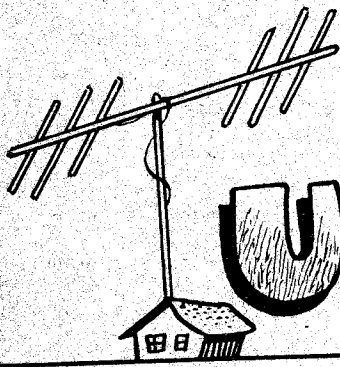
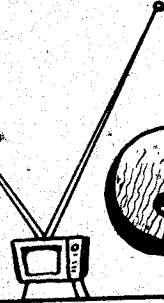


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The Rubber's Voice

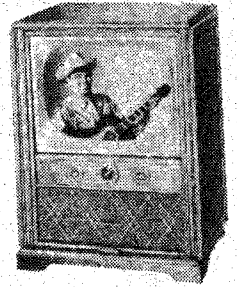
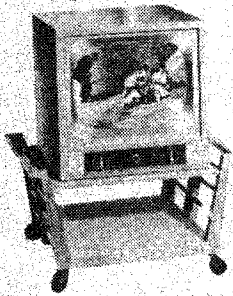
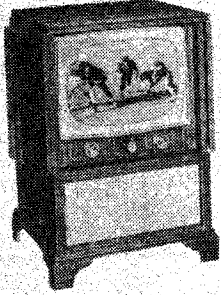


Number Three

COUCH POTATO NEWSLETTER

MCMLXXXIII

1953 Model TVs



collage by: Joe Schwind

Inside this issue: The 3 Stooges, Bilko, Salute to 1953, Transistor Ted, Comics, Survey Results, Viewing in Japan, & Much More!

SALUTE TO 1953

Just for the heck of it, let's look back 30 years to review a significant year in television.

SOME TV FIRSTS

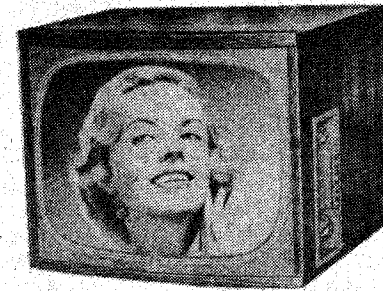
- First televised murder trial (on WKW TV)
- First educational station, KUHT
- First televised A-bomb test (from Yucca Flats)
- Ronald Reagan makes his debut as host on *G.E. Theatre*
- Televised coronation of Queen Elisabeth II of England
- First televised presidential inauguration (Eisenhower)
- First hour long color TV program. December 17th marked the arrival of color casting with a modified version of RCA's "compatible" all electronic (dot sequential) system.
- Little Ricky is born on *The I Love Lucy Show* (Jan. 19) within the same week Lucy's real baby arrived. More people watched Little Ricky's birth (44,000,000) on the *I Love Lucy* show than watched Eisenhower's inauguration (27,000,000) the next day.
- First issue of *TV Guide* in April featured Little Ricky Ricardo on the cover.
- George B. Munsey invents the toaster oven

THE DEBUT OF MEMORABLE SHOWS

- *The Adventures of Superman*, starring George Reeves, with Phyllis Coates, Jack Larson, and John Hamilton.
- *Life with Father*, CBS comedy (Nov. 1953 to July 1955), starring Leon Ames and Lurene Tuttle.
- *Life of Riley*, NBC comedy (Jan. 1953 to Aug. 1958), starring William Bendix and Marjorie Reynolds.
- *Make Room for Daddy*, ABC comedy (Sept. 1953 to July 1957), starring Danny Thomas with Jean Hagan, later Marjorie Lord.
- *Topper*, NBC comedy (1953 to 1955), ABC (1955-56), Leo G. Carroll, Ann Jeffreys, Robert Sterling, and Lee Patrick.
- *Winky Dink and You*, CBS kids' show (Oct. 1953 to April 1957), Jack Barry, host.
- *Marty* on the *Philco Television Playhouse*, starring Rod Steiger and Nancy Marchand.

... AND FORGETTABLE SHOWS

- *Bank on the Stars*, CBS game show, Jack Paar, host.
- *Bonino*, NBC comedy (Sept. to Dec. 1953) starring Ezio Pinza and Mary Wickes.
- *Coke Time*, NBC musical variety (April 1953 to Feb. 1957), Eddie Fisher, host.
- *Colonel Flack*, DuMont Comedy (1953-1958), Alan Mowbray and Alan Jenks.
- *Judge for Yourself*, NBC game show (Aug. 1953 to May 1954), Fred Allen, Dennis James, hosts.
- *The Liberace Show*, NBC, 30 minutes (1953 to 1955).
- *The Martha Raye Show*, NBC variety (Dec. 1953 to May 1956).
- *My Favorite Husband*, CBS comedy (Sept. 1953 to Dec. 1955), Joan Caulfield, Barry Nelson.
- *Pride of the Family*, ABC comedy (Oct. 1953 to Sept. 1954), Paul Hartman, Fay Wray, and Natalie Wood.
- *Two for the Money*, CBS game show, Herb Shriner, Sam Levinson, hosts.
- *Where's Raymond?*, a.k.a. *The Ray Bolger Show*, ABC (Oct. 1953 to June 1955), Ray Bolger, Margie Miller, Richard Erdman.
- *Wonderful John Action*, ABC comedy (July to Sept. 1953), Harry Holcombe, Virginia Dwyer.



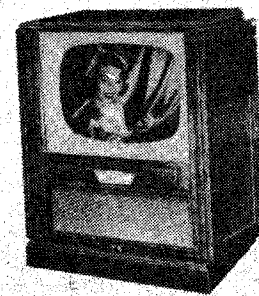
1953 Emerson Model 740



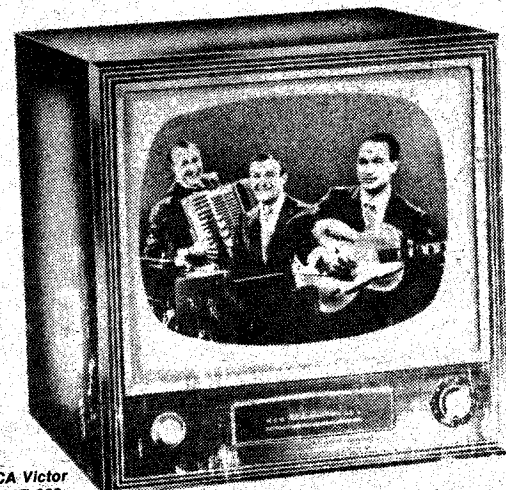
Lucy with Little Desi



Topper with Ghost Riders



1953 Arvin "Ambassador"



1953 RCA Victor Model 217-303

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

AGREE/DISAGREE QUESTIONS

Although an analysis of the results would be too lengthy and too boring for this space, we'd like to share your responses to the forty agree/disagree statements. You agreed: you'd trade all your friends for a 26" Zenith (although several of you pointed out Zenith no longer makes a 26" model), alcohol and drugs can get you in the TV mood, Soapers are mentally unstable, that holography and "feel-o-vision" will some day be a part of our lives, that you'd like to appear on TV, that Gracie Allen is not dead, that TV is watching you, that you can see TV without a set, that TV is an experience to be shared, that talking during commercials is okay, that TV has made you a better citizen, that TV is orgasmic (but not organic), that TV is more than a hobby, that they don't make TV shows like they used to, that TV wants to be your friend, that every network has its own personality, that game shows are all fixed, that TV needs more sex and violence (although many people wrote "more sex, less violence"), that the real world is an accurate reflection of TV (but not vice versa), that people on distant planets are watching *I Love Lucy*, that the Russians hate us out of jealousy for our TV productions and that sometimes your TV seems to be alive.

To the other questions, you responded negatively. Some especially vehement reactions came in response to the issue of whether TV is God and whether Viet Nam was a real place.

Apparently, it was difficult for many of our members to list shows they've hated. This is a sensitive subject with viewers. Some of the C.P. Elders were shocked to find their favorite programs among the most despised:

MOST HATED SHOWS in order of most votes tallied

1. *Three's Company*
2. *Loveboat*
3. *Fantasy Island*
4. *Dukes of Hazzard*
5. *Brady Bunch*
6. *Lawrence Welk*
7. *Dallas*
8. *Little House on the Prairie*
9. *Richard Simmons*
10. *Family Feud*
11. *Gilligan's Island*
12. *Laverne and Shirley*
13. Any news program
14. Any Jerry Lewis telethon
15. *The Waltons*
16. *Donahue*
17. *Charlie's Angels*
18. *Merv Griffin*
19. *That's Incredible*
20. *CHiPs*
21. *Partridge Family*
22. *My Mother, the Car*
23. *Mr. Rogers*
24. *Family Affair*
25. *Eight is Enough*

FAVORITE TV CHARACTERS in order of preference

(of course, this list could go on and on, but we limited it to the top 25.)

1. Hawkeye Pierce
2. Eddie Haskell
3. Beaver Cleaver
4. Mr. Spock

5. Maynard G. Krebs
6. Sgt. Ernie Bilko
7. Lucy Ricardo
8. Jim Rockford
9. Bullwinkle
10. Mr. Ed
11. Brett Maverick
12. Barney Fife
13. Ed Norton
14. Ralph Kramden
15. Soupy Sales
16. Perry Mason
17. Rob Petrie
18. Samantha Stevens
19. Jack Benny
20. Mary Tyler Moore
21. Cosmo Topper
22. Arnold Ziffel
23. Connie Brooks
24. Gunther Toody
25. Angel Martin

MOST EMBARRASSING THING ON TV

In response to the question "What is the most embarrassing thing you've ever seen on TV," a couple of readers chose to answer the question literally (... most embarrassing thing on TV) and described atrocious ceramic clocks, tasteless knickknacks, and so on. One answer of this type was "A used condom on my mother-in-law's set before I married her son."

Here are some of the other answers to the "most embarrassing" question:

- What Arthur Godfrey did to Julius LaRosa.
- Rosemarie on a recent *Love Boat* episode (*bad facelift*).
- L.A. news anchorman John Schubeck giggling while reporting on condoms that had to be recalled because they had holes

in them.

—My mom being arrested for smuggling weapons.

—Dreux Pearson of the Dallas Cowboys vomiting live in the Browns end zone.

—The coronation of Emperor Bokassa.

—William Shafner singing "Rocket Man" on some variety show.

—When George Burns said that he and Jack Benny couldn't die because they had signed 10-year contracts. Aired the day after Benny's death.

—Horse being castrated on PBS.

—When a little marmoset took a whiz on Johnny Carson's head.

—Tiny Tim's wedding.

—*People's Court* case entitled "Negligent Handling of a Hose."

—A Kotex commercial, when I was 11, with my Dad watching too.

—Skip, the blond guy on *Real People*.

—Me on *Challenge My Sermon*, local NBC Sunday morning show.

—Dean Martin flipping ashes into George Gobel's drink on Carson.

—People getting excited on game shows and kissing the host.

—Sonny & Cher's monologues.

—My mother on *Bowling for Dollars*—she lost.

—Any "young entertainer" type on Johnny Carson during the last five minutes.

—Joan Rivers mimicking Japanese people on Carson show.

—Jerry Falwell.

—Richard Nixon on *Laugh In* in 1968. . . revolting injection of reality into TV!

—Sammy Davis Jr. hugging Richard Nixon!

ESSAY QUESTION

There were many inspiring answers to the essay question "What TV show or star was most influential in shaping your personality?" Then again, some answers left us worried about some members' identity problems. Here's a random sampling:

—"The Prisoner conferred upon me the need for a sense of playful paranoia."

—"The Fugitive taught me how to bullshit my way out of teenage scrapes with the law."

—"Watching *Mr. Wizard* with Don Herbert started me towards electronics."

—"Howdy Doody; he taught me there's always strings attached."

—"Joe Pyne taught me people will love you if you're clever when you're nasty."

—"Maverick—without TV, I'd do nothing but drink and gamble, too."

—"Winky Dink and You—helping Winky escape danger each week taught me the true meaning of loyalty and friendship."

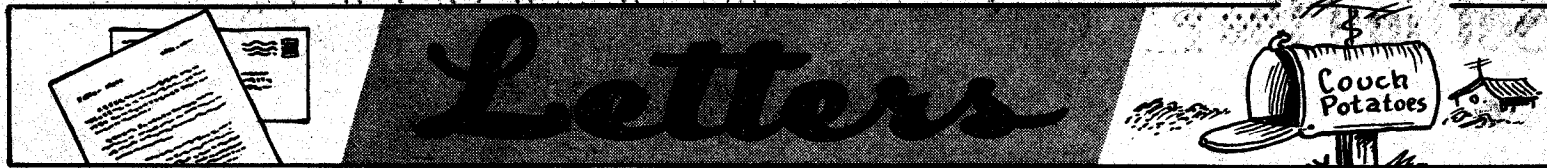
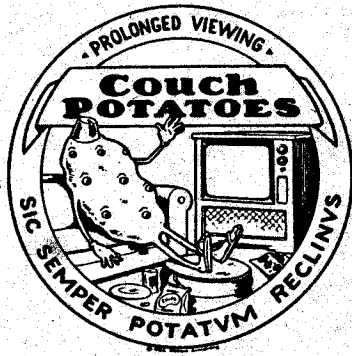
—"Stu Irwin impressed upon me that all people are inferior, there are just varying degrees of vile-ness."

—"Captain Kangaroo, because he taught me my first songs. (I make my living singing)"

—"Broderick Crawford on *Highway Patrol*—he made me want to stay off the streets, which led to more TV viewing."

—"Bob Denver as Maynard G. Krebs has forever helped me maintain a healthy view towards 'work'."

—"I Led Three Lives made me not want to be a Communist." □



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Notices

ZONED OUT ON TURKEY DAY

We have just returned from Hollywood, where we spent Thanksgiving with our daughter. We are not sure if we merit any special notice for this, but we watched all eight hours of the *Twilight Zone* marathon. It started at 9 a.m. and ended at 5 p.m. on Thanksgiving day. During the commercials (which, by the way, were the same three for all 8 hours) we attended to our Thanksgiving cooking duties. At 6 p.m. we went visiting friends and learned there was a two-hour *Twilight Zone* special on at 8:00. So we rushed home and viewed two more hours, while stuffing on more pumpkin and pecan pie. I would like to know if any other readers did what we did on Thanksgiving.

ERNA & RAY BURGER
Davis, CA

INSPIRING TESTIMONIAL

Three years ago I was an uninformed TV bore. I had no understanding of the higher meaning of TV. I thought it was there for entertainment! I even went so far as to write an article critical of TV music, citing it as innocuous and vapid; a rip-off of current and classical tunes.

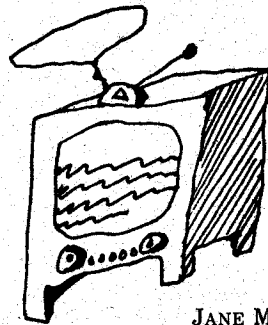
But something happened. It began very simply, with a weekend marathon showing of *Thin Man* movies, then a period of illness kept me in and watching reruns of *Get Smart*, *Benny Hill* and *The Brady Bunch*. Finally I was spending whole weekends in my darkened apartment, gorging on Twinkies and Coke, OD'ing on Japanese horror flicks. I was filled with wonder and amazement at my transformation, but I was really only leading the lifestyle without an inkling of the underlying meaning; especially of why the music was so dull.

Then came my initiation into Couch Tomatodom and *The Tuber's Voice*. With the resultant awareness of the cosmic importance of TV came the revelation: *The music must be*

ing would be impossible. Here in Albuquerque, channel 4 (NBC) and channel 7 (ABC) remain the same over the air waves, but with cable become 6 and 9 respectively. Channel 2 (CBS) is 13 but 12 with cable. Your 28 (PBS) is 5 but 8 with cable, but only until 11 p.m., at which time channel 11 L.A. takes over. There are also various local stations here which convert to different channels (14 to 2, 23 to 10, etc.). In all, we receive channels 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 31.

I believe Elder #6 can attest to the fact that viewing here transcends anything ever experienced in Southern California and, though I miss those Michigan Street wine fests, the move was a boon for me.

DAVE and JANE SOYKA
Albuquerque, NM



JANE MOORE
Mill Valley, CA

DOESN'T ♥ NY TV

NY TV is the worst! People are actually turning to *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* from 2:30 to 3:30 a.m. weeknights on NBC as though it was sent from heaven! There are a few decent shows on at around 4 or 5 (A&C, *Groucho*), but whenever I'm up and tune in at those hours they never seem to be on! The only possible salvation is coming across a "Honeymousers" cartoon by pure luck on *The*

TV REDEFINED

I just finished reading an article about your organization, The Couch Potatoes. My husband and I too used to spend an inordinant amount of time glued to our TV set. However, we have had our lives turned around.

As you can imagine, we have weeded a lot of nonsense things out of our lives. The TV set went 2 or 3 years ago—and neither of us have [sic] missed it! Both of us have turned our lives over to Jesus Christ (almost 10 years ago for me—5 for Tom.)

A verse in Psalms spoke to me one day—Psalm 119:37 "Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in Thy ways." I looked up the word vanity in Webster's and it means "that which is empty, idle, or useless—devoid of worth, use, truth, etc."—a perfect definition of 99% of TV programming.

CHARLENE A. McCLOUD
Lancaster, NY

I am so glad there is someone on this earth who is standing up to those blasphemers and maligners of the sacred teevee god, and at the same time standing up for the god-given right to view, guaranteed in the constitution.

I was reborn in the spirit of television only one short year ago when I purchased a black and white from Gemco for \$77. I have received my initial payment back, and much more, praisethelord, by investing just this much in the video ministry. Soon I would like to get cable and a VCR and maybe a color with remote control.

I would like to share with your readers an oft neglected viewing experience, which is Christian television. As a member of the Church of the Subgenius, it is one of my duties to envelop myself in every form of bizarre religious or financial pitch that comes my way. Since the TV evangelists are certainly promoting a bizarre form of religion, if not mass

KIDDIE SHOW ERRATA

I am writing this in response to Bobby Drewry's warmly personal review of the kid show tribute I produced and hosted at the Vista Theatre on June 1. While I am grateful for the attention, I have to point out a number of errors he made.

I did not say that Lucille Bliss' *Happy Birthday to You* show was the only preserved record of a female kiddie host, only that it was the only kinescope of one I could find. As it turns out, there were very few female hosts during that era (*Romper Room* and *Little Princess* are the only shows that come to mine [sic] other than *Hobo Kelly*) and what few there were don't seem to exist.

"Engineer Bill" Stulla retired as a securities broker in 1976 and now lives in retirement in Westlake Village. He is also a reclusive, embittered man regarding the way he was forced to leave channel 9 in the mid-1960s. When I interviewed him, I found him to be both a warm and generous guy and a temperamental sonofabitch. (Pinky Lee, to whom I also spoke regarding the tribute, is a thorough monster, so video buffs are advised to forget about seeing any of his old shows anytime soon.)

The "moderne" outer-space character was Colonel Bleep, whom I thought was so marvelous and magical when I was a kid. When I screened a few of those cartoons for inclusion in the show, I saw them for what they were: stiff, wooden, cheap-jack animation that was cranked out to meet the demands of TV syndication in the late 1950s. A lot of those episodes do exist and they were produced in Florida, NOT Japan, by-the-way.

I don't mean to seem snide about Drewry's article, but I felt compelled after reading it to correct some factual errors and mistaken impressions.

SAM FRANK
Long Beach, CA

• We finally have membership cards available. If you're a member and haven't received yours yet, send a S.A.S.E. and we'll send one off to you.

• We'll be starting a classified ads section with issue #4; so if you have a short, relevant message you'd like to get printed, send it in.

• Interested in display advertising in *The Tuber's Voice*? Please contact our advertising dept.?

Establish Your Own C.P. Chapter

Many of you members out there have been writing us showing an interest in starting your own local chapter of the Couch Potatoes. Up to now they haven't been formally sanctioned. With this issue (see enclosed sheet) we offer you the opportunity to establish your own lodge chapter.

For \$5.00 we'll send you a starter kit, which includes forms to sign up members of your chapter, membership cards, and a beautiful, official-looking certificate of sanction, suitable for framing to hang in your lodge hall or viewing module. We'll also offer you the opportunity to report on any of your lodge happenings to be printed in this newsletter.

-Subscriptions:

Tuber's Voice is published sporadically as the official forum of the Couch Potato movement. Subscriptions for the next 3 issues (numbers 4-6) are available for \$3.75. Write to: Couch Potatoes, Rt. 1 Box 327, Dixon, CA 95620.

...it must be the one which modern mind into torpidity. That is it's sole reason to be.

This realization has completed my transformation. I can now spend countless hours staring at the tube without thinking a single thought; without moving; without wondering about the music!

My purpose in writing is to thank the elders for their continued faith in the rightness of their vision, and to encourage those whose evangelistic fervor might be flagging to persevere. The voice of the tuber shall be heard throughout the land!

MARSHA THOMAS
Inglewood, CA

L.A. TV RIVALED

Since moving my family from the heart of TV Land, Los Angeles, I have discovered a new Tuber Mecca that, though unbelievably so, dwarfs L.A. in its television range and scope. I am, of course, speaking of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

My initial fears of all-Mexican-speaking stations were layed to rest when I had *THE CABLE* installed. In moments, I and my entire family were enjoying, back-to-back, *Gilligan's Island*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, and the list goes on. I see more Dodgers and Angels games than I ever did in L.A. Thanks to that wonderful satellite, I still receive channel 5 from L.A. and Ted Turner's station from Atlanta, and during late night we receive channel 11 L.A. In addition, we have HBO (extra charge), the all-news network, 2 all-sports channels, and the new MTV (the video-music station). We have a down converter, also, which receives a microwave station when they're in business (much like the "Z" channel).

However, the task of understanding and using my remote control channel selector has been magnified to such a degree that intense study is required to translate the cable TV guide to the channel selector on the television set. With the built-in converters in the new TVs, a viewer may still keep the use of his or her remote control, without which serious view-

...local channel actually shows 90 minutes of in the morning and again in the afternoon). I fear it can only get worse and worse with newer and newer shows falling into syndication. Boy, I remember the days of eating canned spaghetti to the tune of *The Untouchables* or *Honeymooners* (hell, even *Bowling for Dollars*!) But *Three's Company* or *WKRP*? Uh uh, no way, I won't do it.

TODD ABRAMSON
Berkeley Heights, NJ

VALERIE OPPOSES WOMEN AS FURNITURE

Thank you for the invitation to appear in your periodical (now "legend" publication, having been immortalized in *TV Guide*). I must decline due to a cartoon you featured in which a female human being was depicted as a hassock. Call me crazy but... as a woman it is hard enough fighting one's way to personage without suggestions that one aspire to be furniture. Ned tells me a woman drew the cartoon... alas, alack, so much work to be done!!! But... as a battler of the bulge, I must admit the possible remedial effect is not without a certain appeal.

VALERIE HARPER
Los Angeles, CA

TRANSIENT VIEWER

I am in a somewhat difficult situation, as I don't own a television! I spend my days and evenings roaming from department store to department store, desperately in search of an available screen (and if I'm lucky, a usable couch). I have found Sears a favorite, as I enjoy the stale popped corn-packed air mingling with my usual can of sliced Spam and banana flavored Scooter Pies.

Until I have a television of my own, this lifestyle is okay. What I do object to is all the moving around I have to do, at the expense of some of my favorite shows.

CAROL HIGHLAND
Santa Cruz, CA

insanity, and they are constantly coming up with newer and more ridiculous ways to get you to send money, they fit the bill perfectly.

My personal favorites by far are Jim and Tammy on the *PTL Club*, also known as the *Jim Bakker Show*. I am absolutely positive that they take drugs before the show and that the whole thing is a big joke to them, and a good way to make a fast buck. Tammy wears tons of makeup and punk-looking little miniskirts and headbands. She is constantly referring to her great spiritual troubles in the past, so we can only imagine what kinky stuff she was into before she became a bornagain. Jim is always breaking into giggles in the middle of very serious discussions about the meaning of the bible. He also cries a lot when asking for money. They make lots of money. On one show, they showed their house. Tammy said, "We couldn't decide if we wanted a house with a lake or a house with a swimming pool, but then we got lucky and found a house that had both." Yes, the lord has certainly blessed them. They also have a beautiful retreat in the mountains where they have weekend retreats for couples who are having marital problems. They get to stay in a cute little condominium, play tennis, sit in hot tubs and sauna, and fuck their neighbor's wife, all in the name of Jesus.

I guess some of the other evangelists like Jerry Falwell are just as funny to some people, but you just can't match good old Jim and Tammy for silliness, and good clean fun.

ALICE ADDEE
Sacramento, CA

VIDEO GAME

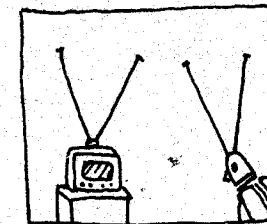
While watching *The Bob Newhart Show* we play a drinking game called "Hi, Bob." Everytime they say, "Hi, Bob" you take a sip and everytime they say "Hi Bob, How was your day?" you drink the whole thing.

SUSAN MCQUADE
Naranja, FL

DIFFICULTY ADJUSTING

I traded in my rabbit ears for a 75 ohm cable connection. Alas, I must admit it—I'm a cable-tuber. And that has wreaked havoc with my prolonged viewing. Instead of settling in for eight or ten hours of uninterrupted viewing (in deep concentration, punctuated with forays into the kitchen for a "Station Break Gourmet" snack), I sit clicking nervously from cable channel to cable channel, forever frazzled by the lack of a program guide for cable and haunted by visions of missing an episode of *Space Patrol* on USA Network or a *Fractured Flickers* on Showtime. It seems as if NTSC is telling me "No time for sleep, Cremer" (or you might miss one of those really great shows like *Masquerade Party* or *The Tammy Grimes Show*). But I think I can lick this. After all, I licked Gilligan-phobia (the fear of *Gilligan's Island* being preempted), and I can lick this, so help me Liberace!

BOB "COLOR BARS" CREMER
Richmond, CA



TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE

I particularly enjoyed The Station Break Gourmet. Unfortunately, I do not own a toaster oven, but find the top of my set to reach a high enough temperature after 10 or so hours, enabling me to melt butter for the popcorn and also keep the teapot hot. Just trying to do my part in conserving energy.

CHARLOTTE JAMBECK
Minneapolis, MN

Setting the **STOOGES**



The guests are assembled in a semi-circle around the set. The hostess speaks: "You not only hear the program, but you actually see it on this screen." The set is switched on to a live broadcast from Niagara Falls. Suddenly the screen bursts and a torrent of water rushes out, drenching the partygoers.

It's a gag, of course, but one with unusual historical interest. For, appearing as it does in a Three Stooges short of 1940, *A Plumbing We Will Go*, it could well be the earliest pop-culture reference to television, not as some futuristic marvel of science, but as a means of entertainment in the home. Perhaps this is only fitting; for television and the Three Stooges have had a long, close, and mutually beneficial relationship.

The Stooges were appearing on TV variety programs as early as 1950, with Shemp in the "third-Stooge" slot. However, the Stooges' real connection with the tube began with Shemp's death in 1955. The team's two-reelers had been slipping badly for several years, but they continued to be top money-makers for movie theaters. With three years to go on the Stooges' contract, a decision was made to bring a comic named Joe Besser into the act. Joe had made his greatest mark in television, creating the dubiously unforgettable character of

By Tom Bertino

ly all of the top variety programs, including three Ed Sullivan shows and three for Steve Allen. Moe recalls not being too taken with Milton Berle, who delivered a slap that broke one of Moe's front teeth.

Television is a thirsty beast and it was soon demanding more Three Stooges for its screen. In 1965 a series of 156 Stoooge cartoons were produced in color for TV distribution. The Stooges provided their own voices, and each episode was framed by about three minutes of newly-shot live action. The animation was of typical rock-bottom quality for the period, but the stories had some clever touches and the humor was in keeping with the Stooges' style. The Three Stooges stepped before the camera as a team for the last time in 1971, to make a pilot for a proposed TV series of comedy travelogs. During production, however, Larry suffered a stroke, and that spelled the professional end of the Three Stooges. The surviving footage from this project was edited into a one-hour segment and was released in 8-millimeter under the title "Kook's Tour."

Over the years, many familiar faces from the tube found their way into the films of the Three Stooges, some appearing in their earliest screen work. As early as 1934, in the team's first starring vehicle, *Woman Haters*, the boys had several encounters with Walter Brennan, decades before his *Real McCoys* success. That same year the Queen Mother of television comedy, Lucille Ball, was a young starlet receiving early schooling in *Three Little Pilgrims*. Among the indignities she suffered at the hands of the Stooges was having Curly hose

IN DEFENSE OF PRESIDENT REAGAN

By Jack Mingo

I am often surprised to find how many Couch Potatoes disapprove of our current president. Admittedly, he has passed the peak of his TV acting powers as exemplified by his work on *GE Theatre* and *Death Valley Days*. Certainly he sometimes thoughtlessly pre-empts some of the better shows.

Yet, I'd like to argue that he may be the best president we Couch Potatoes have ever had. In fact, he may even be one of us. After all, he is the only president we've had who was a TV actor before becoming a different kind of public servant.

Critics of the president cite the apparent failure of his economic programs and the warlike tone of his international dealings. But let's take a close look at these charges from a Couch Potato perspective.

The Economy

Is it so bad that a record number of people are out of work and that the tax relief goes only to the rich? Not necessarily. A near-depression is a time of great opportunity. With unemployment rates growing daily, thousands of people formerly tied to the drudgery of job responsibilities have been freed to experience the joys of daytime television. Soap operas! Classic comedy reruns! Old movies! Local talk shows! And much, much more.

Are the tax breaks unfair? Some people say that, and there's some truth to what they say. The rich people's hefty tax breaks allow them to spend less time making money and more time watching the tube. The poor already have plenty of time for TV. Thus, once again an unfair burden falls on the working middle class. While the rich folks carry their tax breaks home in wheelbarrows, most of us will be lucky to get enough back for a few *TV Guides* and a case of generic beer.

This isn't fair, of course. We should write and ask Mr. Reagan for hefty tax breaks, too. He seems like a nice guy—at the very least I'm sure he'd be willing to

realm of TV programming. *Private Benjamin* (sometimes unfairly called "Gomer Pyle in drag") may not be the best show on, but it is the first entry in a new series of the long-unused "Military Life Is Fun" genre, so it can't be judged too harshly.

Just think of all the good shows that came out of the Cold War militarism of the 1950's and 1960's: *Gomer and Bilko* and *Mc Hale* to name a few. Sure, a peaceful world would be wonderful, but without war and its accoutrements we would never have had *M*A*S*H*, *Hogan's Heroes*, *No Time for Sergeants*, *Combat!*,



Ronald & Nancy Reagan, Tommy Nolan, & an unidentified political advisor pose on the set of a GE Theatre production called: *A Turkey for the President. (Swear to God!)*

Mr. Reagan's Other Policies

Most of Mr. Reagan's other policies don't really concern us much. So what if he is attempting through terrorism to keep Latin America in line? Most Couch Potatoes realize that Latin American television programming is not that good, even if you know the language, and so we don't get down there too often. Declaring war on the environment and the parks system? How many of us leave the house that often? Besides, I have seen nothing in the Reagan/Watt plans that would prevent us from watching TV in our recreation vehicles in wilderness areas. And all you solar pow-

Moe and Larry and Larry were not a happy one, though. Unsettling as it may seem, the "Stinky" character had a life of its own, and never seemed to jibe with the traditional Stooge goings-on. Added to this was the fact that nobody involved in making films really cared about making good comedies anymore. Short subjects were considered a walking corpse in Hollywood. After grinding out 15 truly embarrassing films, the "new" Three Stooges were ordered from the studio.

The turnaround was not long in coming, however, and TV was to provide the *deus ex machina*. In 1958, while the Besser shorts were still playing movie theaters, Screen Gems assembled a group of forty Stooge comedies for TV syndication. These films dated back to the 1930s and included many of the team's best efforts from their greatest days. There wasn't much hope for their success, and they were offered to stations mainly as a cheap way to fill a half-hour. The result was that an entire generation which had never seen anything like the great Three Stooges comedies from the peak years went nuts over what they saw. Screen Gems hurriedly fed the entire backlog of nearly 200 Stooge shorts into the tube. Overnight they became one of the hottest properties on TV.

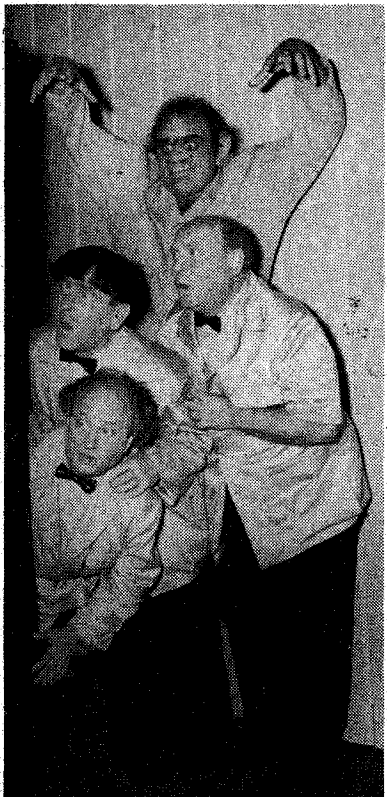
Obviously, this rediscovery by the television generation meant a new career for the Stooges, now consisting of Moe, Larry, and Joe DeRita, known as "Curly Joe." The boys' old studio begged them back to embark on a series of feature pictures which proved very successful by comedic as well as financial standards.

Needless to say, the trio was in great demand for TV guest spots as well, and during the next couple of years appeared on virtual-

comedic future, keeping up with the Stooges every step of the way, and occasionally getting the better of them with her typical wisecracks.

Kenneth MacDonald, who played especially greasy villains on such TV action-shows as *The Lone Ranger* and *The Cisco Kid*, essayed the same types of roles in the Stooge shorts of the early fifties, usually receiving a kick in the shin or a spittoon on the head for his trouble. A struggling actor named Dan Blocker played a rather portly variety of alien monster in 1957's *Outer Space Jitters*, two years before he achieved video immortality as Hoss Cartwright on *Bonanza*. In

continued on page 7



Stooges with pre-Hoss Blocker

Either way, we're bound to win more free time for TV viewing.

President Reagan and America's New Militarism

Most of us have noticed the comeback of G.I. Joe and other war toys during this last Christmas season. Even those of us who use news breaks for kitchen breaks know that the president wants more soldiers, more bombs, more missiles, more airplanes, more tanks and more warships.

Some people think this is bad. Yet, think of the potential in the

Sheep, or hundreds of late night World War II movies. Not to mention all those good spy shows like *Man From UNCLE*, *The Avengers*, *ISpy*, *Secret Agent*, *Mission: Impossible*, *I Led Three Lives*, and even *Get Smart*.

So you see, the military path this country is marching down, under the leadership of Ronald W. Reagan, may be the best thing that has happened to TV programming in a long time.

I, for one, can hardly wait to see what shows (if any) come out of World War III. Oh, boy.

Rude Awakenings

By Toby Tirrello

In the years since I've had a job, I've continued to set my faithful TV-clock-radio for 7:00 a.m. wakeups. Thus I begin carefree days of extended viewing. Yet this habit may change.

Once I was lulled at dawn's early lighting of my TV screen. The likes of Hugh Downs and Jack Lescoulie won their way into my dear circle of friends. Now I am jarred to snarls by characters with enough bad habits to drive Matt Houston to the Austin University tower.

Instead of the polished and appealing types who used to host the morning news and information shows, I'm talking now about real lip-smackers, body-twitchers and tongue-rattlers. And after the investment of thousands of waking hours (which could have been spent, say, getting dressed and looking for some line of work), I think the networks owe me some prettier waker-uppers.

Over my first mug of Ovaltine I'd like to see a more presentable group of folks than those on the *CBS Morning News*, for a start. After nearly a year on the air together, this fidgety bunch

continues to punch up each important word with a toss of the head, a blink, a twitch, or, in the case of Bill Kurtis, all three.

Maybe they and I are all a bit on edge from the show's energetic background music, which suggest the Phantom of the Opera let loose in Santa's toy shop.

And there is nothing anyone can say to discourage my observation that co-anchor Diane Sawyer bears a remarkable resemblance to Charles Kuralt (a fitting tribute to her former mentor).

Zippering Speech

A quick switch to the *Today* show brings no respite from noise and commotion. (Friends say "I just don't understand the New York pace," to which I say, "Get off my Barcalounger!") Bryant Gumbel's zippering speech makes me worry lest he lose a race to the washroom. And Willard Scott's weather goes by like a Georgia twister. Such likeable fellows, too—it's a shame I'm so sensitive to the uncouth.

continued on page 8

mills can really screw up TV reception.

In conclusion, then, let me reiterate that I believe that, should we survive, the Reagan years may go down in history as the best years ever for the Couch Potato movement. □



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TRANSISTOR TED:



A Yecchy Way of Knowledge

By Carl Castagnola

The first time I met Transistor Ted, it was at a bus stop in Wasco. He was eating a box of Screaming Yellow Zonkers and drinking a bottle of Boone's Farm Red. He looked at me and began to laugh. I quickly checked my fly, but it was closed. He laughed harder. I didn't know it at the time, but Transistor Ted, from that moment on, would be my teacher.

Initially, I had been seeking someone who could help me with my correspondence-college thesis on Hungry Man Frozen Dinners and the Way of the Truck Farmer in the San Joaquin Valley. Little did I know at that time that I would become the disciple of this ill-smelling transient, and that I would enter into the way of the tuber and learn the art of viewing.

Viewing, in the sense my mentor meant, had nothing to do with viewing as we understand it. His absurd explanation went something like this: located just in front of the umbilicus and about forty degrees to the right we have a series of cables, invisible to us, that are, nonetheless connected to our bodies. Until we learn the art of viewing, these cables are dor-

Transistor Ted turned to me. "What do you see?" he asked.

"Nothing," I replied. He punched me in the temple with his fist. "Now what do you see?" he asked. I was getting annoyed. I refused to answer. He wound up and kicked me in the small of the back. Now I began to see things.

He started to beat the living crap out of me. "Is this really necessary, Transistor Ted?" I asked, bleeding now from both ears.

"You dumb pisshole, you'll never learn viewing. You don't have the impeccability of the true viewer, you don't know the way of the tuber. You don't know Video. You'll just change channels manually all your chickenshit life." He grimaced, hawked, and spit a real gross one in my eyes. For a brief instant I wanted to kill the little pimp. But then a very strange thing happened. There was a flickering of color and shape on the screen. Color, on a 1959 Philco black-and-white. Then it disappeared. I thought it must have been a hallucination.

"Transistor Ted, I . . . saw . . ." I began. "It must have been a hallucination," I finally said.

"You saw, but you didn't view,"



Television at Double Time

Viewing the Bilko Show

By Bill Griffith

Rocco: "Why would a guy worth 200 million join the Army?"

Bilko (disgusted): "Because the Riviera's too crowded this year! Because he's crazy about chipped beef on toast! Jerks!! . . . He wants to be treated like any other G.I. He wants friends."

Henshaw: "Friends? In this platoon?"

Bilko: "You know, I liked the kid the minute I saw him. . . ."

—from "The Millionaire", a 1957 Bilko episode

"You had to like Bilko because inside everyone, even the straightest pillar of the community, there is a con-man wiggling to sneak out."

"I was predestined to be Bilko."

—Phil Silvers,

This Laugh Is On Me, 1973

My happiest viewing hours, both as a twelve-year-old boy and as a confirmed tuber approaching Jack Benny's age, have been spent absorbing the rays from *The Phil Silvers Show*. Subtitled *You'll Never Get Rich*, it aired originally over CBS from September 20, 1955 to September 11, 1959. My father, a career army sergeant, was equally, if perversely, addicted. He resembled Phil Silvers enough that, the morning after each show, his underlings would yell "Hey, Bilko!" as a greeting. This infuriated him. We would watch together, me sprawled on the living room rug and Pops, in uniform, scowling from his easy chair. He never cracked a smile but stared intently at the screen, breaking his

as if it was so much Play-Dough, who shaped the series and gave it its special appeal.

What the show seemed to "really" be about was the futility of total control. In the end, Bilko had no more control over his platoon than Colonel Hall had over him. The elaborate schemes Bilko devised to get what he wanted were mined for non-stop laughs and burlesque-style set-ups. Of course, the "come-uppance" endings, showing us the inevitable "heart of gold" inside the otherwise thoroughly un sentimental con-artist, reflected more the pressure of a social taboo than a true-to-character finale. The scripts went so far into the crazy-man Bilko persona that they frightened themselves into backing off at the last minute. Silvers himself said that Bilko "was like the hero of a Greek tragedy — he had a fatal flaw: he was a softy." I think it had a lot more to do with 'fifties self-censorship and artistic timidity. In any event, these stuck-on endings were quickly forgotten as the next episode rolled around and Bilko was off on another compulsive-behavior binge.

The show generated such high ratings in its heyday that it actu-

ally forced the competition on NBC, Silvers' old friend Milton Berle, into an early retirement. What separates the Bilko show (and much of early TV sit com, especially *The Honeymooners*) from today's generally somnambulant fare is that, instead of lulling you into a subliminal state, it wakes you up with a poke at the frontal lobes. The Bilko troupe recognized that the best use of the TV image is in quick dialogue and simple, limited-set, "proscenium arch" composition. Much of today's "product" with its car chases and long distance shots is more suited to the movie screen and doesn't translate well onto my beloved 12-inch black-and-white.

Phil Silvers' talent was hypnotic. What else but induced hypnosis could explain the ultimately obedient behavior of his platoon to Bilko's avalanche-of-words persuasion techniques? He all but leaped out of the set and grabbed you by the collar with his faster-than-a-speeding-matzo-ball, borscht-belt delivery. Of the show's intentions, Silvers said, "We were not selling clarity, or arty close-ups: we were depending on speed to build a momentum of laughter" . . . and the insinuating, bespectacled face of master comedian Phil Silvers. □

SGT. BILKO, WHY DO SO MANY PROGRAMS TODAY REMIND ME OF THE LITTLE CIRCULAR NUBS LEFT ON TOYS

ZIPPY.. IT'S LIKE I WAS TELLING COL. HALL WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME ROCK VIDEO MADE YOU A NICE

called the *viewing body*. But, once one becomes an accomplished *viewer*, these cables become functional, and we can watch television *without turning on the set*.

Of course I dismissed this claim out of hand as the gibberish of some dazed wino who couldn't get the nickels together to take a bus to Modesto, where he could get some professional help. This sent Ted into paroxysms of laughter that had some of the locals staring as he lay there kicking and drooling in the dust. Deeply embarrassed, I began to walk away when suddenly I felt this strange sensation in the pit of my stomach. For a moment I couldn't breathe, then, along with a prickling sensation that seemed to originate in my urethra, I started to retch. Finally, I just puked my guts out.

I figured it was the Super Slushy I'd had for lunch at the Seven-Eleven, because there was definitely some orange in it. This sent Ted into even deeper levels of hilarity. He bent down, picked up a rock, and hurled it as hard as he could striking me just to the right of my hypogastrium.

Suddenly, we were alone in a room. All I could see in the room was a 1959 Philco television. I had the strange sensation that the set was turned on, yet there was *nothing on the screen*.

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The truth of the statement hit with the force of a hurricane. I bent double with the realization. My shoulder blades felt like they were cutting through my back. Then the pain went away. I straightened up.

"What... what's on the screen?" I asked with trepidation. My own voice sounded hollow and grating. It startled me.

"Just two of the best-looking chicks in history doing unimaginable things to a really ugly dude." For some reason this made him laugh so hard that he cracked three ribs.

Suddenly I knew what I wanted. "Transistor Ted," I whined, looking hard at the blank screen, "I really want to learn *viewing*."

As suddenly as he began laughing, Transistor Ted stopped. He gazed at me then at a spot just past my hypocondyle for three and a half weeks. Then he nodded. "You will need to ingest certain frozen dinners. You must meet with the approval of don Kartoffel and Chief Boy-Ar-Dee."

"Who is this don Kartoffel?" I asked.

"He will be your TV GUIDE." At this, Ted went into the deepest most awful sequence of hysterical laughing I ever saw. I hope never again to witness anyone laugh that hard. He snorted so violently that he fractured his nose, broke three capillaries in his right eye and lost all the hair in his nostrils.

I was undaunted. I was determined to learn the art of *viewing*, the way of Video.

Next issue: Further Conversations with Transistor Ted. The secret of Vertical Hold. Home Fries and the Art of Viewing. Remote Control and don Kartoffel. □

... Television's a hallucination, as you call it, anyway." ... during commercials with a diatribe against the insult to the military the program represented. This, of course, just served to strengthen my Bilko-mania — a condition for which, luckily, there is no cure. Several years ago, when a local channel took the show off the air, I joined with other outraged viewers and formed the "S.O.B. (Save Our Bilko) Club." As I'm not yet in the video-recorder bracket, I taped the last show on my audio cassette player. I still run it on occasion as I wimper myself to sleep, having now gone without a televised episode since 1978. I did receive a much-needed fix a few months back at that Mecca of Couch Potatodom, the Museum of Broadcasting in New York City — but it could hardly make up for the daily dose I once took for granted.

What made the series so great, aside from the genius of Phil Silvers and the uniformly incredible acting abilities of the twenty-two-member cast, was the brilliant, fast-paced writing by Bilko creator, Nat Hiken. (Hiken also went on to do *Car 54, Where Are You?*) The casting was perfect. Paul Ford played Colonel Hall, commanding officer of Fort Baxter and Bilko's nemesis-patsy; and Harvey Lembeck and Allan Melvin were his adoring lackeys, Rocco and Henshaw. Also featured were Joe E. Ross as the gullible Mess Sergeant Ritzik; Maurice Gosfield as the "Slob of the Century," Duane Doberman; and Bilko's sporadic heartthrob, Sgt. Joan Hogan, played by the well-rounded Elizabeth Fraser. Together, they formed a 'fifties *Commedia Dell' Arte* troupe of archetypical American dogfaces. It was Silvers, however, as the ego-maniacal, smooth-talking manipulator treating the world (and Colonel Hall's rubber face)



©1983 Bill Griffith

In Praise of the Sony Watchman



Humankind took another step toward the goal of continuous TV viewing with the advent of the Sony Watchman, a small, lightweight, handheld set with a new design in picture tubes that eliminates the inevitable bulkiness of the old designs. Featuring a tiny black and white screen, the Watchman is not about to replace the home hearth TV in the living room, but it wasn't designed with that in mind.

Portability is the chief virtue here. You can watch while shopping, while jogging, while riding on public transit, while on the

job. School kids can hide the TV behind a book and watch during class.

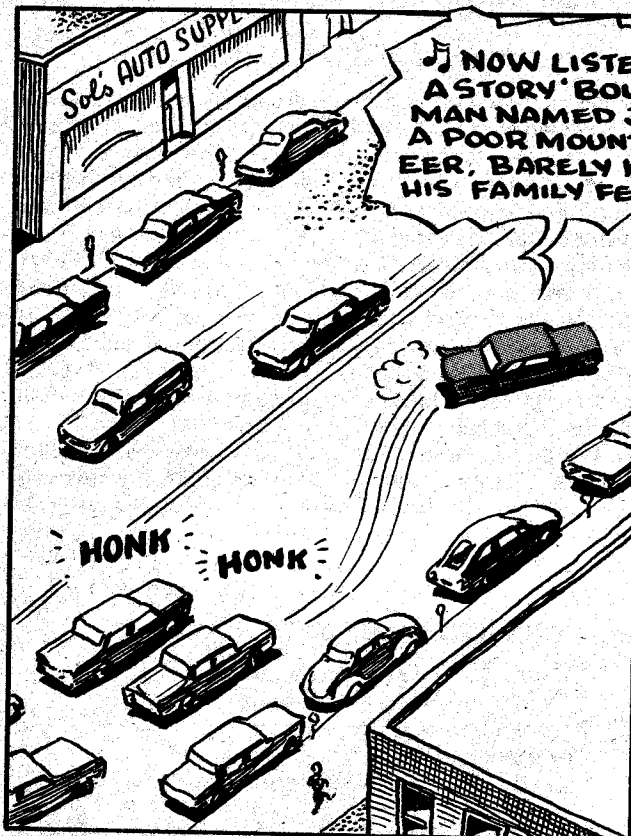
The only problem with the Watchman (and the wristwatch TV promised by another Japanese company for sale this summer), is that it is still not small and inconspicuous enough. The Couch Potato laboratories are working on a prototype set of TV Glasses which will look like normal sunglasses, for use in the many places in this society where TV viewing is still frowned upon.

The television image is projected onto the inside of the glasses and the sound comes through the ear pieces. The image density can be controlled so that you can set it at 100% when you are sitting and relaxing, or 30% when you are walking and don't want to run into things.

We are willing to sell this idea to any company that is willing to cough up a reasonable rate of royalties. Until then, Humanity will have to make do with products like the Sony Watchman.

The Couch Potatoes

in "THE ROAD TEST"

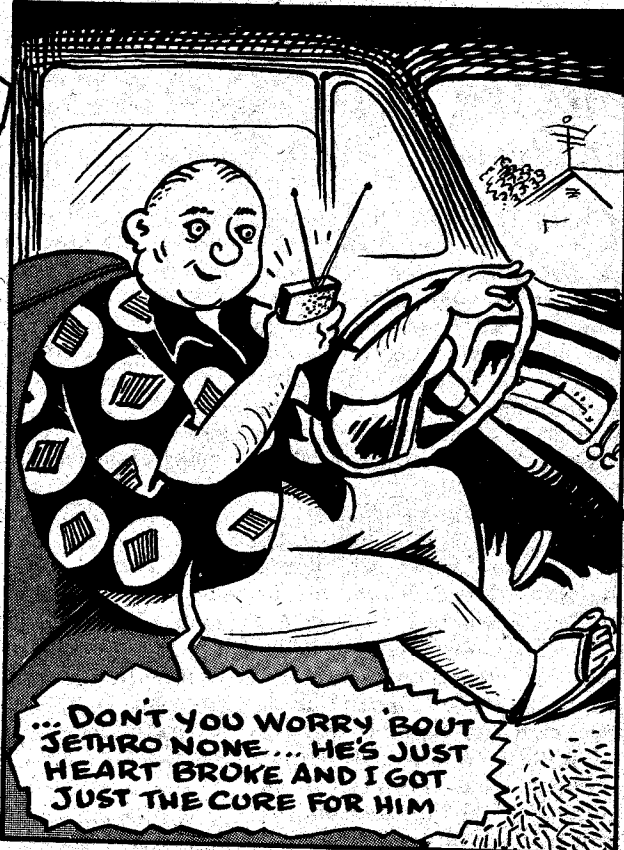


♪ NOW LISTEN TO A STORY 'BOUT A MAN NAMED JED; A POOR MOUNTAINEER, BARELY KEPT HIS FAMILY FED. ♪

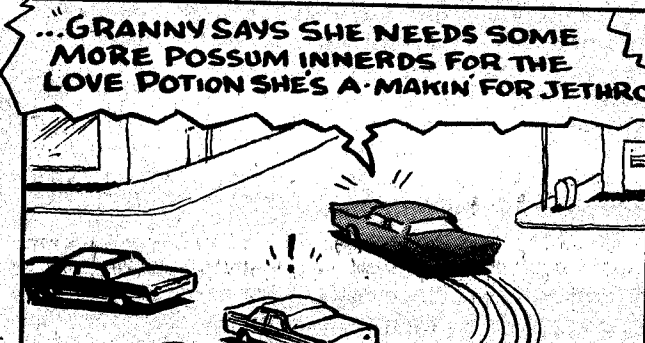


"GRANNY, JETHRO SAYS HE'S A GONNA END IT ALL BY DROWNIN' HISSELF IN THE CEE-MENT POND!"

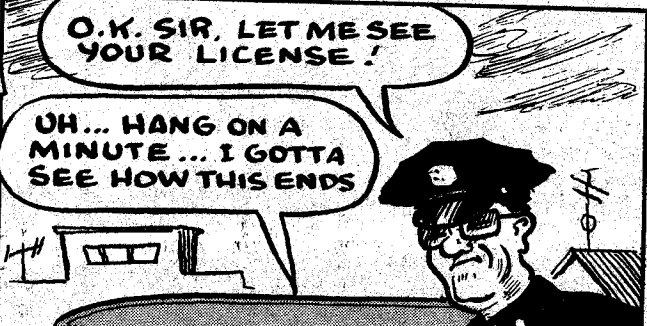
WOOSH



... DONT YOU WORRY 'BOUT JETHRO NONE... HE'S JUST HEART BROKE AND I GOT JUST THE CURE FOR HIM



...GRANNY SAYS SHE NEEDS SOME MORE POSSUM INNERDS FOR THE LOVE POTION SHE'S A-MAKIN' FOR JETHRO



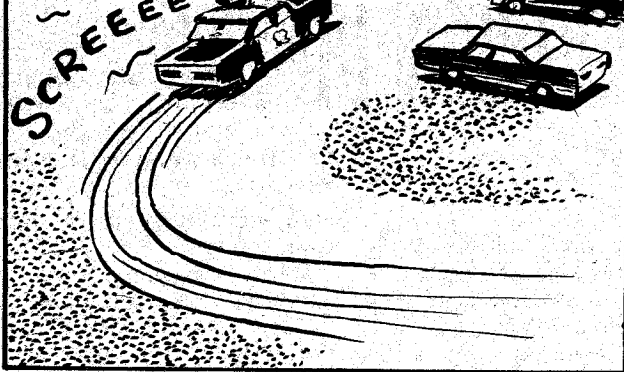
O.K. SIR, LET ME SEE YOUR LICENSE!

UH... HANG ON A MINUTE... I GOTTA SEE HOW THIS ENDS



OBVIOUSLY, SIR, HAVING THIS LITTLE TV ON WHILE OPERATING A MOVING VEHICLE IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS!

HEY, GIVE THAT BACK TO ME RIGHT NOW!



"OOH, JETHRO I DID NOT KNOW YOU COULD BE SO UTTERLY SUAVE AND CONTINENTAL"



"... ESPECIALLY WHEN WATCHING 'THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES'!"



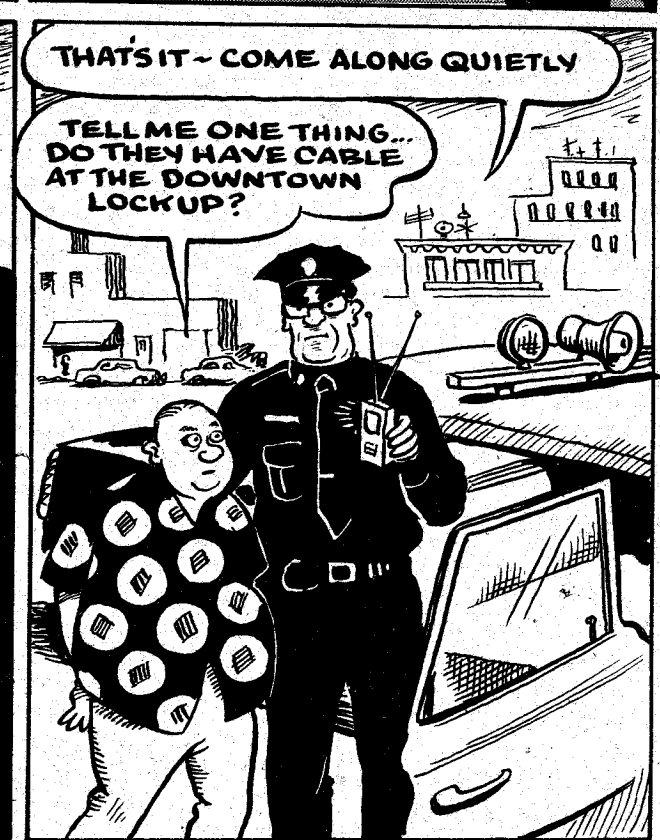
"DAMN YOU! GIMME THAT TV!! I GOTTA FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS TO JETHRO!"

"JETHRO, WHAT'S WRONG NOW?"



"ALRIGHT, SETTLE DOWN, MISTER!"

"...GRANNY, I'VE DECIDED I DON'T LIKE GIRLS ANY-MORE..."



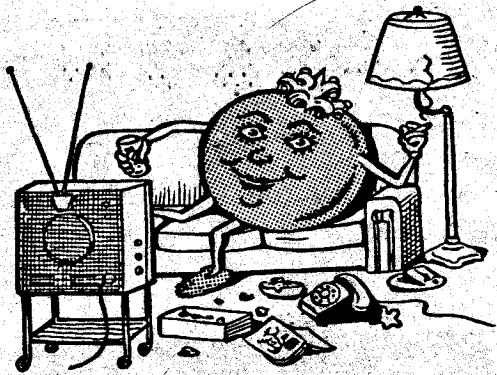
"THAT'S IT - COME ALONG QUIETLY"

"TELL ME ONE THING... DO THEY HAVE CABLE AT THE DOWNTOWN LOCKUP?"

©1983 Robert Armstrong

END





FROM THE TOMATO VINE

A Female Viewpoint

By Patty Graves

Couch Tomatoes, like Potatoes, have been around for as long as our revered icon, the television. In the old days a Couch Tomato was the one who would get up during a commercial and head for the kitchen to pop corn. Sometimes we even got verbally abused for bumping the Potato's TV tray on the way to the refrigerator. We were the ones who were required to answer the phone when it rang during the spud's favorite show and fib that he wasn't home. It was the Tomato who would always give in and walk across the room to adjust the antenna or a knob when the reception got so bad that the program had become unintelligible. (Tomatoes seem to be more sensitive than Potatoes to the quality of the signals being received.) To the trained Tomato fell the task of phoning the repairman when the sets broke down. We went to the store for more chocolate milk, Cheetos, and Eskimo Pies with very little cajoling or threatening from the Potato. We had to know the location of the TV Guide at all times. We even had to read, interpret, and carry out the directions for preparing frozen dinners...

Get It Yourself, Asshole
Soon after women's liberation

once initiated, needs to be invoked only occasionally (except in the most obstinate cases) for the point to be made.

This change of social order in the Potato/Tomato domestic scene has had widespread effects that go beyond the walls of our sweet homes. The popular uprising of the oppressed Tomatoes of the world can no doubt be credited with the invention and ready-availability of video remote control. The ever-increasing convenience of convenience foods and the popularity of phone-answering devices are also most likely direct results of the necessity of replacing free, pre-liberation labor.

Equal Rights to the Couch

The next logical step in the evolution of the Couch Tomato is equality. The end of oppression is only the beginning. The Tomato demands an equal right to uninterrupted viewing. We are entitled to be unproductive, too.

In households unlucky enough to possess only one television set, we Tomatoes must assert ourselves and state our preference regarding choice of channels. We no longer have to sit quietly for endless hours of boring sports programs. We must insist on our right for equal time. If we have to

Rerun Heaven

homage to the dearly departed

We lost a lot of TV greats in 1982. Here are the names we'll sadly miss, but some of their shows will probably rerun forever.

- Hugh Beaumont — Ward Cleaver — *Leave It to Beaver*, 1957-63. Also played dramatic roles on *Suspense* (1949-54), *Teledrama* (1953), and *Undercurrent* (1955).
- Dave Garroway — original host of *The Today Show* (1952-61), plus other news and variety shows (from 1949-1971)
- Dick Lane — Los Angeles personality and sportscaster for wrestling, roller derby, and destruction derby on KTLA (from 1942-1976).
- Harvey Lembeck — Corporal Rocco Barbella on *You'll Never Get Rich* (Sgt. Bilko, 1955-59), Seaman Gabby DiJulio on *Ensign O'Toole* (1962-63), also played roles on *Batman* and *The Hathaways*.
- Vic Morrow — Sgt. Chip Saunders on *Combat* (1962-67), Ames in *Roots* (1977).
- Joe E. Ross — Mess Sgt. Rupert Ritzik — *You'll Never Get Rich* (1955-59), Officer Gunther Toody — *Car 54 Where Are You?* (1964-65).
- Lee Patrick — Henrietta Topper on *Topper* (1953-56), Gwen Allen's secretary on *Boss Lady* (1952).
- Jack Webb — Detective Sgt. Joe Friday on *Dragnet* (1951-59 & 1967-70), host-occasional performer on *General Electric True* (1962-63), also produced *Adam-12*, *Mobile One*, and *Emergency*.
- Vladimir Zworykin — Pioneer in the development of the first practical TV camera tube, the iconoscope and the kinescope picture tube during the 1920s and 1930s. Incorrectly alleged to be the inventor of television. □

STATION BREAK *Gourmet*



Recently many Potatoes have been calling me to task on the basic framework for the ideal Couch Potato food prep and eating style. As many of you know, I often practice a meditative cuisine called Squeezene™. This is a highly simplified attitude toward sustenance which is based on a streamlined method of food prep. One can prepare any aspect of the diet with scissors, toaster oven and a pickle fork. Although this is a revolutionary and extremely practical eating style, I don't mean to give the impression this is the only way for me or any Potato to go. As in all aspects of our Couch Potato world, there is a great variety of influences and styles and the strong individualistic nature of each Potato demands a myriad of influence.

Here's a recipe I received from a fellow west coast Potato, Ric Lawson. It's a unique speciality and I give it my hardest recommendation. He writes, "Dear Chef Aldo, For a delightfully different and nearly-European viewers' snack, you may find this tasty spread to your liking. This recipe is tried and true to the set-side kitchen of the gourmet Couch Potato."

CONTINENTAL COUCH PATÉ

- 1 Oscar Meyer all meat wiener
- 1 Teaspoon sweet pickle relish
- 2 Green olives, with pimento
- Mayonnaise
- 2 Saltine crackers (four squares)
- Pepper

Turn the blender to the highest speed, add wiener (recipe works best if the wiener is left whole when placed in the blender), relish and olives, let blend for 45 seconds.

To serve: Carry blender body to viewing location, along with a kitchen knife, mayonnaise and pepper. Spread the two large crackers generously with mayonnaise and then break into individual squares. Spread on paté and add pepper to taste. Count on eight servings from each wiener.

Thanks for the great idea Ric. I'll be sending you an autographed photo before too many primetimes have passed and I'd like to remind everyone that I'm sending an autographed photo to anyone who sends me a recipe I use in my column!

begin getting a lot of airplay on TV news programs, we Tomatoes began to realize that we were not getting a fair shake. We had the human potential to be just as indolent as our mates. We began to say "No!" to the endless demands of our vegetative counterparts, who had by now become one with their respective recliners. It began to occur to us that we knew as much about viewing as they did. We had recognized the superb humor of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. We were equally capable of sitting through a dull movie for the third time, just for the sake of viewing. Addiction to *Star Trek* and *M*A*S*H* was not confined by the bounds of gender.

The time had come for change. It wasn't easy at first. The technique of withdrawal of services had to be abrupt, cold turkey. We couldn't expect results through the use of subtle hints. A direct, easy-to-remember catch phrase evolved: "Get it yourself, asshole" became the reply to requests and demands expressed and implied. Although such "backtalk" seemed harsh to some of the more sensitive among us, we found it amazingly effective. This motto,

submit to football games, the potatoes will be exposed to our soap operas. They should practice what they preach, anyway: indiscriminate viewing.

In more privileged environments where more than one tube is available, one set is always superior to the others (e.g., better color, bigger, remote control)—or, it's melieu is preferable (e.g., closer to frig, comfier seating or reclining arrangement). We have as much right to the best couch and/or set as the Potato does. The way to control a position on a couch is to stay in it. Equality will be achieved through passivity.

Rosy Glow

Once everyone gets used to it, this new arrangement will prove a happy one. Imagine the cozy comraderie of shared viewing experiences. In our old age we'll be able to look back on marathon sessions in which we participated as partners. We'll remember how high we got practising simulviewing techniques together and thrill at our daring. As we bathe together as equals in the flickering blue light of our TVs, our vision of the future takes on a rosy glow. □

Advice to the COUCH POTATO

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

By Dr. Davenport H. Spudd

Dear Dr. Spudd,

Some people, including my son, are downright rude when somebody calls during their favorite shows. They say they are watching TV and hang up! When I watch TV, I take my phone off the hook, or let it ring and later tell whoever called that I was in the shower. But this isn't a very satisfactory solution, either. Is there a way to tactfully terminate a phone conversation when your viewing is interrupted?

—Dialer From Downey

Dear Dialer—

I think your son has the right idea. Be straightforward with your friends. They will either a) appreciate your honesty and call back between programs, or b) never call again. Either way, your problem is solved.

* * * * *

Dear Doctor Spudd,

My mom won't let me watch TV. She says TV makes people violent. What can I tell her to change her mind?

—Telecast-off Son

Dear T.S.—

Your mother should know that depriving a male child of TV can cause extreme telecastration anxiety.

I, for one, am really tired of hearing people say TV causes violence. TV does not cause violence, and the next person who tells me it does gets a punch in the schnozz.

Dear Dr. Spudd,

How do you feel about the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) taking air time away from the old show re-runs?

—Mad Monk in PA

Dear Dr. Spudd,

Can religious broadcasts be considered entertainment?

—Confused in New Orleans

Dear Mad and Confused—

I like religious programming. Just as entertainment programs can be watched religiously, religious programming can be watched entertainingly, if approached with an appropriate level of reverence. As Grandpappy Spudd used to say, "If God didn't want us to laugh and make fun, he wouldn't have made the people who claim to represent him such buffoons."

* * * * *

Dear Dr. Spudd,

Sometimes I feel nervous and jittery after a long night of viewing. What am I doing wrong? P. S. I drink Sanka, so that isn't it.

—Edgy At Night

Dear Edgy—

This reaction to the tube, although not uncommon, indicates a viewing deficiency of some sort. Maybe you're not watching the right combination of programs, or maybe your technique is faulty. I'd suggest you ask your lodge leader, or some other experienced prolonged viewer, to

view with you and help diagnose your problem.

When done correctly, prolonged TV viewing should make you feel refreshed, invigorated and newly born, yet relaxed. The benefits to mind and body are so dramatic that some people call prolonged viewing "Transcendental Vegetation."

* * * * *

Dear Doctor Spudd,

Am I confused, or is the preferred form of birth control among Couch Tomatoes tubal ligation?

—Over Easy

Dear Ovary Z,

You're confused. The Couch Tomatoes' favorite form of contraception is *Tuber Libation*. That's where you watch so much TV and drink so much alcohol that you couldn't make love even if you wanted to.

* * * * *

(Adolescence, or "addled essence?" If you are a teenage Couch Potato or the parent of one, you'll want straight answers to questions like: Does the radiation from color TV cure acne? Can you get pregnant from watching *Love Boat*?

(Send \$1.50 to Rt. 1, Box 327, Dixon, CA 95620 for a brand new pamphlet, *Dr. Spudd Talks to Teen Couch Potatoes*.) □

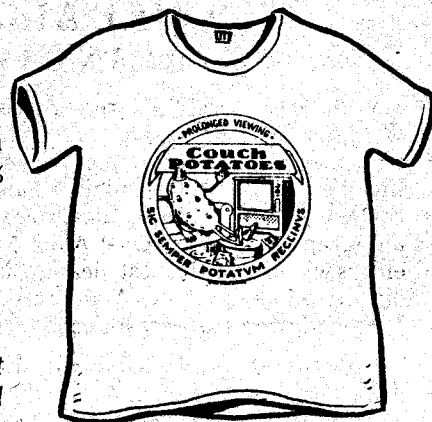
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with alternative design screened in four colors on 100% cotton shirt.

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SIZES: S, M, L, XL
when ordering,
please specify that
you want the model
"B" shirt!



VIEWING JAPANESE STYLE

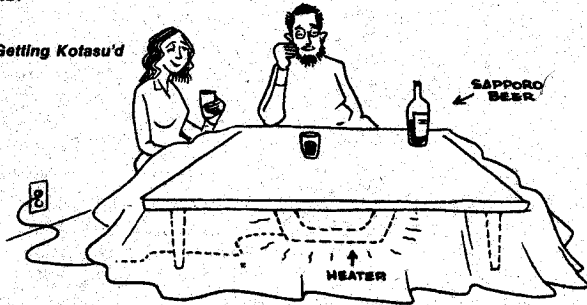
By Adam Woog

In the interest of furthering the universal appeal of TV addiction, Adam Woog, head of the Far East Chapter of CP International, shares some insight on the habits of Japanese viewers.

What with Trinitrons, Betamaxes and belly TVs seemingly taking over the U.S., "Japan" and "television" must be nearly synonymous for a lot of folks. In a future report, I'd like to tell you in detail about Japanese TV — but first, a word on the significance for us, expatriates and natives alike, of couches and potatoes.

Although not a part of everyday life for most Japanese, couches are pretty familiar objects — most everybody's seen them in the movies or on an imported TV show. We, my honey and I, don't even have one, but we were allowed to join anyway. It was suggested, "Couldn't you just tie a couple of futon together?" The answer is, sure we could; but only at the risk of inciting chillingly derisive laughter from our neighbors and friends.

Fig. 1: Getting Kotasu'd



Instead, we have the most common item used in the war against the Japanese winter: the *kotatsu*. (See figure 1.) This is a sort of electric coffee table, the modern equivalent to the charcoal braziers used in pre-Sony times. First, a big rug is spread on the *tatami* mats to conserve heat. An electric heating element, not really much more than a big light bulb, is underneath the table, and then a thick quilt is sandwiched between the two layers of the table, extending down to the floor. Comfy chairs (figure 2) are available, that allow you to sit back from the table in style. When you sit around the *kotatsu* it keeps you toasty warm from mid thigh down. (For the upstairs part of your body you have to wear sweaters.) I've seen *kotatsu* in stores that are designed to be used with Western-style chairs and tables, but these strike me as energy-inefficient and kind of dumb. There's a lot to be said for living close to the ground; when you spill your snacks, for instance, they're easier to pick up. *Tatami* mats are also great for clumsy people; if you spill a drink, it's immediately and irretrievably absorbed, so forget about running to the kitchen for paper towels.)

STOOGES

continued from page 3

1960, Paul Winchell hosted a compilation of classic Stogie shorts titled *Stop! Look! and Laugh!* Winchell, with dummies Jerry Mahoney and Knucklehead Smiff, introduced such great footage as Curly in drag lip-synching to the records of a female opera singer (*Micro-phones*) and a pie-fight deluxe at a swanky party (*Half-Wits' Holiday*).

The Stooges' last theatrical feature, *The Outlaws is Coming* is a Couch Potato's feast. It featured guest appearances by local kiddie show hosts who had helped introduce the Stooges shorts to TV (Officer Joe Bolton, Sir Sedley, etc.) as notorious gunslingers. In addition, the straight lead was played by Adam West, soon to camp his way to notoriety as the TV "Batman," and *Laugh-In* favorite Henry Gibson was cast as a hip Indian! Larry provided the film's funniest scene when, for no reason, he stopped the action to endorse a particular brand of gun, complete with "bleep" on the soundtrack when he mentioned a competing brand!

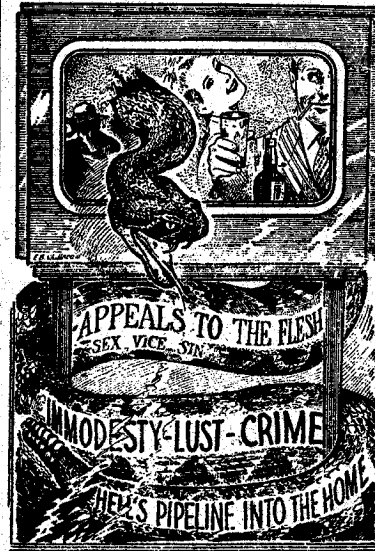
Another interesting note concerns the Stooges' 1962 feature *Three Stooges in Orbit*. An important plot element involves a nutty inventor who is developing an apparatus which will produce "electronic cartoons" for television. The results bear more than a passing resemblance to the stylized images in the video games familiar to many with home video systems.

Since their first TV appearance, much criticism has been levelled at the Three Stooges by the watchdogs of so-called "children's programming," pointing them out as examples of the worst television available to the nation's young. This is neither the time nor place to launch into a discussion of this question, but



STATIC AND OTHER INTERFERENCE

15 Reasons Why TELEVISION IS WRONG



The Head Is In: Soon The Whole Body

1. Because many of our spiritual leaders and mothers in Israel of various denominations have voiced their opinion against it
2. It is detrimental to spirituality
3. It is a proven fact that some persons who purchased a TV set while they were in an unregenerated state, after conversion were convinced of its evil influence, and disposed of same
4. 80% of that which comes through the eye gate is remembered, while only 20% of what is heard
5. The best of God's people are opposed to TV
6. The beer, whiskey, wine and tobacco advertisements, improperly dressed dancers, Hollywood divorce evil, murder pictures and lustful scenes are a long way from gracing a Christian home
7. There was a day when a growing boy was not permitted

to see a burlesque performance, but now junior gets it served with his chicken dinner and his breakfast toast

8. Television will warp and twist the mind of our youth

9. Crime programs, such as pictures on television screens, won't make better boys and girls, but thieves, murderers, gangsters, prostitutes, and Bowery bums

10. Television caters to the evil mind

11. Movies are evil. The devil has transferred the movie into the home

12. TV sets cost \$300.00 to \$500.00, this is a lot of money to spend foolishly

13. God does not get his glory out of lust pictures, prize fights, nude dancers, wrestling bouts, liquor or tobacco advertisements, crime promotion, Hollywood divorce evil, etc.

14. Time is valuable; we have none to waste

15. It robs the individual of his spiritual strength. Anyone who believes the Bible from cover to cover, cannot approve of TV.

—written by Huey Gillespie, evangelist

sent in by Mark Trail, Eureka, CA

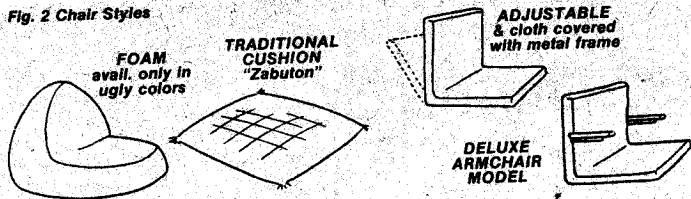
...nteu, ..rectionate, a building design-er-contractor, naturalistic sculptor-painter, interested in acupuncture seeking a very special woman to share my life and love. Guardian Box #10-P.

Not A Couch Potato

I'm 31, white, 6'1", thin, good looking, well educated single man with stable career. People are always telling me what a great husband and father I'd make. It's true. I love mothers, children, animals, physical affection, playing, communicating, exploring, nature, responsibility, quiet time and activity. I'm looking for someone who wants love, marriage, commitment, intimacy and children. I'm not some sexist couch potato planted in front of a TV looking for someone to keep barefoot, pregnant and subservient. I'm looking for a partner in love, work, and mutual respect. If this is what you want, please write, maybe we can fulfill our dreams. Ready-made families and other nationalities welcome. Guardian Box #9-BB

—from the Bay Guardian "Personals" column

Fig. 2 Chair Styles



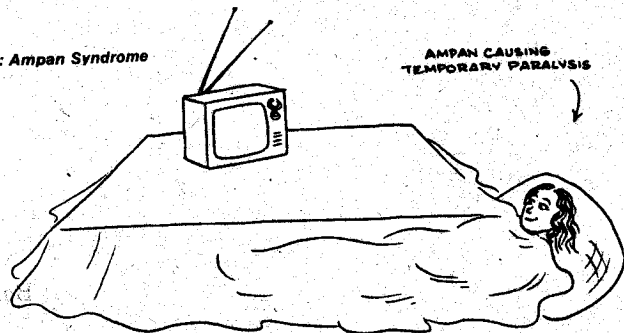
"Getting kotatsu'd" is a phrase coined by my honey to describe the phenomenon of, once sliding under the thing, having great difficulty in getting out again. You tend to just settle in for a while. She and I get *kotatsu'd* pretty regularly during long winter months. A corollary condition is what our next-door neighbor, Mayumi, calls "The *Ampan Syndrome*," after a Japanese cake with a soft, shapeless form. She has a big pillow that looks like an *ampan*; when she settles under the *kotatsu* her head nestled on the *ampan*, she finds herself utterly incapable of movement. (Figure 3.) She wants to get an articulated hand on a long extension, so she can fetch cigarettes, brandy alexanders, etc. without having to get up. "Or," she says, "Maybe I'll just wait until I can buy a robot to do it for me."

About potatoes: the best sort of spuds we get around here are sweet potatoes — our regular-style spuds just don't make it compared with Idahos. However, sweet potatoes here are real good. Wandering wooden carts with built-on, highly jerry-rigged ovens, sell them on the street. The vendors call out, "*Ishi yaki imo*" (stone baked spuds), though this is sometimes supplanted by a tape-recording of same.

Somehow, *kotatsu imo* just doesn't have the right ring to it. Does anybody out there have any ideas as to what we, the Far East Chapter of CP International, should call ourselves? *Kotatsu Cabbages??* We'll be glad to hear from you. Write c/o the *Tuber's Voice*.

Next time: more on Japanese TV — the tackiest special effects, weirdest game shows and nosiest "human interest" programs on God's green earth — not to mention Live Sex Night, variety shows that make Barbara Mandrell look like Furtwangler at Bayreuth, and lots more.

Fig. 3: *Ampan Syndrome*



one can't help but wonder what these frothing do-gooders thought of the Three Stooges when they were children, watching the same films in first-run theaters. Suffice it to say that television has, through faithful re-running of the Stooge backlog, kept some of the greatest comedy work in history alive and readily accessible to generations who might not otherwise know how much uncomplicated-fun humor used to be. The Three Stooges are more popular than ever before, and these days they are just as likely to be scheduled at the most adult hours of midnight or 2 a.m. as during the usual kiddie slots. Look once again at TV history: Moe Howard made his last TV appearance in 1974, pushing a pie into Mike Douglas' face. Now there's a guy you have to admire. □

30th Anniversary of the Toaster Oven

A tear came to the eye of the old chef as he looked over at his gleaming toaster oven and noted the recent passing of its inventor, George B. Munsey. Munsey, who died in November of '82, began his appliance manufacturing company in 1953, when he developed a toaster in which buttered bread could be toasted horizontally. At the time he was the Little Rock sales manager for the Fleischman Division of Standard Brands, Inc.

The rest became history as the toaster oven quickly achieved the stature it enjoys today as one of the true necessities of modern living. Later in his career Munsey developed other products, such as deep-fat fryers, warming trays, popcorn poppers, and aluminum ladders. Munsey was 64.



In the midst of TV and video games glorification, this *Kaboom* drawing represents a deep current of wish fulfillment. Although it only emerges close to the surface when R. Reagan, J. Watt or a similar obnoxious presence appears on the screen.

—Michael McMillan
San Francisco, CA

CHEF ALDO'S HANDY HINTS CONTEST

With this issue of *T.V.*, we begin our environmental forum. We offer tips, views and handy hints for the continuing enjoyment and betterment of the gracious manner of couch life. We ask readers to send their handy hints to Chef Aldo/o the *T.V.** If we use your idea, you will receive a personally autographed photo of Chef Aldo! At the end of the year the elders will choose the best idea published and the grand prize winner will have Chef Aldo come to his or her home and personally demonstrate his couchside cuisine.**

*All submissions become of property of the *Tuber's Voice* and cannot be returned without a S.A.S.E.

**The winner is responsible for: roundtrip travel, accommodations, and all material and incidental expenses Chef Aldo may incur.
(The winner has the right to refuse the Grand Prize in the Chef Aldo Handy Hints Contest.)

Couch Potatoes
Don't DO IT
 ... they'd rather watch



The Couch Potato Society, Rt. 1, Box 327, Dixon, CA 95620

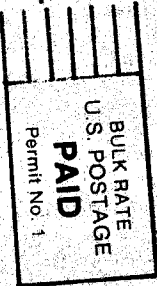
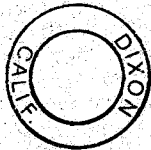
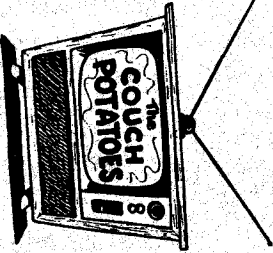
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TONING UP WHILE TUNING IN VIGOROUS VIEWING

with
Arlene LaBunche

We gals really worked especially hard during the holiday season. We had to prepare sumptuous holiday feasts, stick to rigorous viewing schedules and keep our thighs from looking like drumsticks!

This exercise cleverly combines viewing, serving, and firming.

This is Madame LaBunche's specialty—thigh exercises designed to keep those legs like steel-belted radials!

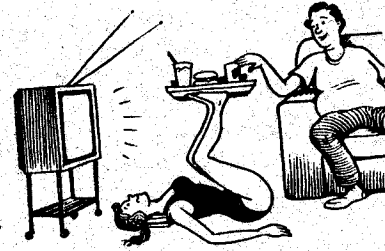
You'll need several old *TV Guides* and two TV trays, equally balanced with snacks and drinks. These should be heavy snacks like burgers, large soda pop bottles, cakes, jars of pickles, etc. *TV Guides* are to be used for neck support.



During viewing, keep thighs and calves pressed to chest, keep buttocks flexed tight.



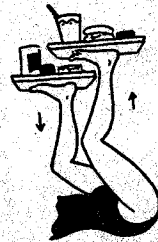
During commercials, extend legs until snack trays reach desired serving height.



After snack, refill trays and slowly lower one leg at a time.

Repeat on all snack breaks, allowing your viewing mate to eat while you silently burn it off!!

(If your legs are really in bad shape, use a toaster oven on the tray for added weight.)



continued from page 3

NBC newsmen of lower rank seem afflicted by a condition causing them to smack their lips where you or I, more delicately, would breathe. (One has such great percussive smacks, beginning just below the ear lobes and shooting out past the lips, that I must now wrap my screen with safety tape.)

Yes, twist that knob to ABC now! *Good Morning America* to be sure, has its share of peccadillos, what with copy cats (will their own mustached movie critic ever become the real Gene Shalit?) and dead issue beaters (can we ever be sure that General Franco is still dead?). But some of these guys are, well, homely! Whew! I've seen baby marsupials looking for homes in the folds beneath some newsmen's eyes.

Dainty and Disheveled

An exception, of course, is the dainty Joan Lunden (a honey of a good talker, to boot). The example of her perpetual non-hairdo nevertheless makes me fear for the success of my brother-in-law's newest salon.

You must understand finally that I wince under anchor David Hartman's admonition to "go out and make it a good day!" Often I feel recompensed for the early shows' shortcomings only by staying glued until way past Bob Barker's last showcase show-down.

Only then can I roll off the bed muttering, "Oh, god, I've let another day get away from me!"

My morning routine will probably stay this way, until Jane Pauley starts chewing gum—and forces me away from the set and into (shudder) gainful employ.

Tirello is the sometimes lighting manager for L.A.'s punk-a-billy band, Eddie Ricketts and the Snaps.