

## FAMILY FARE

## LET'S TALK

### It's summertime: What are the kids watching?

By Suzanne Gill

Memorial Day and the Fourth of July have come and gone, but two months of summer vacation remain. Camp, swimming lessons and family vacations may fill up some of the time, but there are still vast stretches when they'll moan they have "nothing to do." That's when the TV is most likely to come on.

Summer is a traditionally dreary time for adult viewing, with endless reruns and not-ready-for-prime-time experimental pilots, but it can be even worse for kids. It seems that when school's out, all the television programmers go on vacation, too.

There are, however, some alternatives. If your kids turned off public television when they graduated from *Sesame Street*, try going back now for *Square One TV* or *Reading Rainbow*. *Square One* gives math a new spin and includes a *Dragnet*-style serialized mystery that keeps kids coming back for more. *Reading Rainbow* offers a different story every day, including *Dive to the Coral Reefs*, *The Robbery at the Diamond Dog Diner* and *Barn Dance* in July. These bright, entertaining tales might help spark interest in a weekly trip to the library, where kids will find many of the titles available for further perusal.

If you're headed for the video store, look for these recommended titles: *How the Leopard Got His Spots*, *The Amazing Bone* and *Other Stories*, and *Madeline*.

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Roddy McDowall plays a millionaire with a grisly sense of fun in *Deadly Game*, Wednesday on USA.

### Fred Dryer pursued athletics before beginning acting hunt

By Polly Vonetes

**Q: My husband and I are great fans of Fred Dryer, star of *Hunter*. What can you tell us about him? We know he was a football player, but nothing else. We also liked Dee Dee McCall much better than any of his other leading ladies.**  
—Mrs. T.W. Taylor, Prescott, Ariz.

**A:** Fred Dryer was born July 6, 1946, and raised in the Los Angeles suburb of Hawthorne. He began his athletic career as a baseball pitcher in high school, and only turned to football when his throwing arm collapsed. He went on to play at San Diego State and was signed by the New York Giants in 1969. In 1972 he was traded to the Rams, and in 1981 Dryer was abruptly dropped from their roster after a contract dispute. But several seasons before he was dropped by the Rams, he had set his sights on television. He had approached NBC for a chance to do some sports broadcasting and was advised to try acting. He then began studying with acting coach Nina Foch and decided in 1982 that he really wanted to be an actor. Since beginning his acting career he has appeared in numerous television movies and guest-starred on many series. His feature films include *Cannonball Run* and a starring role in *Death Before Dishonor*. He has also directed numerous episodes of *Hunter*. Divorced, he has one daughter and resides in an apartment in Los Angeles.

**Q: I would like to get all the information I can on James Arness — about his family and what he is doing now. I would also like to know his birthdate.**  
—Bonnie M., New York

**A:** James Arness has the unique distinction of having starred in the longest-running dramatic series on network television. For 20 years (1955-1975) he was Matt Dillon on *Guns, Smokey*. He was born May 26, 1923, in Minneapolis. He fought in World War II as a combat infantryman and was wounded at Anzio in 1943. After the war he drifted to Hollywood, picking up odd jobs and bit parts in films. His friend and mentor, John Wayne, recommended him for the role of Matt Dillon. All during the series' long run, Arness was known as a loner. "Aloneness," he is quoted as saying, "is absolutely essential to my life." A divorce from his wife of many years in



Fred Dryer

1963 and the suicide of his daughter in 1975 were both borne silently. Since *Guns, Smokey* he has made few appearances on television, but he recently appeared as an older Marshall Dillon in *Guns, Smokey: The Last Apache*.

**Q: Whatever happened to Barney Phillips? We recently saw him starring with Jack Webb in an old *Dragnet* rerun?**  
—Dorothy Keane, Sugarloaf, Pa.

**A:** Barney Phillips, who starred as Sgt. Ed Jacobs on *Dragnet*, died in 1982 at the age of 69.

**Q: In the last several shows of the Bill Cosby series being shown in the Paducah, Ky., area, there is something on Bill's left upper chest on his coat, sweaters, etc., which looks like an "S" and "P" superimposed on each other. What is it, and what does it mean?**  
—Mildred Christoff, Metropolis, Ill.

**A:** Bill Cosby had a special pin made in honor of Sammy Davis, Jr., who died last May, and wears it in his memory. The initials are SD with a JR in smaller letters underneath.

**Q: One of last season's *Knots Landing* was dedicated to the man who played Eric Fairgate. Was there a special reason for it? Has he passed away?**  
—Shirley Johnson, Hibbing, Minn.

**A:** Steve Shaw, the actor who played Eric Fairgate, has passed away.

Send your questions about the world of entertainment to: Features Dept., Let's Talk, P.O. Box 961009, Fort Worth, Texas 76161-1009. Because of the volume of mail, only questions of general interest can be answered.

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