

From card shark to 'The Man in the Family'

Ray Sharkey gets domestic role

By Steven Alan McGaw

Family tensions, family tumult and family ties (with apologies to the Keaton clan) are time-honored fodder for TV. Running the gamut from zany misadventures with sitcom tribes like the Cleavers to heart-tugging drama in series like the cleverly titled "Family Ties" and the late, lamented "A Year in the Life," familial ups and downs have been the stuff of television since it started. And TV, in its way, has mirrored the changing makeup, dynamics and responsibilities of American family units, as well as reflected the more serious sides of the ties that bind.

Such is the case with ABC's new "The Man in the Family," premiering Wednesday, June 19. Ray Sharkey stars as cocky Sal Bovasso, a charming ne'er-do-well called back to his Brooklyn home from a life of luck and leisure in Las Vegas. The reason? Sal's dad is dying and has one request: that his son take charge of their small, family-operated grocery store.

The young man promises to honor his pop's request, maybe realizing what a change it will make in his life. To be in charge of the Bovasso family business, Sal soon learns, is to be in charge of the Bovassos. Veteran character actress (and appropriately named) Julie Bovasso plays Sal's fiery mother, Angie. Leah Remini and Anne De Salvo are featured, respectively, as Sal's sisters Tina and Annie, with Billy L. Sullivan as Robby, Annie's rebellious sons and reliable Louis Guss as irascible Uncle Bennie. Don Stark rounds out a list of series regulars as Cha Cha, a boyhood chum all too eager to welcome Sal back to the old neighborhood, but heedless

of his pal's new responsibilities and resolve.

In Wednesday's premiere episode, aptly titled "Honor Bound," Sal makes his commitment and begins to figure out how to live with it. He must also assert himself in the unlikely role as head-of-the-tempestuous Bovasso household. Sal's agenda is further complicated when Cha Cha and another chum, Vinnie, arrive proposing a wild get-rich-quick scheme. Guest stars in "Honor Bound" include Joe Cortese as Vinnie, veteran Sylvia Sidney as Mrs. Panetta and Al Ruscio as the fading patriarch, Carmine Bovasso. The premiere installment was written by Ed Weinberger, from a story by Weinberger and Gina Wendkos, and directed by John Rich.

Ray Sharkey brings a wealth of experience to his portrayal of Sal Bovasso, both personally and professionally. Like his character in "The Man in the Family,"

Sharkey is an Italian-American from Brooklyn, N.Y. Seeing acting as a means to better himself and leave his tough adolescence behind, Sharkey studied for several years and then took off for Los Angeles. Since then, he's had roles in "Who'll Stop the Rain," "The Idolmaker" (winning—a Golden Globe Award), "The Lords of Flatbush" and last year's critically acclaimed "Class Struggles in Beverly Hills."

Sharkey is perhaps even more familiar to television audiences after well-received work in "Wiseguy," "The Neon Empire" and "Behind Enemy Lines." He's played the title role in "The Revenge of Al Capone," appeared in Tennessee Williams' "27 Wagons Full of Cotton" for cable's Arts & Entertainment network and played a recurring character in "Crime Story," NBC's intelligent critical fave of a few seasons back.



Stephanie Faracy, Shelley Hack and Sela Ward (from left) are among those who gather for an old friend's wedding in *Bridesmaids*, CBS' Tuesday Movie.