

The **u**ber's **o**ice

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The Couch Potato Newsletter

MCMLXXXII

Hawaii: Potato Paradise or Purgatory?

By John W. White

Television is strange in Hawaii. The careful prime-time positioning of show against show, network vs. network, is curiously abandoned somewhere during the journey across the Pacific. A top-rated sitcom seen in every mainland city, say, at 8 p.m. Wednesdays, may be shown in Hawaii on Saturday evenings at 6 — except once in a while when it may appear (with forewarning but without explanation) on Tuesday night at 9:30.

The reason for this apparently random shuffle of prime time programming is simple: no one cares. A state whose total population is considerably smaller than that of a mid-sized mainland city is of little concern to networks and their advertisers. Hawaii is, in short, demographically insignificant.

These and other quirks of local television are a constant source of belly laughs to the Hawaiian Couch Potato — a.k.a. "Couch Papaya" or "Tuberose." The *Tonight Show*, for example, arrives in Hawaii by jet rather than satellite, and runs exactly one week late. Poor Johnny's mono-

ny's monologue, comes to Hawaii at least one week late. Visiting Couch Potatoes faithfully tuning in their favorite cop show find themselves watching the same episode they saw the week before in Des Moines.

All local television stations operate on "Hawaiian Time" — a lighthearted reference to the slow pace of life and relaxed approach toward business matters prevalent in the islands. If you're throwing a party which begins at 7 p.m. Hawaiian Time, you can expect your guests to arrive sometime between 8 and 10. When a TV station runs on Hawaiian Time, it means "no big thing" to lose a few seconds here and there during the broadcasting day, until by signoff they're about ten or twelve minutes behind schedule. Thus, when you sit down promptly at 10:30 for the *Late Nite Movie*, you'll probably catch the tail end of the *Ten O'Clock News*. The movie beams in at about 10:38.

For the unprepared spud visiting from the mainland, TV in Hawaii can be a source of constant irritation and disappointment. But by taking a few simple precau-



NEW IMPRESSIONS OF CHUCKO & BOZO: L.A. Kiddie Shows Revisited

By Bobby Drewry

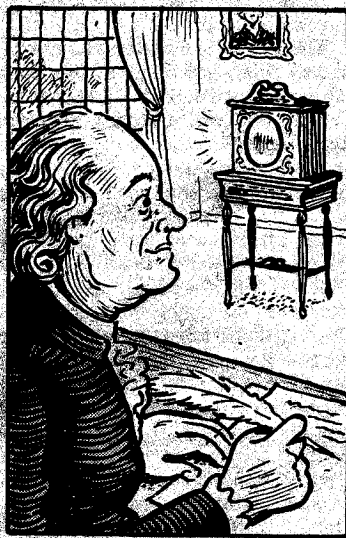
It was with glad anticipation that I pulled myself out of the bean bag chair beside my TV one evening in early June. A greater spectacle awaited me at the far east end of Hollywood Boulevard, where a tribute to the L.A. local kiddie show hosts of the 50's and 60's was to hold forth at the Vista Theater.

I had seen the blurb in the paper just a few days before, adjacent to the television listings, promising the appearance of those early shapers of my psyche: Skipper Frank, Sheriff John, Chucko the Clown, and others. My editor said,

who showed up, I'd say ninety percent had two things in common: a birthdate in 1952, and cheap clothes. They were too young to recognize the "Winky Dink and You" intermission music provided by Dr. Demento, and too shabby to disco-hop after the show.

M.C. Takes Bow

Sharing these same traits was the organizer and m.c. of the event, Sam Frank, an intense young man compelled to honor the long-ago hosts who "reached through the little box and showed us they loved us and cared for us."



PIONEERS OF VIEWING

By Fred Dortort

During commercial breaks at Couch Potato gatherings, naturally enough, the talk turns to television. In the occasional longer enforced silence of power failure, I've heard questions asked about the tube's history and origins. The standard answers aren't convincing anymore — we all know that television has been around for

longer than the napkins of the networks would have us believe. I decided to do a little research on my own, and I've come up with some convincing evidence of the possible existence of television over a century and a half ago.

The English visionary poet, William Blake, is widely acknowledged to have foreseen many current trends in our culture. But no one before ever realized that in one of his poems he actually describes an early TV viewing experience. This poem, written about 1803, is called "The Crystal Cabinet". Let's procede with the evidence:

*This Cabinet is formd of Gold
And Pearl & Crystal shining
bright*

*And within it opens into a World
And a little lovely Moony Night*

*Another England there I saw
Another London with its Tower
Another Thames & other Hills
And another pleasant Surrey
Bower*

Blake's television is a good looking one, with a gold and pearl cabinet, the match of an early Farnsworth, but he does seem to have some reception problems:

*Another Maiden like herself
Translucent lovely shining clear
Threefold each in the other cload
O what a pleasant trembling fear*

It's a shame Blake didn't know the finer points of adjusting his reception, but finally, driven to distraction, he went too far —

*I strove to seize the inmost Form
With ardor fierce & hands of flame
But burst the Crystal Cabinet
And like a Weeping Babe became*

Who among us hasn't felt the same helpless despair when our sets have gone out, but poor Blake, where on earth was he to find a television repairman?

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week's news. Sports events which are broadcast "satellite live" appear at weird times, such as Sunday morning at 7:30. When an event is broadcast "live via satellite-delay," such as a Monday Night Football game, we see it at the same time of night as mainland viewers. But the outcome has long since been determined. So sportscasters on Monday's five o'clock news give their viewers a chance to close their eyes before the score is revealed. They flash it onscreen with a super (no numbers are uttered) and tell viewers when it's safe to open their eyes again.

But most everything, like John-

exploring the random juxtapositions offered only in the Land of Aloha. Precaution #1: immediately upon arrival in Hawaii, arm yourself with the current *TV Guide*, available at the airport tobacco shop. Precaution #2: keep an open mind; shows are often better the second time around, providing the opportunity to study such subtleties as camera technique and editing.

Always remember, too, that far fewer harmful rays emanate from the set in your hotel room than from the hot yellow ball outside. Nothing will impress your friends and Elders more than returning from Hawaii . . . without a suntan! □

indeed, I was excited. How many tricks had I sent in to Skipper Frank's magic contests? How long ago had I earned a Webster Webfoot doll for having my tonsils out?

Scanning the street for a parking place, I wondered what type of folks would arrive for this celebration. It was plain to see that the Vista, built as a silent movie temple with beautiful Egyptian styling, was surrounded by the Hollywood gay life. But would the people inside be lonely, curious, nostalgic, or just out for a cheap laugh? [Ed. note: *Who cares? They wanted to see Chucko!*]

Among the three hundred or so

personalities and kinescopes available for this night, and the obligatory tribute to the UCLA library, which would be receiving a videotape of the whole presentation, the curtain rose. We first viewed rare filmed segments of Bozo the Clown (featuring Magic Man Chuck Jones), Engineer Bill, and Chucko the Clown, along with typical cartoons that appeared on such shows. There was also a 15-minute episode of a 1952 San Francisco live show, *Happy Birthday to You*, starring Lucille Bliss, more famous as the voice of Crusader Rabbit. When the crowd was told this was the only preserved record of a female-hosted show there were widespread moans of despair (goodbye, Hobo Kelley).

The crowd was nevertheless delighted with all that appeared on the screen, hollering appreciatively through the evening. Sam Frank was pulling off what every tuber dreams of doing, presenting his own video hodgepodge for the entertainment of his fellows, complete with his own commentaries. It was similar to that meeting of the Couch Potatoes documented by Kim Deitch in the underground comic book, *Lemme Outa Here!* (Print Mint, 1978).

Weird Instruments

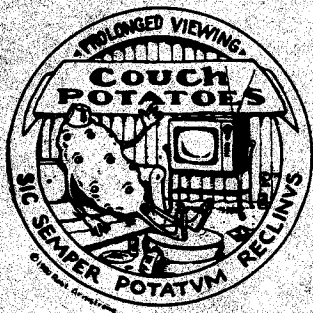
During these screened presentations, I was fascinated again by the gruff voice and world-wise manner of Bozo the Clown, and dismayed by the grotesque makeup. We were told that the chipper Vance Colvig, who played the part, works as a real estate agent (he sold Popeye host, Tom Hatten, his new home) and appeared recently on the *Book of Lists* TV show, banging his head with weird musical instruments.

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Don't bother turning out lights!

Come out of the closet & view with dignity



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

I have a question for your readers: I want to know who (what artist or animation studio) did Colonel Bleep, the 1959 syndicated 3-minute animated cartoon series. So far I know only that Colonel Bleep appeared on *The Jim Dooley Show* in Miami, Fla. and the *Engineer Bill Show* in L.A. This was in the late 50's. I wish to contact the genius behind these Bleep films — but nobody knows who he is. Also, what other cities ran Bleep footage in the late 50's? And is it true that Bleep appeared in a late 50's 7-11 Foodstore TV commercial?

Jay Lynch
Chicago, Ill.

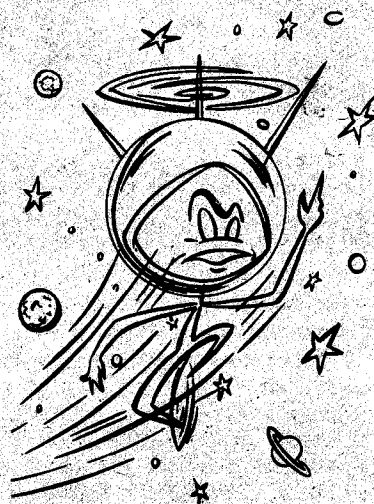
A TUBER'S ROOTS

I just read the article in the *View* section in the *L.A. Times* about the Couch Potatoes and feel as though a sudden light has suffused my inner eye (with which I long someday to really watch television.) I hereby apply for membership in your august body (maybe it should be November body instead, you know, for Sweeps Week?)

I have one confession to make, and I hope that it won't make me ineligible for membership. I am actually a television writer and make a sort of living at it. Since that is awfully utilitarian, and therefore rather not in the spirit of your club, I felt you should know. However, in my own defense, let it be known that I also just lay around and watch television without thinking about my job. In fact, if you really think about it, I am qualified for potatohood because, even though I am a professional writer, when I watch television I really don't know what I'm seeing. I can't make the connection between working for it and watching it. They are different worlds. So there remains a purity of approach, if I make myself perfectly unclear. It would be so much simpler if we could have an AFT button surgically implanted so we could bring it all in a little better, don't you think?

Also, I actually tried to talk a producer into doing a rebuttal to *Roots* that was about a family of poor Irish potato farmers who are stolen from their idyllic bog by fast-talking blacks and taken to Harlem, where they are forced to dance the jig and sing "Danny Boy" and get drunk all the time to the unending amusement of the locals. What was I going to call it? You guessed. They got *Roots*, we got *Tubers*. Assholes turned it down.

Ned Wynn
Los Angeles, Calif.



We haven't had much luck finding out info on this weird non-verbal series. Kim Deitch thinks it's one of the first Japanese imports.

These 6-minute episodes featured Bleep, a futuristic space cop, along with his deputies, Squeak the Puppet and Scratch the Caveman, who attempt to thwart the maniacal Dr.

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ELDERS

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L.A. Times reminded me of my own televiewing exploits eleven years ago in Austin, Texas, when, with my pal Red Wassenich, I watched TV from signon to signoff for a solid week. We were inspired to this effort by Charles Sopkin's *Seven Glorious Days, Seven Fun-Filled Nights*, a book you should familiarize yourself with, if you haven't already. This experience even colored the revolutionary fervor of our college radical days, as we were constantly exhorting our compatriots to "Watch TV in the streets!"

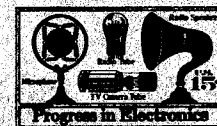
I hope you will take into consideration my former, well-nigh Herculean, servitude to the one-eyed monster.

Zack Replica
Berkeley, Calif.

PROPER VIEWING HABIT

If I can manage to tear myself away from my 18" Sony Trinitron long enough to go out and get a job I will send \$8.00 for a tunic. I am in the habit of viewing in a cotton house-dress similar to those worn by Ethel Mertz. During the winter months I can be found in capri pants or my Mary Hartline majorette uniform. I think the tunic will fill the need for transitional wear.

Charlotte Jambeck
Minneapolis, Minn.



IN COMMEMORATION OF THE TUBE

I am writing to express my outrage at the fact that the United States has not issued a stamp properly honoring television. Except for the TV camera

I read an article (forgive me) on your group of little social redeeming value in *The Milwaukee Sentinel* and thought "Here is my type of people." We are the wave of the future. Look at the "Trekkies" still hanging on. And then the "Blueys," who fought for *Hill Street Blues*. TV is so important we must devote our lives to it. So get the bowl of dried fruit (too much PBS, I'm afraid) and pull the afghan off the back of the couch and get ready for the future.

You asked for 5 all-time favorite TV shows. Well get serious, this is the 20th century. I have 2 lists. One is of the shows I will probably never see again, and the other is of the shows I will see over and over until I can mouth the dialogue with the actors.

But first of all, I'd like to put in a word about those rare gems, the "never-released" films. The ones that were intended for the theaters but were so tacky that they were shelved until (they hoped) everyone forgot them. But no! I keep an eye out for these nuggets the stars pray they won't be recognized in. They usually premiere at 10:30 on Wednesday night, and only the true Couch Potato ever sees them. The *Monkees* film *Head* was one. I heard Robert Redford was in a few of these before someone noticed his looks. But on to true TV.

Here's the shows I gave up the Library Club for, or going out for baseball. Here's the shows I ran home from school to see. Here's the shows I threatened my little brother with death by pillow if he didn't shut up. *Dark Shadows*, number one. Two, *My Favorite Martian*; three, *McHale's Navy*; four, *The Addams Family*, that timeless classic; and five, *The Wild, Wild West*. Honorable mentions go to that astute docu-drama of social mores, *Petticoat Junction* (how does a girl get a guy to marry her? Here we learn); that exposé of military life, *F Troop*; that ongoing tragedy of a family destroy-

Confessions of a Video Junkie

By Kim Deitch

"When I was a little boy," said Sam Havelabasco recently, "I saw this newsreel of FDR watching films in his own private theatre. Now that just seemed like some sort of Xanadu thing. The absolute opulence of it just floored me!"

Today Sam has a collection of over nine hundred feature films and he's amassed this collection at a fraction of what it would have cost in FDR's day. Modern video technology has brought film collecting within reach of the common man at last.

However, there is nothing common about Sam Havelabasco. He's put together a video viewing set-up that would turn all but the most jaded of Couch Potatoes green with envy.

While we talked in his San Francisco home, a tape machine silently dubbed a broadcast of *The Mummy* with Boris Karloff. An occasional click could be heard as a sophisticated device called "The Killer" automatically stopped and started the recorder, eliminating commercials from the tape as it was being made.

Sam is a wiry dynamo of a man. His eyes glistened behind oversized plastic glasses as he described his set-up, revealing all the boyish enthusiasm that young kid watching the FDR newsreel must have had. "What I've tried to build here is a system that gives me complete flexibility to view and record things simultaneously."

To put it in fairly simple terms, Sam has five color sets strategically placed around the house, including one in the kitchen. They're hooked to a complex interlocking switching system that has three small TV monitors of its own. He can flash different tapes to various parts of the house and can dub as many as four things off the air at once. So much for FDR and his dinky movie theatre.

And so it goes. High brow directors like Fellini and Cocteau are represented, but there's also plenty of just plain fun stuff. For instance, the career of John Wayne is well represented going all the way back to his B western days. Even a few X-rated classics like *Deep Throat* are on hand.

Particular favorites like Frank Capra are more thoroughly represented. "I think I have all but one of his films now," says Sam. "I feel Capra has important things to say. His films are a uniquely American experience just as much as the novels of someone like John Steinbeck are."

There are various sources for video-taped films, but for Sam the primary source is still the tube itself. "I scan what's on every week and choose what I want to record. Often I'll set up one or two of the machines days in advance and it'll just record automatically. None of the TV's even have to be on." Occasionally when there's something broadcast too far away to be brought in by even Sam's electrically motorized antenna, he'll trade dubs with other collectors.

Sam acknowledges that there's a large bootleg market for tapes. "I'll occasionally get a call from someone and they'll say, 'Do you want *Raiders of the Lost Ark*,' or some other hot new film. Sometimes it'll be a film that hasn't even been released. But I never buy bootleg copies. What you'll generally get is a fourth, fifth or sixth generation copy that's very hard to see and usually hasn't been adjusted for its wide screen image. If there's some action on the sides you totally miss it, or else you'll get a squeezed picture and people with funny dimensions."

What's most conspicuously absent in the Sam Havelabasco collection is any kind of TV show



HOW TO TELL THE FUTURE WITH YOUR TV SET

"I don't know how it works, but you really can tell the future by watching your TV if you know how to interpret what you see. It's sort of like the oracles of ancient times — the truth is there to see, but in cryptic form. It's hard for the Western mind to understand, but if you interpret these images right, you get the truth. If you do it wrong, it can be a disaster."

— Quasar Dumont

* * * * *

When Quasar Dumont agreed to talk with me, I knew I was in for surprises. As one of the Couch Potato movement's most prominent televisionaries, she was always good for surprises. The first happened when I drove to the address she gave me. It was a modest, almost ratty, house, located in an ordinary neighborhood in a rather boring state in the somewhat mundane Midwest. Although she made me promise not to reveal the location, it is safe to say that it is in the last place you would expect to find one of the best minds of our generation (not Toledo, but close).

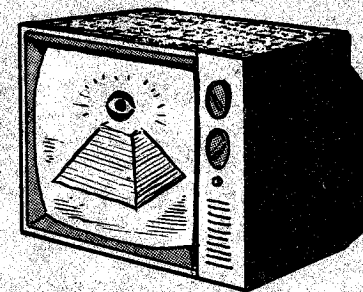
But her ordinary surroundings were just a small prelude to the big surprise she promised: she was going to reveal for the first time her technique where almost anybody can see into the future armed with just a TV set and a recent copy of *TV Guide*.

"But how can a nearly ordinary person like myself tell the future through TV viewing?" I asked. "Isn't that sort of thing possible only if you're an Elder or close to it? Doesn't it take a very high level of Video Consciousness?"

"Well, I agree it shouldn't be attempted by novice Couch Potatoes. They could conceivably hurt themselves," she explained. "Yet, on the other hand, there's no reason why an intermediate — someone who is capable of simulating four or five screens for long periods of time — why she or he couldn't do this."

The technique, which Ms. Dumont calls "TV Guidance", was developed from tips learned on the couch of Elder #1 before he decided to become a complete TV hermit several years ago. She further developed the idea based on ideas put forth by Dr. Carl Jung, one of the few pioneer psychoanalysts who lived long enough to appear on TV. "I never actually read anything by him, but on TV he seemed to be saying that we all have a shared consciousness that is universal that we can tune in on, and that everything that will happen has already happened and is happening now. Or something like that," explained Ms. Dumont. "As I understand it, he was saying that reality is like a re-run, a preview and a made-for-TV movie, all rolled into one. Get the picture?"

Well, no. The theory was ap-



By Jack Mingo

parently beyond my level of televisionism. But no matter. TV Guidance would work for me, anyway.

"It's sort of like the I Ching, that Eastern guide," she said. "You can approach it from any level. Like the I Ching, you use seemingly random phenomena. The basic idea is that everything that happens in the universe is interconnected, from the most significant event to the most trivial." She reached into her *TV Guide* and pulled out a slip of paper with a quote from one R.G.G. Sui — "If I move my hand, everything in the universe also moves (and so) it is only natural that when a question is ceremoniously posed, the universe responds. . . . At any given moment *everything* fits into the particular pattern of the moment."

What? I couldn't believe my ears. Does she believe that everything appearing on TV is connected to the happenings all over the universe at that moment?

"Yes," said Ms. Dumont. "Even the commercials." She noted that many serious simulviewers have noted that after a while it becomes clear to them that all the shows they are watching are connected in subtle ways. "What they don't realize, most of them, is that it's not just the shows, but the whole frigging universe."

Attitude Is Important

Although the TV Guidance technique sounds absurd on the face of

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With the cost of printing, paper and postage we aren't making anything out of this endeavor. We're counting on the support of you tubers out there. We keep hoping John Beresford Tipton will select us as lucky recipients.

The staff and contributors here at *T.V.* have big plans for future issues, so stay tuned by subscribing today.

The next issue will be out after the fall season has been established.

Your Always Hurt the One You Love

During one particular episode of the *Colgate Comedy Hour* in 1953, Frank Walsh of West Hemstead, Long Island became so infuriated with something he'd seen that he pulled out his gun and blasted his TV to bits. In less than a week, Walsh wound up a contestant on CBS's *Strike It Rich* - "the program with a heart" - and was lucky enough to win a new television set.

Earlier this year, enraged by a local access cable talk show, Michael Moore of Rock Island, Ill. hoisted his set, gave it a kick and threw it outside. By the time he decided to make it up to his \$79 portable, it was too late: someone had already made off with it. "I guess it serves me right," Moore said, admitting he had abused the set before.

anyone have Bleep on kinescope or tape?

-Ed.

Do you guys know whatever happened to Big Otis - the giant guy in the Kellogg's Frosted O's commercial? I entered a contest years ago to be in a commercial with Big Otis and he suddenly disappeared. I've been concerned ever since.

Olga Kramer
Carlinville, Ill.

Unfortunately, Olga, Big Otis fell victim to the same problem that drove many of his fellow Scottish sales images from our screens. These bonny lassies and laddies were unable to compete with perennials such as the *Lucky Charms Leprechaun*, the manly scent of *Irish Spring* (both strong contenders from the Emerald Isle), the superstars of the animal kingdom (*Tony the Tiger* and the *Trix Rabbit*), and the many other hard-driving ethnic types that can out-perform the venerable Highlanders. Let's face it, what chance does a man in a skirt have against *Chiquita Banana* or the *Frito Bandido*?

-Ed.

CONFUSED OVER CABLE SEX

You guys know a lot about TV, so I've gotta ask for your help. I've heard about all the new *On & Select* and all that stuff that comes on these new channels. Here in Southern Cal (that's beach talk) I turn on 22 or 52 late at night to watch the sexy movie they advertise in the guide. But all I see is a bunch of wiggly lines and the colours change all the time and things flip up & down, and it's all so confusing. Is that the way sex is supposed to be? No wonder sexy movies get people in trouble. I don't even know which hand to use. I mean, one moment they're nipples and the next they're eyeballs. I don't know why people pay good money for these new stations - I'm glad I didn't. Jeess!

David Leshner
Sunset Beach, Calif.

to become a member of outstanding quality. He fits the requirements in a remarkable fashion. His devotion to television watching is impressive. His average weekly viewing of television is approximately 50 hours. When you consider that he works a full 40 hours each week, you can see how earnest and concentrated his efforts toward "watching the box" really are. To underscore his qualifications as a Couch Potato applicant I might add that he never has been known to watch TV while sitting in a chair. His position for watching is lying prone on the couch - very nearly immobile, his breathing shallow, the only muscle movement is that of the eyeballs. Of course East Indian fakirs have been practising and refining immobility for centuries to no ill effect, yet this family does become concerned about my husband's disregard of exercise and the cardio-vascular system. So to generate some exercise we occasionally conspire to hide the *TV Guide* which causes him to scurry around the room in a frenzy of frustration, stooping to look under chairs, lifting pillows, crawling to reach under the couch, etc. In this manner we do make certain that he gets at least a little bit of exercise now and then.

The radio broadcast indicated that your organization would be interested in a list of his favorite programs. Well, on the very top of the list would be *Benny Hill* - followed by a listing of any movie (or re-run of a movie) you might care to mention. Actually, it's a bit hard to think of anything he would refuse to watch. I believe he would watch a test pattern indefinitely if it vibrated a bit or showed any indication that it might move. The lone exceptions that come to mind which would cause him to rise from his comfy couch to change the channel are any shows which might have even the faintest hint or odor about them that they might be considered cultural or educational.

Dorothy Nisbet
Walnut Creek, Calif.

FUN-FILLED NIGHTS

Reading of the quixotic entropy of the Couch Potatoes in last Sunday's

such a stamp, or also possibly to redesign our dollar bills so that they show something meaningful, like a happy family watching re-runs of *Mr. Ed*. A special commemorative quarter could also be issued for use in pay TV slots at Motel 6.

"Box" Holder
Modesto, Calif.

OUT OF THE CLOSET

Thank you for helping me come out of the closet. It's high time that Tubers stood up for their rights. It'll be a relief to remove all this aluminum foil that I wear under my clothes, so I can share all the millirems of radiation that I've accumulated over the years.

Greg Budgett
Lakewood, Ohio

I wholly endorse this socially-redeeming endeavour on your part, as well as, on the part of your fellow potatoes.

I feel there exists an important need for an organization espousing your collective cause. It will raise the consciousness of many who would shun the society of "those who view television." I, for years, was a closet television-viewer. If company would drop by unexpectedly, I would find myself rushing to turn off my television, grabbing some sort of arty-crafty paraphernalia and greeting my guests with an exclamation of how I was just grinding wheat for a happy, healthy, wholistic life! The television-viewer faces much discrimination.

Ron Todd
Medina, Ohio

At long last I have found a peer group. I have been in the closet too long, sniffing that I wasn't familiar with the persons "Bo" and "Luke," and discreetly avoiding any engagements that might take place on my favorite TV-watching nights. One could say I identify with the *Love Boat* scene in which the single lady over 30 explains to a friend, "Marriage? Oh yes, I've had offers, but there always seemed to be something good on TV. . . ."

fast becoming merely distant sparks in the galaxy of flash-in-the-pan supernovas. One, *Rowan and Martin's Laugh In*; two, *Lost in Space*; three, *Land of the Giants*; four, *The Second 100 Years*; and five, *Here Come the Brides*. Honorable mention must be made for the epic of ancient pre-history, *It's About Time* (so what do we know, it could've been like that); that realistic portrayal of teenage drifters and protesters, *The Mod Squad*; that mysterious do-gooder, *The Green Hornet* (the hypnotizing graphics at the beginning were really neat; I never understood a thing but I always sat through the whole show, and insisted we buy all of their sponsors' products); and that show of instant identification, *My Mother the Car* (haven't we all had a car radio like that?) Further mention must go to 2 shows that I sat through every episode of: *Honey West* (my dad's favorite show) and *This is Tom Jones* (my mom's favorite show).

This letter is too much for a Couch Potato, and besides *The Dick Van Dyke* show is about to come on. I gotta go now. I already missed the flip over the ottoman.

Lynnette Hartwig
Wauwatosa, Wisc.

RELIGIOUS VIEWER

I am an avowed lover of Baad TV, or Gooood TV, whatever. My meditations with the box are much shorter than they should be. I usually only get to watch one show at a time, but boy do I ever trance out when that tube is on. I love it for *what it is*. These jerks that actually *boast* how they "Don't watch TV," as if that somehow made them more intelligent, *shit*. I strongly believe there is more to be learned from watching TV than from any other source. I still watch TV more than I read. . . . Verily, let these "cultured ones" beware, *ha*, if they don't like TV, if they think it is "below" them because they cannot see properly, *if they are not themselves 2-D, Aiiiiiee*: "If thine eye offendeth thee, pluck it out!!" If you think the show's bad, don't turn off the set, *rip your eyes out!!!*

Rev. Douglass St. Claire Smith
The SubGenius Foundation

ancient year (by home video standards) of 1973. His first machine was a reel-to-reel model that took standard quarter-inch audio tape. It only recorded in black and white and got a mere fifteen minutes to a reel. Quaint, and at that rate Sam would have had to build a new garage to store his more than nine hundred video taped films.

Nine hundred films! Sam shrugs at my incredulity. "I know some people that have ten or fifteen thousand movies. But it's a mess. I felt there had to be a logical limit. So my wife and I took the position that about a thousand movies was going to be our limit."

Since he can generally get more than one feature on a cassette, he manages (just barely) to store his going-on-one-thousand films in four drawers. His filing system is an orderly wonder unto itself. Titles in his collection can be found easily in a seventy page computer print-out list, cross-indexed by artist, type and filing number. As titles are added and eliminated, the list is periodically updated on his home computer.

A casual glance at Sam's current list shows quite a bit of variety, ranging from Bible epics of the 1950's to crackpot X-raters like *Pink Flamingos*. "I felt that if I was going to build a cinema library, it should have a broad range of things in the same way that my library of books has everything from literary masterpieces to crummy spy novels. It's all part of what makes literature."

Shogun. This is basically a matter of personal taste though it does make for an odd contradiction of terms. Sam is a TV junkie who almost never watches TV when he isn't dubbing a movie for his collection. "I'm interested in cinema as literature, which differs from television as entertainment. I don't look upon this collection as an entertainment library, but rather a literary cinematic library."

I'm afraid attitudes like the above coupled with the fact that Sam is one of the most unsedentary persons I know, make him a rather dubious candidate for Couch Potatohood. When I asked him if he ever watched more than one film at a time, he vigorously denied having done so.

Retreating to higher cultural ground, I suggested that Abel Gance's *Napoleon* might be a great item for his set-up. Seeing that film's triple screen panorama and triptych effects synced up on Sam's three monitor switching system would be kicky; silly perhaps, but oddly satisfying.

Sam leaves that one to my own video day-dreams, but he does confess to a desire to one day have an in-house film festival. Not bad! Why you could have cartoons in the play room, Julia Child in the kitchen, Linda Lovelace in the bedroom, John Wayne in the living room and Mr. Deeds going to town in the library! Wow! You know, Couch Potatoes, there may be a place for this man in the organization at that!



Quasar Dumont's Secret "TV Guidance" Technique

So, here it is: how to tell the future with your TV set and a copy of *TV Guide*.

Step One: Sit in quiet meditation with your TV tuned to the last channel you were watching, but with the sound turned all the way down. This is your first Guidance Point. If your *TV Guide* is a new one, open it and flex the binding a few times.

Step Two: Holding the *TV Guide* between your hands, ask your question. For best results keep it short and to the point. For example, "Should I do such-and-such at this point in time?"

Step Three: Turn the sound up. Pay very close attention to what happens on the screen and soundtrack. After about 20 seconds, turn the sound down again and repeat mentally what you just saw and heard.

Step Four: Reverently toss the *TV Guide* into the air and let it fall on the floor. This tells you your next Guidance Point. If it lands with only the front cover exposed, switch the channel knob forward to the next station (pass by weak stations or channels with only snow). If it lands with only the back cover exposed, go backwards one station. If it lands open, go forward three stations. Switch from VHF to UHF when you hit the "U" on the knob. Switch back if you hit either end of the UHF spectrum. Get the idea?

Step Five: Repeat steps 3 and 4 until you have seen a total of five 20-second sections. Try to remember all of them. Now comes the challenging part.

Step Six: Interpret the images as they apply to your question from Step 2. Did any of the segments directly answer your question, or were they all cryptic? Which seemed most related to what you asked? What was the general *tone* of the segments you saw? — Happy? Funereal? Foreboding? Comical? Were they optimistic or pessimistic in tone?

The overall tone is important to note, because one image may symbolize different things in different contexts. As an example, Ms. Dumont led me through a TV Guidance session in which I asked for advice about a specific undertaking. One of the segments I saw was a cartoon in which a character in a haunted house tried to tackle a suit of armor that was enchanted. He took a running leap and sailed right through it.

"In most cases that image would indicate a futile attempt at your project, of attempting and failing," Ms. Dumont told me. "But this time, when coupled with all those optimistic images from the Dr. Pepper commercial segment, it means good news. Your TV Oracle is telling you to take a good running leap at your project and you'll sail right through it." I took the TV's advice and, sure enough, the project was a success.

I know it seems incredible, but try it yourself with "a clear and tranquil mind, receptive to the cosmic influences." At first, the images will be hard to decode, but keep at it and Ms. Dumont guarantees that soon you'll be privy to the secrets of the universe without having to leave the comforts of your own viewing room.

valid as the *F Ching* or any other divination techniques. It should be attempted with all seriousness. "One does not approach a wise teacher or friend with frivolous or childish questions."

She warns that the responses will usually not be a simple matter. Like oracles everywhere, the TV Guidance technique provides cryptic images that you will have to interpret. She warned about being honest and open to all information and not interpreting your TV oracle's responses "through the rose-colored lenses of wishful thinking."

If you don't understand, don't worry. The universe is a complicated place, and even Quasar Dumont doesn't always understand the oracle. "I have at times been puzzled or even completely lacking in understanding about my TV's response to a question until subsequent events eventually clarified what it meant," she told me. One tip she gave me: for the clearest answer, ask a question that is direct and to the point: for instance, "Should I undertake such and such at this time?"

Ms. Dumont told me that after getting the message, one should spend some time with it. "Meditate on the strangely familiar symbols and the advice contained in the answer," she told me.

"Is a station break long enough to do that?" I asked. It depends, she said. She pulled out another quote from her *TV Guide*: Carl Jung stating that in using this type of divination one must become involved in the "Dreamlike atmosphere (where) one has nothing to rely on except one's own so fallible subjective judgement."

"Anything else?" I asked.

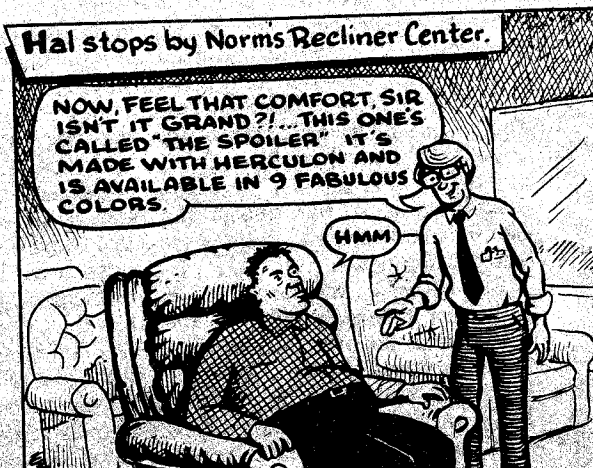
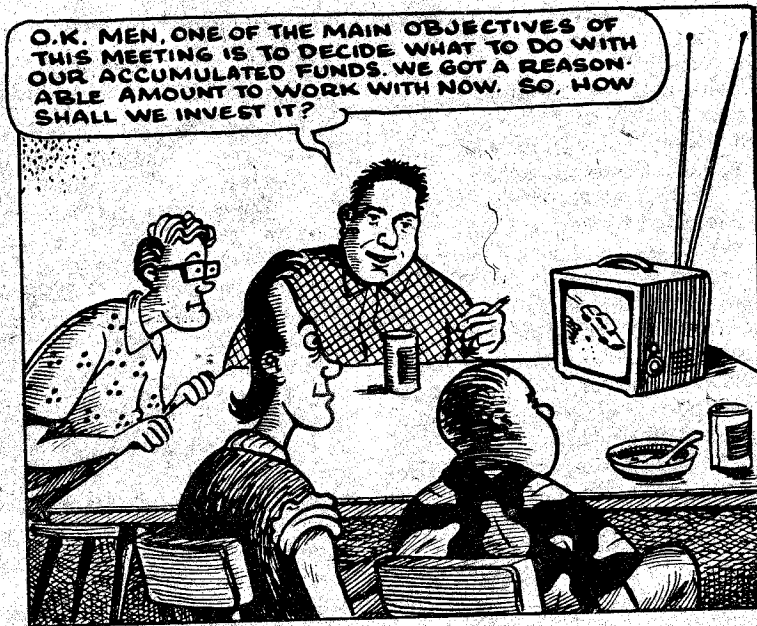
"Well, to slightly paraphrase Richard Wilhelm: "All individuals are not equally fitted to consult the TV oracle. It requires a clear and tranquil mind, receptive to the cosmic influences hidden in the humble flickering Blue Light." □

from the forthcoming comic Mickey Rat #4

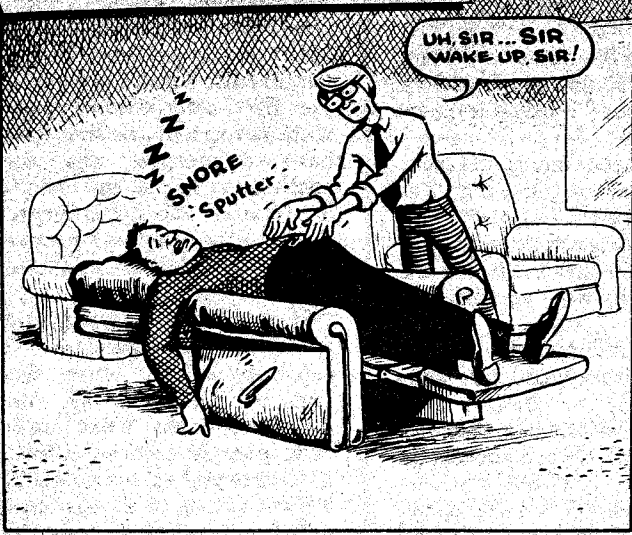
The Couch Potatoes

in INCLINED to RECLINE

© 1982 Robert Armstrong



After 10 minutes of LAY-Z-Boy® comfort...



OOH... AH... YEAH WHERE AM I? OH YEAH... GUESS I GOT A LITTLE TOO RELAXED THERE... HEH HEH



WELL SIR WHAT DO YOU THINK? HAVE YOU MADE SOME SORT OF A DECISION? ISN'T THE LAY-Z-BOY® EXPERIENCE ABSOLUTELY THE GREATEST?!

UH... YEAH... THE GREATEST EVER... I'LL TAKE 4 OF 'EM. SEND 'EM TO THIS ADDRESS

VERY GOOD SIR. WILL THIS BE CASH OR CHARGE?



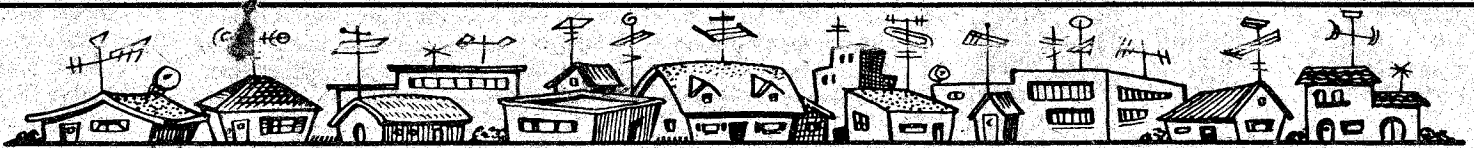
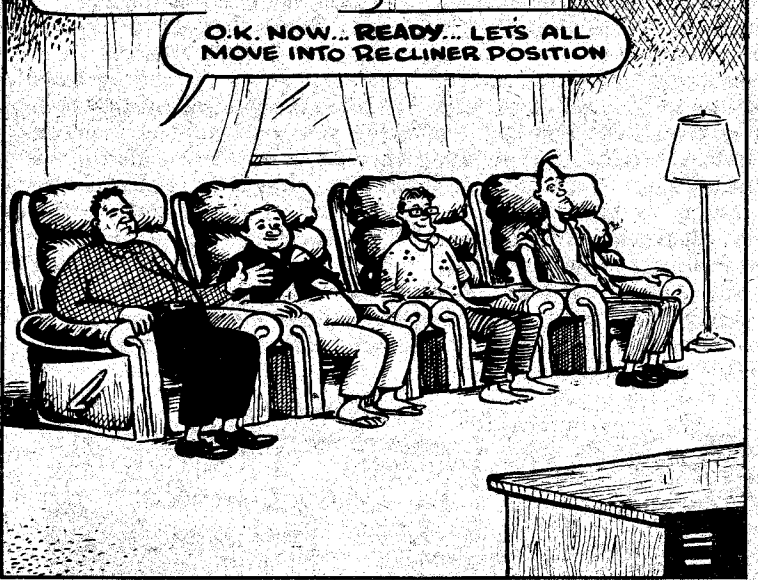
HEY, HOW ABOUT A DISCOUNT? THESE ARE FOR A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION!

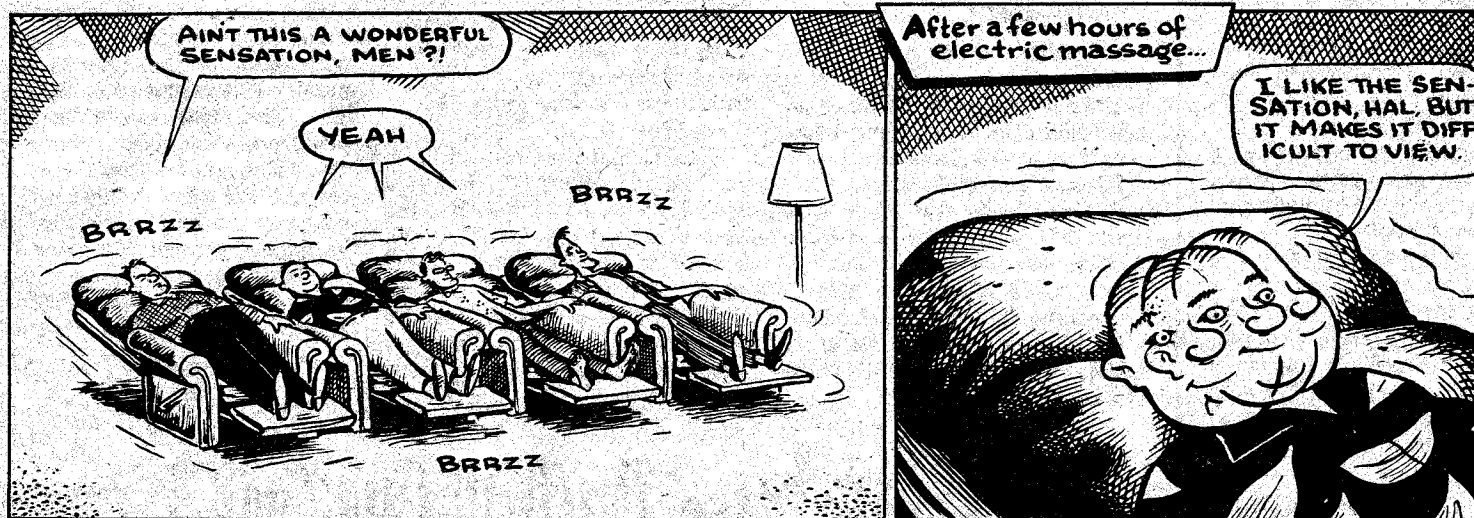
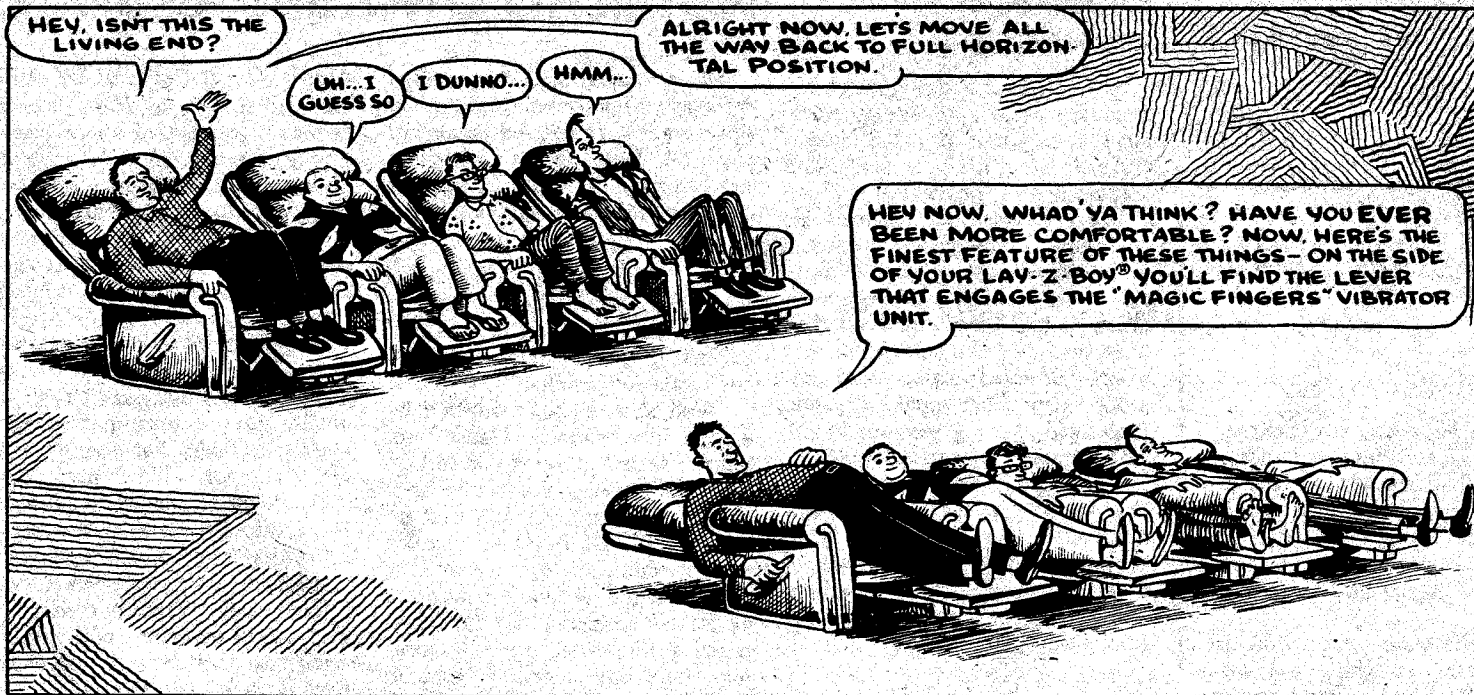


The next day back at the C.P. lodge hall...



SINCE WE COULDN'T REACH A DECISION I TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO INVEST OUR SAVINGS INTO SOMETHING PRACTICAL WE COULD ALL ENJOY.





Spuds' Favorite Dinner Can Aid Reception

By Elder Six

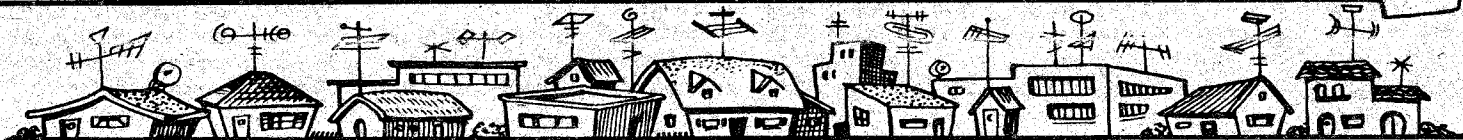
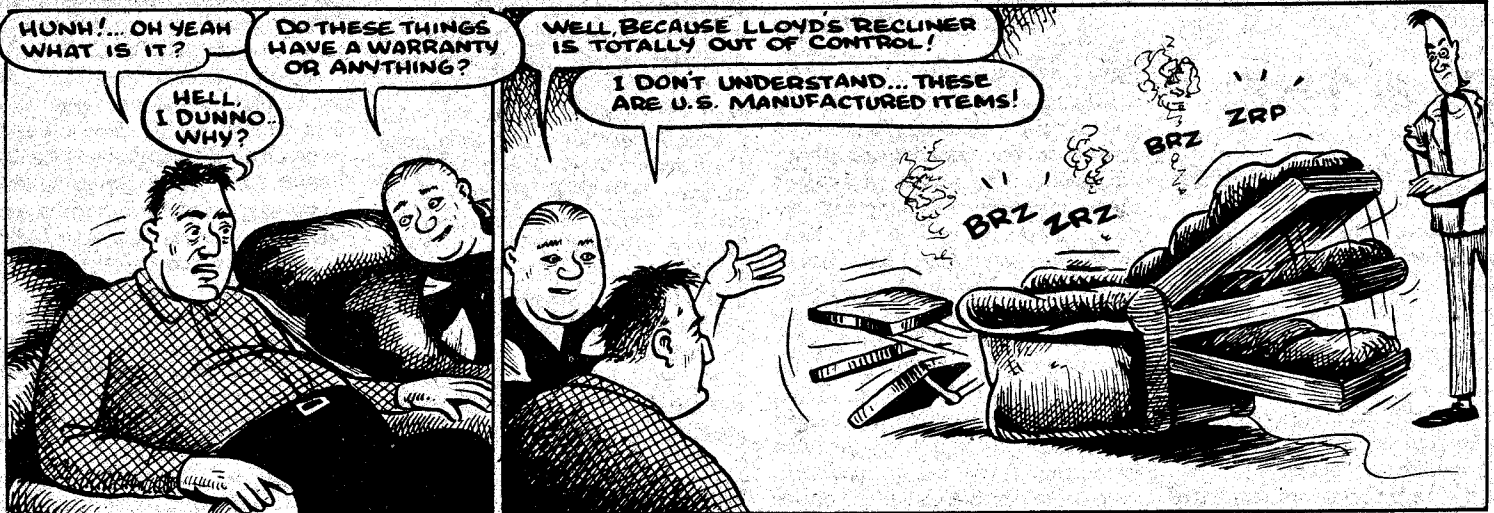
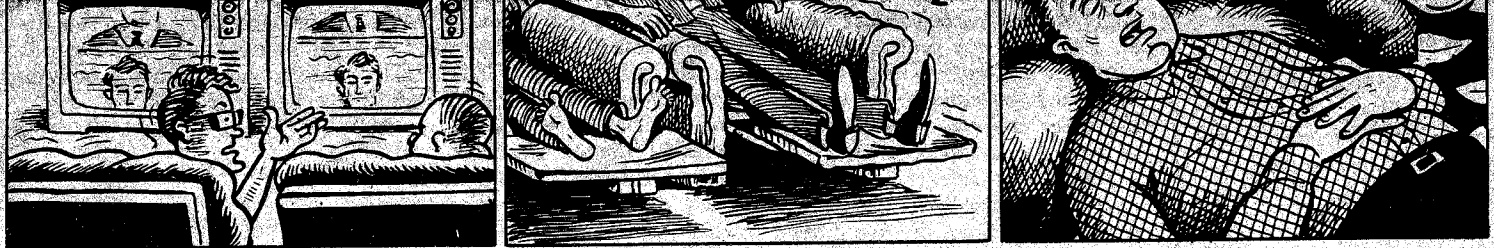
Elder J.O. Seely has been making some important advances in video reception for the budget-minded. Here he shares some of his preliminary discoveries. — Ed.

In my quest to augment my viewing pleasure, I have found a new way to increase my channel count and satisfy my palate at the same time. By saving my TV Dinner trays, I was able to construct a satellite receiving antenna. All Potatoes might consider doing the same. Here are the first five easy steps:

First — Save the gravy from meat dishes; it makes an excellent glue. For those who like fried chicken dinners, buy a few boil-'n-bag meals (I especially like the cream-chipped beef dinners) they usually have enough gravy in one or two pouches to cement together your antenna. (Note: gravy should be aged two weeks, or until the consistency of roofing tar is achieved).

Second — Try not to bend the corners of the trays that have the little triangular compartment for the vegetables. Save the trays in a safe place until the new season or re-runs start (depending on when you start the project). By then you'll have enough to begin building your antenna.

Third — This step, like all the rest, can be done while in front of the tube. With the pile of trays in front of you; start interlocking the triangular spots that held the vegetables. Fold the corners so that they lock securely. Continue until nine trays form a rectangular section. After one week of prime-time viewing you should have eighteen sections. Set the sections



...makes viewing impossible. You will probably have to go outside; however, this step could also be done with a good portable.) Place the eighteen tray sections with the main course sections overlapping. Next use the glue (from your reserved gravy) to bond the sections together. By now you should have a twelve-foot-square blank ready to form into the dish shape.

Fifth — Mold the blank into shape. I tried several methods to form my dish. The method I found worked best was to carefully mold the trays over a Volkswagen sedan. The Volkswagen isn't the perfect shape, but its good for at least 150 new channels. A better shape would be a water tower, but one must not stray too far from one's set. I now see that it's time for *The Fabulous Fifty-Two*.

The next article in this series will tell you how to mount your antenna and aim it at the best satellites. Also, how to make your microwave oven double as a receiver. □

Comfort Tip

—From John White

The bladder from a 4-liter box of Summit wine (any color) makes a comfortable, sturdy, and attractive pillow for TV viewing. When you finish the wine, grab the plastic spigot and pull the bladder slowly from the box. Rinse it out if you must, but it's not necessary. Open the spigot and blow until the bladder reaches the desired degree of inflation. The pillow is fully — indeed, infinitely — adjustable. And, with its shiny silver foil-like appearance, a handsome and trendy piece of high-tech furniture. At a fraction of the cost.

We're interested in hearing what comfort tips or handy viewing hints you readers would like to share. Send them to Chef Aldo c/o Tuber's Voice. Chef Aldo will offer a prize for the best tip used.

The STATION BREAK *Gourmet*



Many tradition-minded Couch Potatoes shun the advancement and concepts of the present-day, ultra-convenient world we live in. I must admit that even yours truly the old Chef himself has labored under the obsolete guidance of the classic convenience chefs such as Milani and Boyardee. But today with the mass input from all corners of our Couch Potato world both radical and reactionary spuds have begun considering updated styles of sustaining themselves.

These brave new concepts of food consciousness provide an approach to sustenance that is so harmonious with couch-side behavioral patterns that the old ways — TV Dinners, convenience foods, even cooking in a kitchen — may soon be as obsolete as listening to the radio.

One of the most efficient food-intake systems takes its inspiration from the space program. It's based on astronaut-like food containers available in your own supermarket. I call it the Squeeze Bottle Cuisine, or *Squeezine* (® Chefaldoco, International).

As with all great concepts, the simplicity of *Squeezine* is astounding. It has virtually eliminated the need for a kitchen, flatware, cookware or plates. All one really needs is a toaster oven, a TV tray, a pair of scissors and an occasional spoon.

To begin, go to your local supermarket or convenience store and examine anything that interests you in a squeeze bottle or aerosol can. Some particularly effective products are Liquid Parkay and squeeze bottle Hershey's chocolate. But don't stop there; there are many more wonderful products available and literally thousands of combinations avail themselves to the adventurous Couch Potato gourmet. And best of all, they need go no further than their TV tray or spend more than five minutes to prepare them.

Let's take a look at one!

Ingredients needed:

- 1 pepperoncini (from the bottle)
- 1 slice white bread, crust trimmed off
- 1 squeeze bottle Parkay Margarine
- 1 aerosol can cheese food (Snack Mate or other).

Step one: take medium-to-large pepperoncini. Snip off stem end with scissors. Squeeze pepperoncini juibe back into bottle.

Step two: Stick nozzle of cheese product can into pepperoncini and fill it to capacity.

Pioneers

continued from page 1

Still, whether it was through his visionary powers, or, the mysterious possession of an actual ancestral television, it's clear that Blake was surely a progenitor of the Couch Potatoes, and deserves his posthumous recognition as such.

How much further back in time should we look? I've heard speculation that Leonardo da Vinci may have invented the television, and even wild-eyed claims that obscure Carpathian monks enjoyed prolonged viewing sessions in the 12th century. Interesting ideas, but let's face it, a little far fetched. I've shown you the solid proof of my theory, now it's time for us all to examine the so-called data of these self-proclaimed researchers and expose their delusions for the shams they are. □

TV MORE IMPORTANT THAN TOILET

According to the A.C. Nielsen rating service, there are now more U.S. households with at least one television than with either indoor plumbing or telephones.

Nielsen research and government statistics also show that about 98% of American homes, or 81.5 million households, have at least one television set. 86% of those have at least one color set.

As of January 1982, 52% of the homes in the continental U.S. had two or more TVs. □

NUMERO UNO SPEAKS

The following was transcribed from a taped diatribe submitted by the proudest prolonged viewer of them all. Here, at last, words of wisdom from the couch of number one, somewhere in Alabama:

"Uh. . . jus-a-sec. There, I wanted to catch the Diet Pepsi commercial. Soft drink ads are exploiting women so well. Hard core sells soft drinks.

"Well, so everybody wants to be a spud. The response pleases me, but not so fast guys. If you think a couple of measley years in a dark shabby room in front of a beat up last leg TV set qualifies you for membership then 'you wrong'.

"Years, nay decades must pass. Countless sessions, daytime, late night, prime time, Sunday morning, Saturday morning cartoon glut, Sunday afternoon sports splurge, cable et. al; these are the meat and potatoes of my vision. With these wasted indolent hours we dedicate our myopic French fried brains to the glory that is *Gomer Pyle USMC*.

"Hah! Gomer Pyle you say. Yes, yes and yes again. (Thirty years later Joyce would have written the first three scripts for *Kung Fu* instead of *Ulysses*). Yes, let the bucolic simplicity of Jethro knock that pseudo-intellectual pedestal out from under you. Yes, yes welcome Mr. Haney to your heart, trust him (ever notice the resemblance between Haney and Chef

Aldo?) *Jawoll! Oui! Da! Si!* Without Gillis, *Life of Riley* has no redeeming qualities (save Junior giving Chester A. shit). Make Jimsie your spiritual neighbor. Yes, seek Agarn as brother to us all. And Mrs. Odettes as video grandma to our kids. Do not allow these prophets to languish in rerun heaven unheeded. Floyd the barber bless us and keep us trim.

"It has been brought to my attention (a friend read the *Times* article to me during *Hee Haw* station breaks) that some Northern California elders have done splendid missionary work; seeding the California press with enough info to enhance membership. But I caution: do not go overboard, keep a low profile. Today's media is a gluttonous monster totally indiscriminate to things of value and soul. This is 'cosa nostra.'

"In summation, I welcome all pledglings: potatoes, tomates and tots. Prove yourselves, remain undaunted in the face of community abhorrence to our values. The Blue Hue mentality is a privilege, not a right. I know we make it tough, but therein lies the reward. For a little while I shall be with you and for a little while I will be gone. You will not know me, but I will know you (poor posture is a dead giveaway). Remain faithful and let the TV guide."

Your Serene Potentato
The Halladonian
C.P. Numero Uno

Advice to the COUCH POTATO

By Dr. Davenport H. Spudd

(Send your questions to Dr. Spudd in care of this paper.)

hard as it might seem). Public TV's pledge breaks are almost as frequent as, and usually longer than, commercial breaks on the

talk to your teachers, or cut this out and tape it to the channel control knob. Maybe they'll get the hint.

A great treat your couchmate will love, and peppers are very high in Vitamin C.

Let's eat right to keep viewing!

Note: If you have a favorite convenience or TV chef from past or present that you believe deserves Hall of Fame status, send a brief profile, picture and/or recipe to Chef Aldo for his upcoming tribute to setside sustenance.

TELEVISIONARIES & THE VIDEO IMAGE

By Elder R.E. Armstrong

To you who have joined the Couch Potato movement recently, we bid you welcome. As you stay tuned to our program you'll find that we, in the course of time and in our writings, shall reveal some of the esoteric teachings and viewing techniques for which this organization has become revered. These revelations may only be comprehended by a discerning few. Many of you unqualified members may only perceive the literal or exoteric interpretations of the Couch Potato life at this time, but that's o.k. Keep watching the "box" and it will all come to you.

To the Couch Potato who is truly "tuned in" and on the way to achieve the status of being a Televisionary, all that is taken in during a normal 12-hour day of viewing has significance. After a prolonged period with TV one learns to overcome value judgments on programming so that the insipid and profound become one and the same and equally important. The pure beauty of television is that it makes simple the great truths and abstract principles. The vital forces of the universe are personified, much like the gods and goddesses of ancient mythologies.

TV updates these ancient cultural symbols and icons; presenting them in a contemporary context. So, instead of Zeus and Athena we have Uncle Martin and Samantha Stevens manipulating the fates of mortals. Likewise, Lucy Ricardo and Gilligan have come to replace Pandora and Loki in the modern mythology.

While the ignorant multitudes of ancient times brought offerings to the alters of their deities, the wise recognized in the marble statues only the symbolic consecrations of symbolic truths. Similarly, the Couch Potato who has achieved the status of Televisionary has learned to look beyond the video image for something of more cosmic significance.

As members of this organization we must remember that Art imitates life; but life imitates Television. Moreover, TV mediates and reinforces our public symbols. It provides a means for the devoted viewer to know who he/she is, and what society, even the universe, is like.

So, through prolonged viewing, you, as a Couch Potato member — no matter what your status, will find most of what you need to know about life by simply watching it on the little screen. □

er. However, my problem is that the lack of commercial breaks makes it impossible for me to visit the ladies' room as often as I need to when I consume beer.

Do you think it would be improper to install a "Porta-Potty" in the living room for use during intimate viewing situations?

Desperate in Des Moines

Dear Desperate,

First of all, let me congratulate you on your frankness. There is no reason to be embarrassed about discussing with a trained adviser the functions of one's body that are so disgusting and filthy that sometimes even I feel like throwing up when I think about them.

Many people have problems similar to yours. The ideal solution, of course, is to have a TV in every room of the house. Some incurable PBS junkies use a system comparable to what you are proposing. A few use an elaborate system of catheters and rubber tubing for extra convenience.

Whatever perversions two married adults freely agree to is their own private affair, of course. No, I'm not referring to the "Potty" problem, now, I'm speaking of this business of watching Public TV. I personally would not recommend the practice at this time. It is as harmful to one's cerebral cortex and nervous system as it is to one's bladder. Some studies indicate that it may cause as much brain damage as reading books.

"But Dr. Spudd," you may well say, "we can't give up PBS just like that! It would kill my husband!" And you're right, of course. Public TV is a disease, an addiction, and should not be kicked "cold turkey". Try tapering off. One suggestion is to watch only during Pledge Week (since PBS seems to have a Pledge Week about twice a month, this is not as

those normally commercial TV: usually old musicals and special crowd-pleasers like Fred Astaire Presents *Celebrity Polo Live from Kennedy Center Featuring Carl Sagan and Jacques Cousteau*. How much harmful brain stimulation can a viewer get from that?

One final note: you will be happy to hear that so-called non-commercial TV is getting ready to go commercial, as its government funding dries up. That's right: as part of a feasibility study, three Public TV stations in cities around the country have begun showing commercials. That will spread, no doubt. Once that happens, of course, Public TV will have enough money, ratings worries, and advertiser pressures to begin reaching the high standards set by the networks.

So, PBS may soon be safe for the mind and bladder. Until then, though, try to cut down.

* * * * *

Dear Dr. Spudd,

I'm a high school student. My problem is that school work gets in the way of my television viewing time.

As soon as I get home from school I rush to the TV and catch the last half of Gilligan's Island and then watch Batman. By this time I eat dinner (usually in front of the set) and then have to do my homework, which is usually about half an hour's worth, too much to do during the commercials. Usually I wait for a while, though, and my parents come in and make me quit watching TV in the middle of some really great show.

What's a young Couch Potato to do?

— Sony Boy

Dear S.B.,

Half an hour of homework?? Every night?? That seems grossly excessive. Ask your parents to

share with you, they are guilty of child abuse and should be reported to the Authorities.

* * * * *

Dear Dr. Spudd,

I am a devout "Sub-Genius", currently attending services at the Church of the Immaculate '60 Chevy. For the past seven years I have shared bed and television with a confirmed Couch Potato.

At first I was sure we could make this mixed marriage work, but lately we've been having problems. My beloved spud will no longer share in my religious devotions, especially when they coincide with re-runs of I Love Lucy. I have not insisted so far, but I feel a show-down is not far off. My church is planning an orgy of religious frenzy at U.C. Davis' Earth Day and I want to march as a Slut for Bob, but my husband refuses to attend with me. What is your advice?

— Video Widow

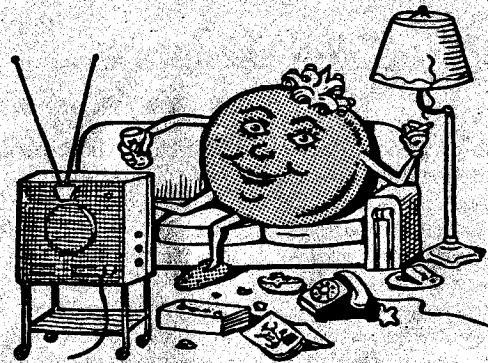
Dear Wideo,

Well, I'm sorry, but I think your husband has the right idea. Why expose yourself to the harmful rays of the sun and the perils of fresh air when there is TV to be watched?

If you want to worship your false gods, at least have the good taste to keep from disrupting your husband's life.

* * * * *

Is it true that a Couch Potato can eat his or her own weight in only four days of TV viewing? What are the three situations in which it is socially acceptable to interrupt a TV program? These and other fascinating questions are answered in Dr. Davenport Spudd's new pamphlet *Etiquette for the Couch Potato*, available for \$1.49 by writing to Dr. Spudd in care of this paper. □



I am a Teenage Couch Potato

By Samantha Margaret

Well, I start off my days watching TV and end them watching TV. Right now I have my own TV with cable (27 channels).

I wake up at 6:55 to my radio alarm, but I quickly turn that off and turn on my small but cozy TV set and watch *Mr. Ed*, *I Dream of Jeannie* or *My Favorite Martian*. Then, at 8:00 I leave for school, unless I can convince my mom I'm sick.

It was at school that my teacher (the famous) Dr. Spudd introduced me to Couch Potatoism. Until then, I had thought I was just a fat, lazy slob, but now I can simply say "I'm a teenage Couch Potato."

I'm proud to be old enough to be a full-fledged Couch Potato and not a Tater Tot, since I recently turned 13. My teacher says that I'm probably one of the youngest members. I consider that a great honor.

I've been training to be a Couch Potato for years. Since birth, in fact. My parents named me after the witch Samantha in *Bewitched*. I swear to God I'm not making that up.

Anyway, I get home from school, turn on the TV and watch *Get Smart* at 4:00, *Bewitched* at 4:30 and on and on. Around 7:30 I take a shower and wish I had a TV installed in the wall so I could watch TV all the time. My mom says it wouldn't be safe though — she says she doesn't want me to end up a Fried Potato.

I'm waiting for the day and age of space-age TV, where electrodes are placed in the brain and a TV receiver is implanted in your

TONING UP WHILE TUNING IN

By Arlene LaBunche

I know a lot of you gals out there have been worried about losing your girlish figures because you like to sit for extended periods and watch "the box." Well, here's an easy exercise you can do while viewing with your mate to firm up that soft bottom and help eliminate those dreaded cellulite saddlebags.

You don't need much to begin — just a few basic materials: one armchair, one hassock, one TV, one Couch Tomato with a large posterior problem, and one helpful Couch Potato with big feet.

FROM THE TOMATO VINE: A Female Viewpoint

By Patty Graves

We've been getting lots of letters from female, as well as male, viewers. The women who write mostly say they don't want any part of this organization, but would sure like to sign up their indolent mates.

Some say they want to be Couch Potatoes, but will be Tomatoes if we insist. Others flatly refuse to be Tomatoes under any circumstances and threaten to take us to court if we don't allow them to be full-fledged Potatoes in good standing. And then there are Tomatoes who happily accept their distinction from their subterranean counterparts (Potatoes & Tomatoes are members of the same genus), claim their rightful spots on their respective sofas, and ripen in the blue rays with pride. A regular little microcosm we've got going within our ranks.

What we choose to call ourselves is not the real issue. The important common cause is ERC: Equal Rights to the Couch, ladies. We no longer view ourselves as an auxiliary service organization. Some of us, who have no natural propensity to vidiocy ourselves get very agitated trying to pry the old man away from the set. The best way to avoid friction is to remember: "If you can't lick 'em

How many on the little screen? How many real-life bad guys are as purely evil as the villains that criminalize for us on TV in the comfort of our own homes. As long as there's plenty of the best on the tube, why look any further?

* * * * *

A recently-enrolled Tomato writes: "I work in an attendance office of a local high school. On an average day we can be visited by the police dept., probation dept., and irate parents. One day last week a student had a grand mal seizure right by my desk, students had broken into the main office and left 3 holes in the ceiling, a snake shared the student phone (also by my desk) with a student while coiled around his neck, a student was arrested for indecent exposure to a female custodian, and I found out that one of my favorite student aides snorted "coke" during the prom." Maybe there's too much sex and violence in the "real world". Seems like this Tomato could save herself a lot of undue involvement and achieve the same rush by just watching the first ten minutes of *Hill Street Blues*. But this new Tomato likes to watch TV to relax. . .

* * * * *

1:



So, to start off, make sure your Potato is sitting relaxed and comfy in that large armchair, with snacks at fingertips, and eyes in good viewing range. Hassock should be positioned under his extended feet.

2:



Now, without disturbing the field of view, position yourself on the hassock with posterior under viewer's large feet.

if you get there first.

As a representative of the Couch Tomatoes I was recently asked if there is too much sex and violence on TV. Gods no! If we don't get it on television where are we going to get it, huh? Think about it. How many perfect bodies are there per capita in real life?

Olsen, a language instructor at U.C. Davis for couching the Tomato motto (Get It Yourself A-----) in more refined terms for us. The newly translated byword for Tomatoes to have on the tips of their tongues (or maybe more effectively, across their chests, on a new Tomato T-Shirt) at all times is: "Id obtine tui ipse o asinus." □

What?

On the first episode of *The Millionaire* in 1955 a woman refused the check from Michael Anthony because she didn't want to be richer than her fiance. □



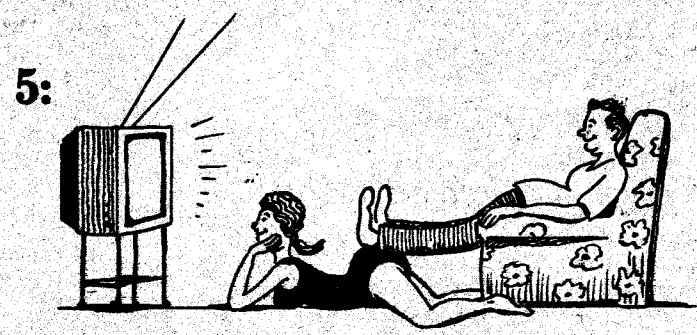
Flex cheeks, roll heels into buttocks, knead buttocks with heels.

The COUCH TOMATO VIEWING TUNIC

STYLISH and PRACTICAL TOO!



Now arch back, tighten cheeks, head up for viewing position. Releasing hostility and frustration while viewing.



Do 1,000 butt flexes with foot pounding every day for a more boingy bottom! Eventually female can replace hassock.

Gals! Here's a fashion item you can't afford to live without?
 • It's perfect for any kind of TV gathering • You'll wow 'em in this one!

Guys! Looking for that special something for the gal that shares your couch?

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NUTRITION TIP: Drink only brown diet sodas because they have the maximum caffeine needed for extra energy.

Chucko & Bozo

continued from page 1

"Engineer Bill" Stulla, today a securities broker, came off on the old kinescope as rather "above" his junior engineers, relying heavily on fast mechanical action ("Green light — glub glub — Red light!") to derail meaningful conversation. His trademark was "Believe you Mel," but he didn't say it in this show. It was good to see him again anyway. I loved the guy.

Chucko the Clown (Charles Runyon) came across in an enjoyable clip, as much cleverer than I remembered him twenty-five years ago, making the most of his props and personality to entertain the small children. Although he's now a farmer and botanist, he's still "the Happiest Guy in Town," and has an autobiography developing beneath his motorized carousel hat.

The most imposing feature of these old shows was the non-stop advertising and pitching of prizes (notably Circus Nuts and Barbara Ann pastries) into the eager hands of the dazzled birthday boys and girls. This seemed to be the greater part of the live action.

The cartoons we saw pointed up the changing styles in animation. There were the graphic complexities of a 1940 Superman cartoon, with extraordinary perspectives, shading and motion. Then there were the immobile cardboard cut-outs of a 50's Crusader Rabbit episode, forerunner of the prevailing simplifications in TV animation. At the time I first saw these cartoons, I probably couldn't tell much difference, and I cherished Rags the Tiger more than any other such creature.

Actually, a vintage and funny Tom Terrific cartoon stirred the greatest feelings in me, although the younger audience majority favored a "moderne" outer-space character who apparently got air-play in the early 60's, beyond my

using only small props, tailored for TV closeups. Then the hit of the evening took place as Randy Runyon, substituting for his flustered father, bounced out in the beautiful red and white Chucko the Clown costume, and danced across the front of the theater. Stuccoed Egyptian princesses smiled down as he clowned to a couple of merry tunes recorded by his father many years ago. More than anyone else this night, Chucko "Junior" succeeded in restoring the past.

Sam Frank presented venerable and affable Popeye host Tom Hatten, who revealed that his video debut had been on *Space Patrol*. He was joined by Lu "Crusader" Bliss, who still does cartoon voices, and Chuck Jones, for a panel discussion of the old shows. The conversation centered largely on the reasons for the demise of the live programs in the mid-sixties (such as the network-prepared animated shows and commercials, orientation toward teenagers in the afternoons, and demands for faster, ruder action).

They also did a lot of "Whatever happened-to's". I learned that Sheriff John Rovick, the lawman with whom I shared a thousand lunches, still does station announcing in Idaho. Skipper Frank Herman and Chuck Jones continue to travel with magic shows. The first Captain Jet (Dallas McKennon), Chucko the Clown, and Skipper Frank have all flocked to Oregon. Tom Hatten commands an awesome four-hour block of air time each Sunday morning with his *Family Film Festival* on K.T.L.A. Jimmy "Webster Webfoot" Weldon is a motivational speaker and actor. Nobody seemed to know what became of Uncle Luther.

Finally, to close the evening, Sam Frank told the audience to swell with applause. "You have to

The Tuber Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Tele-Leisure

By Don Ault with Will Tomlinson

When radio station WWDB in Philadelphia recently conducted a live-on-the-air interview with me (in the wake of the *L.A. Times* Couch Potato article) several points of serious concern arose which I would like to call to the attention of all Couch Potatoes. The insensitive interviewer woke me at 7:35 a.m., totally disregarding the fact that, as an active Couch Potato, I had been up until the crack of dawn relaxing in front of my four working TV sets, bathing in the blue light of multiple video images, especially a Bela Lugosi festival featuring *Murder by Television* and *The Return of Chandu*, a consecutive showing of all the episodes of the classic John Wayne serial *Hurricane Express*, and a back-to-back screening of eight episodes of *I Married Joan*. I had barely dropped off, lulled by the depressing routine of early morning disaster news, when this up-beat high-tension untelevised, devisualized voice started pumping rapid fire questions to me. Though he asked some predictable, stock questions — why the group's name, etc. — he also asked me if all us Couch Potatoes look alike because we spend so much time lounging in front of TV sets: don't we all have fat bellies and watermelon eyes? I was sufficiently outraged by his obvious refusal to grant individual Couch Potatoes the dignity they deserve that I immediately accused him of making a mistake akin to that of racists and sexists who assume people can be categorized simply on the basis of outward physical appearance. It was as though he assumed that just because we share the common (yet unrealized) goal of the total decline of Western Civilization, we

open up a field of greater individuality and freedom of expression by encouraging the viewer to tailor viewing conditions to his or her most personal, even idiosyncratic, tastes and desires. Indeed, the Couch Potatoes exalt and sanctify the individual viewer's quest to achieve the state of total leisure necessary for survival in a world otherwise devoid of meaning.

I was also asked if, in my position as a Professor of English at Vanderbilt University, I meet with hostility toward the Couch Potato philosophy. This is an important question because it goes to the heart of what I understand to be the deeper element of social criticism in the Couch Potato movement. In most intellectual circles TV is shunned and scorned, automatically written off as a bad influence (with a few predictable exceptions of "approved" viewing such as educational, news, and sports programming). A recent example of this tendency is found in the words of Florida International University professor James Flanders who says that TV "deprives one of the bonding experiences with family and friends and leads one into a passive way of dealing with life in general and people in particular. It disposes quiet people to be shy, shy people to be lonely and lonely people to be depressed. . . . This is essentially bad." Whether intellectuals write TV off by reflex or go to great lengths to prove its worthiness, this massive attempt to discredit one of the few remaining sources of human pleasure indicates that there is something in the phenomenon they are attacking which threatens the stability and perpetuation of the institution which

this point. These people need TV and membership in the Couch Potatoes the most: they subconsciously realize that if they had a set, its much-needed therapeutic power would cleanse them in the bath of its blue light and transfix them before their sets 24 hours a day, diverting their attention away from the wearisome, high pressure world to which they are so compulsively committed. I'm reminded here of a moment in the work of the great comic artist/writer Carl Barks, where Donald Duck the salesman is warned by his nephews, "Don't try this house, Unca Donald. These people have a savage dog!" Donald replies, "That shows they're soft touches! They keep the dog to protect them from their own weakness!" (*Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #39, Dec., 1943). Donald's response applies equally to intellectual purists who do not have the courage to confront the power of TV.

The visionary poet William Blake says of a key character in *The Four Zoas*: "He became what he beheld/He became what he was doing he was himself transformed" (page 55: 22-23). This principle gives ontological significance to the pleasures of relaxed but organized TV viewing. To the extent that we become the shows we watch we all participate in each other's identities. But the TV's eye watches us as well and becomes what it beholds. When, in the ideal viewing situation, our multiple eyes are gazing at the numerous eyes of a collage of TV sets which simultaneously watch us, the shows, the sets, and we, as Couch Potatoes, undergo a mutual inter-transformation; this is the unique moment of ecstatic viewing in

become an old grump.)

In-Person Antics

After the intermission, the evening's presentation resumed with introductions to the in-person kiddie show personalities. First the youthful Chuck Jones performed a number of deft tricks

Contemplating this latest threat to our progeny, I reluctantly filed out with the rest of the audience to face again the realities of Los Angeles in the 80's.

Bobby Drewry is the co-founder of the notorious Sherman Oaks Lodge, and addresses envelopes in his own home. □



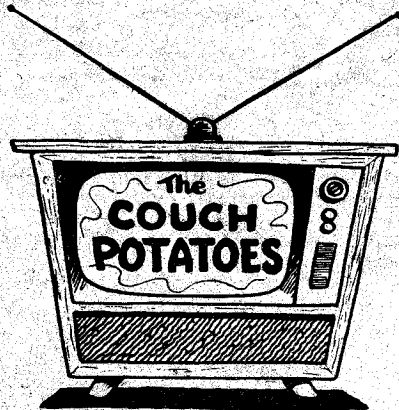
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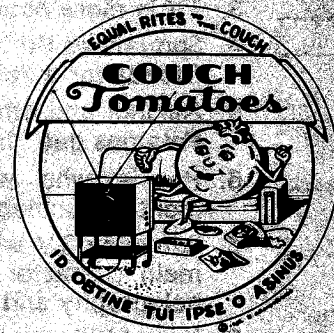
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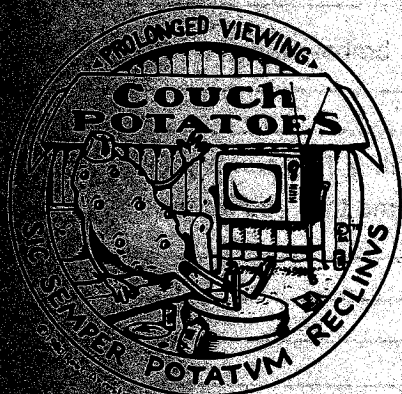
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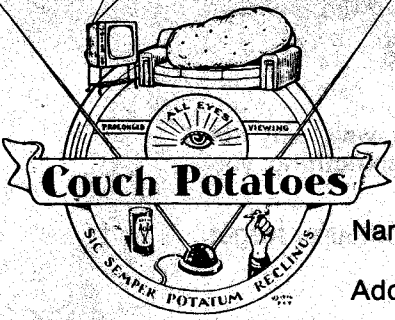


Name _____

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**COUCH POTATO
Questionnaire/Survey**



This little questionnaire is our way of determining what you members out there in TV land are thinking and watching. Please fill out and return right away. We'll publish some of the results in the next newsletter.

Name _____ Year you first began viewing _____

Address _____

Fill in the blanks in front of the numbers with the answer that most appropriately describes your feelings about each of the following statements.

SA — Strongly Agree, A — Agree, D — Disagree, SD — Strongly Disagree, DK — Don't Know

- _____ 1. TV is God.
- _____ 2. TV is better than sex.
- _____ 3. TV is more nourishing than food.
- _____ 4. Sometimes I'd be willing to trade all my friends for a 26" color Zenith.
- _____ 5. Alcohol and other drugs can aid Couch Potatoes get "in the mood" for TV.
- _____ 6. People who watch soap operas are mentally unstable.
- _____ 7. Someday TV will let each person be a main character in every show through holography and "feel-o-vision."
- _____ 8. I would like to be on TV.
- _____ 9. Gracie Allen is not really dead.
- _____ 10. Sometimes I think TV is watching me.
- _____ 11. If I concentrate I can see TV without a set.
- _____ 12. TV is an experience to be shared.
- _____ 13. Talking is okay during commercials.
- _____ 14. TV has made me a better citizen.
- _____ 15. TV is organic.
- _____ 16. TV is orgasmic.
- _____ 17. I'd rather die than live without TV.
- _____ 18. TV is more than a hobby.
- _____ 19. They don't make TV shows like they used to.
- _____ 20. TV is better than ever.
- _____ 21. TV is just radio with pictures.
- _____ 22. TV is just movies, but smaller.
- _____ 23. TV wants to be my friend.
- _____ 24. Every network has its own personality.
- _____ 25. Vietnam is not a real place: it was just a TV series that finally got cancelled.
- _____ 26. The laughtrack has a better sense of humor than I do.
- _____ 27. TV game shows are all fixed.
- _____ 28. Black & white TV is better than color.
- _____ 29. There should be more sex and violence on TV.
- _____ 30. TV is an accurate reflection of the real world.
- _____ 31. The real world is an accurate reflection of TV.

- _____ 32. TV travels forever into space — people on distant planets are watching *I Love Lucy*.
- _____ 33. If you watch TV with lights off you'll go blind.
- _____ 34. Solitary TV watching is a sin.
- _____ 35. I feel guilty when I don't buy products advertised on my favorite shows.
- _____ 36. The people on TV actually live inside the set and wait for me to turn it on.
- _____ 37. Milton Berle is funny.
- _____ 38. The Russians hate us because they're jealous of our TV productions.
- _____ 39. The revolution will not be televised.
- _____ 40. Sometimes my TV seems to be alive.

ESSAY QUESTION

Without being boring, describe what TV show or star was most influential in shaping your personality. (If you need more than 25 words on this, it better be good! Use additional sheets if you must)

What is the most embarrassing thing you've ever seen on TV? _____

Number of functioning TV sets in your home _____

List five TV programs that you've hated.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

List five of your favorite TV characters

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____