

Variations on old TV themes will top ratings

Some are variations on old favorites, some are totally new ideas. All of them are bad enough, I think, to go straight to the top.

4 Bob Hope Salutes Macramé. At press time, Hope had lined up the largest collection of comedians (187) and blondes with large breasts (242) ever to appear in an hour-long television program. Skits and musical numbers will focus on the fast-growing hobby craft of macramé.

7 The Families Feud. A new twist on the familiar game show has Mafia families from across the country competing for the numbers, prostitution and drug rackets. In the "Sink or Swim" segment, one contestant, wearing a pair of cement overshoes, enters a 10-foot tank of water. To win the big money, he must answer five questions on the topic of his choice (sports, famous ports, words beginning with the letter Q, etc.) before going under. Wink Martindale hosts.

8:30 P.M.

7 The Love Sub. It's a round-the-world cruise for adventure, romance and effecting foreign-policy decisions as a U.S. navy clear submarine with a co-ed crew stabilizes conflicts in the world's numerous war zones. Brought to you by Beirut After-Shave, "the after-shave so bracing that it can keep an entire Israeli commando patrol feeling fresh all day long. Remember: Today's your Beirut day. We invade at 0800 hours.

This week's tales: 1. A lonely Wave general (Grace Kelly, in her first screen appearance in nearly 30 years) falls in love with a young ensign (Erik Estrada). 2. A Buddhist nun (Barbi Benton) has a crush on the brooding, intellectual sailor (Donny Most) who rescued her. 3. Lots of girls in bikinis run around the ship's pool while Van Johnson and June Allyson rekindle an old love affair.

9 P.M.

4 Tax\$\$. New series based on exciting true stories from the files of local tax assessors. Robert Ulrich stars as a free-wheeling, hard-loving Sunbelt Strip tax assessor Sev Factor. "Tax assessors live in a dazzling world of fast-paced home inspections, sexy lady homeowners and high-speed car chases," producer Aaron Spelling said. "We've tried to capture that, honestly and realistically." Tonight's episode: Factor has

24 hours to prove that he was correct in assessing a movie star's house at \$335,467, although the blue book lists homes of similar design at \$487,243. An added problem: Somebody's out to kill him.

9:30 P.M.

7 Mork, Mindy and Milk. In an effort to boost this show's flailing ratings, Michigan Gov. William Milliken joins the cast as Mork and Mindy's full-grown son Milk. The show's producers assure us that the focus still will be on comedy, but there also will be room for serious discussions of budget-balancing income tax increases and the state aid formula for schools.

50 Kennedy at the Movies. Host Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., provides anecdotes about the famous politicians he has known and answers political trivia questions, interspersed with old movies like "The Last Hurrah." From time to time his brother Tom Kennedy (host of the popular TV game show "Name That Tune") will drop in for chit chat.

56 The Arts in America: A Perspective. Taped at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York, this series focuses on the Arts of the United States: what they are, where they've been, where they're headed. Tonight: Comedian Art Metrano and his influence on Western culture. Future programs will look at Art Carney, Art Buchwald, Art Godfrey (we may know him as Arthur, but he's just plain Art to his dear friends) and Art Houtteman. Renowned Art instructor Jon Gnagy hosts. Sponsored by the Institute for Encouraging the Arts in America.

10 P.M.

7 The Narrow World of Sports. Scheduled in live coverage of the World Cross Country Water Skiing Championships from the Great Salt Lake, Utah. In a film segment, Curt Gowdy and Vidal Sasson go skeet shooting in the wilds of northern Canada, and Gowdy shares his recipe for roast

2 The Maude Squad. Three members of the original cast of "Maude" — Bea Arthur, Bill Macy and Adrienne Barbeau — return to prime-time television with a new angle. They're outrageous, hilarious, relevant as ever — and now they're cops. They're the Tuckahoe Police Department's hottest unit ever: the Maude Squad, badgering criminals into surrendering with yells and insults. With Gerald O'Loughlin as "The Lieutenant." Another Aaron Spelling production.

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comment

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Family Day for UncleGeorge

IT CAME spilling out like one word — UncleGeorge.

His given name was George Alger, one of six children and my mother's oldest brother.

Maybe it was because he wasn't a father himself that UncleGeorge seemed "fatherly" to his 20 nieces and nephews. He had a way of making a special occasion even more special and of making us feel pretty important.

Actually, we thought of him as our swinging bachelor uncle, an image he didn't try to alter. He once showed us what he said was a key to the Playboy Club in Chicago, and he mentioned something about meeting a "centerfold." I thought he meant a football player.

But when we got older, we realized that being single didn't mean piloting a convertible and dating a gorgeous new blonde every night. After all, UncleGeorge dated Mabel Barnes for something like 17 years before settling down at age 50 or so to a happy married life.

"I guess I was a little slow to realize what a good person Mabel is," he told me recently when I visited him in the hospital.

Slow, maybe, but right.

So the closest he got was second fiddle — a middle name.

AND HE loved the river. Most of his adult life was spent within a few feet of the Detroit River. The hydroplane races meant great family gatherings at UncleGeorge's — even back when his apartment was no bigger than a shoebox and the kitchen was nothing more than a growth off the combination living room/bedroom.

I know he sold paper products. But it wasn't until my visit in the hospital that I realized how much he lived and loved his job. He told me with some amusement how, when he became very ill and delirious, he screamed at Mabel, "Fill that order, Fill that order." I tried to smile.

He introduced us to the first plastic foam cups and predicted they'd "replace glass." Indeed they did, in many ways. He loved working, and his loyalty to his customers inspired the same in return.

IT WASN'T until just recently I found one of my impressions wasn't quite true. He loved the water and enjoyed boating and fishing with friends and relatives. But when it came time to baiting a hook — well, that's what friends and relatives are for.

He once claimed a worm bit him, and that's why he'd rather watch than bait. Then there was the day my dad was reeling in a muskie and UncleGeorge took a look at its teeth and nearly hopped out the other side of the boat.

So I always figured he was squeamish. But he recently told me a lot about his childhood, including how he and his brothers and sisters hunted frogs and caught fish for food when spending summers at a cottage. UncleGeorge would skin the frogs — or so he said.

I KNOW how much he appreciated families. In our last talk, he reminded me of how wonderful my parents are, of how good my dad is to my mother and how no one cooks quite as well as my mom. He spoke glowingly of my cousins and brothers and predicted my youngest brother will do great things.

Sunday when the family gathered, I was thankful that holidays like Mother's Day and Father's Day force us to take time from busy schedules to honor the people we love most.

The problem is we ignore other important people. Maybe what we need is a Family Day or Friend's Day to give us time to pause and think about all the wonderful people in our lives — while they are still in our lives.

Can you hear that, UncleGeorge?

overheard over coffee

Want to know what the people of southeast Michigan are thinking? Ask your friendly Realtor. He/she is speaking for you, according to the board's recent announcement.

Realtors in suburban Oakland and Wayne counties say their petition campaign taking Congress to lower federal budget deficits is having initial success. "Through earlier letter writing campaigns, the Michigan delegation was made aware of our demands on behalf of voters from throughout the state, and the wishes of their constituents should now be clear to them," said Lloyd Mason, president of the Western Wayne Oakland Board of Realtors.

"Working through the Michigan Association of Realtors, our board and others collected 300,000 signatures demanding such relief," said Mason.

Golly, we hardly need to bother electing congressmen this year. The real estate folks can just collect petition signatures and speak for us.

"The basic message on these petitions was to cut budget deficits now to help lower interest rates and get the economy moving again," said Mason. "The Michigan petitions were trucked to Washington and combined with thousands of others from across the country for presentation to Congress."

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