

My friend, the TV, takes me along on a glorious ride past reality

According to the statistics, television is the average American's most constant companion. Men and women spend more time with their TVs than they do with their spouses, and kids spend more time with their TVs than they do with their parents.

I realize how bad things were the other day when the spouse read to me from the paper — I was watching "Dallas" at the time — a list of programs that were to be cancelled by NBC. My pulse quickened and my heart fluttered. "Brett Maverick" was going. How could they? I like James Garner. "Flamingo Road" was going. How could they? I like cheap trash and flashy blonds, brunettes and redheads. I have always liked Howard Duff, and although he doesn't compare to J.R. or Robert Vaughn in a particularly nasty role, he's enough of an old schemer to keep my attention.


How could they get rid of a program that has this kind of blurb in the TV guide: "Lute Mae seeks revenge by trying to kill her treacherous ex-lover, Michael Tyrone, who has taken up with her daughter, Constance." That's a formula for TV success if I ever heard one. Isn't this the program in which someone is always asking TV's favorite question: "Are you having an affair with my husband?"

I complained to the spouse that I would miss seeing all those wonderfully dressed people in that beautiful mansion with all the stonework inside. She told me that wasn't "Flamingo Road," that was "Falconcrest."

Well, I said, how are we ever going to find out then if the head of Charlie's Angels detective agency ever gets his sight back and gets even with that phony psychiatrist for seducing his wife, Lute Mae? She said I was confused. John Forsythe had sold his private detective agency and was now an oil millionaire who wasn't blind anymore and he was married to John Derek's ex-wife who was almost seduced by the phony psychiatrist who is being written out of the series next year because he is asking too much money. Or something like that.

ANYWAY, she said I shouldn't miss the next episode of whatever that program is because John Forsythe's wife before he bought a private detective agency — Joan Collins — was going to be in a love scene where she is almost nude. Since I can remember centerfolds further back than the time when John Forsythe had black hair, I can remember seeing Joan Collins sans clothing about the same time that Lute Mae was appearing in centerfolds sans clothing. I determined that I would watch Falconcrest the next time it was on. Then, the spouse hit me with another news flash which sent me reeling. WKRP was going to be cancelled, she said. I felt lower than the guy sitting on the end of the picnic table discovering that the Miracle Whip had been cleaned out of the bottle. Oh, no. That means no more Venus Fly Trap, no more Johnny Fever, no more Big Guy, no more Lonnies. Oh, no. No more Lonnies Anderson. I discovered her.


TO SERVE something for breakfast, slice French bread or rolls into 1/2 inch slices, dip in your favorite French toast mixture and saute. Serve with powdered sugar or syrup. Enjoy the results you get when you place an Observer & Eccentric Classified Ad to buy, sell or find something.



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Bob Wisler

AS I LOOK at it impartially, I realize that I don't really watch that TV much and I watch very few TV programs all the way through. What I really like to do is lie in a prone position reading the newspaper, magazines or a book and looking up at the TV every once in a while to take in a visually appealing sight, like Lonnies Anderson, or to listen to a funny line.

That the TV is running constantly, attempting at all times to develop visually appealing sights and funny lines to entice me to watch is somehow comforting. The noise of these activities also is somehow comforting. It's like you're not really alone against the big, bad world, you've got your friend, the TV, in there with you.

The genius of Aaron Spelling — I maintain it is Spelling, the creator of Love Boat, Fantasy Island, Charlie's Angels, etc., and not Fred Silverman who has had the biggest influence on TV — is that he recognizes most viewers are like me. Viewers don't really want to watch anything on television that requires concentration, they merely want to look at TV to occupy their brain so that the brain won't get tired out fighting the daily battle against all the ravages that modern brains are exposed to.

THE TROUBLE is our brains have received so much comforting by TV that we can't distinguish TV from reality. This is why news program and Ted Koppel have become popular. News programs have become realistic TV programs which don't have any bearing on our day-to-day reality. I mean, can you find ten people who really think that Al Haig is for real?

Most people have a vague recollection of seeing him some place before, like maybe he was the police inspector in "Casa Blanca," or in some series, perhaps, with Robert Culp.

I personally would like to see Al Haig move into the "Dallas" series to become the ruthless father figure which has been missing ever since Jack died in the plane crash. He could be J.R.'s and Bobby's long-lost uncle from California, a retired Army general turned capitalist who has secretly bought up all the Ewing Company's stock and now plans to fire J.R. and replace him with Richard Nixon.

Al could become another J.R., but more sophisticated. He wouldn't talk like J.R. with all that mush in his mouth, he would use a rapid-fire delivery, convoluted sentences and florid, arcane language almost impossible to follow and he would fly around the world with pretty blond stewardesses serving him drinks while he negotiates with various Central American, South American and Middle Eastern potentates.

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Or did we see this on television before?

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comment

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Success from failure

Mother knew best, again

The simplest things sometimes can have a profound effect on people's lives. Take The Stroller, for instance. If it hadn't been for his mistaking a teacher's rich Pennsylvania Dutch accent, he might today have been a retired mail carrier in his home town instead of a journalist.

Then just think of all the things he would have missed. Interviewing the giants of the sporting world. Riding with speedboat racer Gar Wood at world-record speed in his famous Miss America. Throwing out the first ball when the Detroit Tigers open their major league baseball season.

At the time he reached that special turning point, the Stroller had been forced to leave school to help his widowed mother raise her four daughters. And he was wondering which type of career he would choose.

THEN CAME word that our little town was due to get general delivery of mail and that an examination for new mail carriers was to be held.

That was it. The Stroller decided to take the examination. He figured that not only would it be a steady job, but also, after so many years, he could retire and live a life of ease.

The day of the examination he looked over the applicants and felt confident he could win one of the positions. And he became even more confident when he saw that the examiner was to be Prof. Harold Knauss, one of the teachers he had in school.

The professor was a kind fellow, but possessed a rich Dutch accent. At the moment, this language barrier did not bother the Stroller. He waded through most of the tests with ease. He had been at the head of his class in school and felt there was no reason he couldn't lead the field in the postal exam.

TOWARD THE close of the morning came the spelling contest. Over the years The Stroller had never lost a spelling bee, and he had little reason to believe he wouldn't win this one.

Prof. Knauss read off the words that the applicants were supposed to spell. Then, near the end of the contest, he asked that we spell besiege. Now it so happens that the Pennsylvania Dutch never pronounce "hard" Gs. Instead the Gs come out sounding like the letter C. So The Stroller, with all the confidence in the world, stood up and spelled "beseech." And, much to his



the stroller  
W.W. Edgar

surprise, he was ruled out of the spelling contest. He not only lost spelling points, but that loss eliminated him from the entire mail-carrier contest.

In those few, brief moments his dream of being a postal employee and eventually retiring to a life of ease was shattered.

He was heartstruck when he told his mother that he lost. She was a bit upset, but fighter that she was, she consoled her son in this dark hour.

"Never mind," she said. "Someday things will change, and you might be better off than if you had won the job."

How right she was. That defeat only spurred The Stroller on to better things. And he has had the thrills of his life — thrills that never would have been his in a mail carrier's uniform.



discover  
Michigan  
Bill Stockwell

DID YOU KNOW that the names of most Michigan counties are Indian words, or the derivatives of Indian words, or names? Michigan itself is derived from the Indian words "Michi-gama" meaning large lake.

Alpena County's name comes from the Indian word meaning "a good partridge county" and Keweenaw County comes from the Indian word meaning "portage" or place where portage is made.

Other examples: Leelanau, meaning "delight of life," Muskegon-derived from the Indian word meaning "river with marshes," and Shiawassee meaning "river that twists about."

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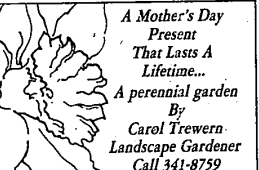
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