

## LET'S TALK

### Columbo's first name a mystery; sing low, sweet Marilyn

By Taylor Michaels

**Q:** My boyfriend and I were watching a Columbo movie a while back and wondered what, if any, first name he uses in the shows. We are both thinking it's Frank, but he just doesn't look like a Frank. Also, has it ever been mentioned what Mrs. Columbo's first name is? —Pennie Sroka, Chicago Heights, Ill.

**A:** Lt. Columbo may have revealed the names of countless conspirators, murderers and thieves, but never in the more than 20 years he's been on television has he bothered to mention his own first name. As a matter of fact, we know more of the personal history of his wife, Kate Columbo (Kate Mulgrew in *Kate Loves a Mystery*), who was never seen in the Columbo shows and vice versa, than we do of the intrepid police lieutenant.

*Columbo* began as one element in the NBC Sunday Mystery Movie rotation, which also featured *McCloud* and *McMillan and Wife*. It was very popular and threatened to become a series, but Peter Falk, the show's talented workhorse, felt a movie or two here and there was enough. (He was said to have earned almost a quarter of a million dollars per show.) Incidentally, Falk wasn't the first choice of show creators Richard Levinson and William Link. Both Lee J. Cobb and Bing Crosby were first offered the role; Crosby was reportedly too rich and too caught up in his golf game to bother.

**Q:** Can you tell me what movies besides *Dead Poets Society* and *White Fang* have featured actor Ethan Hawke? —S.B., North Huntingdon, Pa.

**A:** In addition to his fine work in the two films you mention, catch Hawke in *Explorers*, *A Midnight Clear*, *Mystery Date* and *Dad*.

**Q:** Years ago, I saw a fantastic movie that I have never seen again on TV. I've tried to get it in many video stores, with no success. It was a beautiful love story titled *Letter From an Unknown Woman*. I believe it starred Louis Jourdan and Vivien Leigh. Could you tell me where I can find it? —Margie Callahan, New York, N.Y.

**A:** This 1948 film, starring Jourdan and Joan Fontaine, is available on video but probably only through specialty outlets. One of these is the Video Library of Philadelphia, at



Peter Falk as Lt. Columbo

1-800-669-7157. A number of other trustworthy video outlets are listed in the preface of *Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1993*, arguably the best reference book for video enthusiasts. An astounding number of readers of this column write weekly to express their frustration in locating tapes that, unlike *Casablanca*, aren't rented every day. My advice: Purchase a video guide and dial toll free.

**Q:** Patricia Richardson, who plays Jill — Tim Allen's wife on *Home Improvement* — is great. What other roles has she played? —Patty Lewis, Birmingham, Mich.

**A:** Richardson's main body of work has been in theater, but look for her in the films *In Country* and *Lost Angels*. Her other TV roles include *Double Trouble*, *Eisenhower* and *Lutz* and *FM*.

**Q:** In the movie *River of No Return* with Robert Mitchum and Marilyn Monroe, a male voice is heard singing the title song. My wife says it's Ernie Ford, I say it's Robert Mitchum, my son says it's Jim Nabors and my daughter says "Who cares?" For sanity's sake, who's doing the singing? —William C. Neely, Midwest City, Okla.

**A:** Have we seen the same movie? That's Marilyn herself booming out the title song and the three others in the film. While she did sing with a low voice, it is surprising you would confuse her with those male basses.

Send questions to Let's Talk, Features Dept., P.O. Box 961009, Fort Worth, Texas, 76161-1009.

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## SOAP TALK

### Familiar faces return to daytime

By Candace Havens

**Dear Candace:** What is happening on *Days of Our Lives*? I was just getting used to the new Carrie and now she is off the show. —A confused *Days* fan in Oklahoma.

**Dear Reader:** There was no explanation as to why the show decided to drop Tracy Middendorf, who had portrayed the character since January 1992. Christie Clark, who previously played Carrie, took over the role as of Friday, Dec. 18.

There are some other familiar faces turning up on the soaps. On *The Young and the Restless*, Cynthia Jordan reprises her role as Paul's ex-wife, April. Jordan originated the role in 1979 then left the show in 1982.

Colleen Dion has left *The Bold and the Beautiful* and can now be seen as Brett Gardner on *Another World*.

**Dear Candace:** I wonder if you could get the three television networks to reduce the background noise on their programs. I can never hear what the actors are saying.

Also, the bedroom scenes are revolting. I am especially disappointed with the actions of the unmarried couples. There is all this talk of abstinence, but then there is no example set on television for children. Sometimes when actors and actresses are kissing on screen it looks as though they are ripping each other's tonsils out.

TV is a wonderful invention but not when it is used to degrade human beings with foul language, sex and violence. Can't the executives at the network see what they are doing to our children? —A viewer from California.

**Dear Reader:** Many viewers agree with your comments about sex and violence on television. There is too much on television, and I think it is the parents' responsibility to choose the programming their children watch.

I write about the soaps, and these programs are written for adults and contain adult situations. Most of the soap opera producers realize there is a younger audience watching daytime programming, and they try to focus on social issues concerning teenage pregnancy, AIDS, date rape and child abuse.

Send your comments to Candace Havens, Soap Talk, P.O. Box 961009, Fort Worth, Texas, 76161-1009.

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