he had one demand: Someone was going to have to go through every show, so they would have an idea of what they were running.

That someone turned out to be me. As I said earlier, I had been looking for a job and now I had one. I was paid \$150 a week and my duties consisted of spending eight hours a day at my grandfather's house, watching as many episodes as possible and archiving every one. As an added bonus, I ate lunch with my grandfather every day and he even took time to watch several episodes a day himself. I never told anyone, but I probably would've paid them \$150 a week to let me do it.

Two months later, "The Best of Groucho" appeared on KTLA, the same week my grandfather received his honorary Academy Award, and was soon running on hundreds of stations throughout the country. Since then, the shows have been released on VHS, DVD and now the various streaming services for many millions to enjoy, all because of a phone call from some guy working in a warehouse in New Jersey asking if we wanted him to send us some 16mm reels of "You Bet Your Life."

Am I glad I happened to answer that phone call that day? What else can I say but, "you bet your life," I am.

Andy Marx is a writer and photographer living in Los Angeles. He can be reached through his website, andymarx.com. Check out his Jazz Tribute CD to his other grandfather, Gus Kahn.

The Kickers

It's Not Just People who are Retiring...



This is about preparing for the end of a life. The end of three lives, actually. The end is not imminent. But the three personalities — Harry, Jim and Phil — are old now. One has arthritis. They need care that they cannot get on the 13-acre spread where they have lived for years. They are not-very-wild peacocks that strut and preen and roam in a parklike oasis in the quintessentially built-up city. Home is the grounds of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, on Amsterdam Avenue at 111th Street.

Sometimes they promenade on the avenue. Sometimes they do a little flying. But on Saturday, Harry, Jim and Phil will retire to Animal Nation, a nonprofit rescue center and sanctuary in South Salem, N.Y.

“Having them go is a sadness for us, but it’s what’s best for them,” said the Very Rev. Patrick Malloy, dean of the cathedral. “Much as we love them, it’s because we love them” that they are being sent away. “We want them to be happy in the last years of their lives,” he said.

Peacocks have lived on the cathedral grounds for 50 years, ever since the Bronx Zoo donated some chicks. Jim and Harry arrived in the early 2000s, Phil a few years later. The three were named for former officials of the cathedral or the adjacent Cathedral School. They got a new residence in 2017, a hutch designed to be consistent with the cathedral’s Gothic architecture.

“They live an idyllic life here,” Dean Malloy said. “People feed them. We feed them. We try to give them exactly what they like, so in addition to foraging for worms, they love almonds and they like kale. It is a superfood. But no matter what, they are still aging.” He said cathedral officials had “made a tough decision when they said ‘This isn’t safe for them, this isn’t a good life for them.’” Harry, Jim and Phil will join five peacocks at Animal Nation, along with 250 other animals, from cows and sheep to llamas.

Dean Malloy said the cathedral was looking into replacing the birds but that there were concerns about bringing in peachicks. The cathedral is also home to red-tail hawks that “like to swoop upon little things,” he said. Young peacocks could be vulnerable.

Excerpted from an article by James Barron, © The New York Times, Jan. 20, 2023.

Photos by Colin Schappi for © The New York Times



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