

Television Study in Contrasts; Creator Of Talent Sometimes Ruthless Glutton

By WILLIAM EWALD
United Press Correspondent
New York — (U.P.) — TV is a bounteous horn of plenty or a bottomless stomach. It depends upon your vantage point.

It is a study in contrasts. It is a wooer of new talent, a creator of a new race of giants, a bestower of wealth and stardom. But it is also a fickle and sometimes ruthless glutton.

It has dropped multi-million dollar contracts in the laps of

such performers as Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason, Martin and Lewis and Ed Sullivan. But it has tried to chew up others like Imogene Coca, Wally Cox and Red Buttons.

The first giant of television was Milton Berle. He engineered the "breakthrough." He picked TV up on his shoulders and carried it over the hump. He did it in 1948.

There were about 175,000 receivers in the nation that year.

TV was a sometimes thing.

"Back in 1947," recalls Berle, "I did an all-night telethon for a heart benefit on Du Mont. I stayed on for eight hours without stopping. I got to like it."

Variety Show Idea

"A little after that, the Texas company decided to go into TV and I was approached by their ad agency and asked if I had any ideas. I said, 'How about doing something I've been doing for 25 years, a variety-vaudeville show?' We put it on June 8, 1948.

"During the summer we started to gain momentum and that was it."

That first season, Berle did 39 shows on TV plus 39 more on radio.

"That first show cost \$12,000," remembers Berle. "Now, my show costs \$232,000—that's what it costs. During that first year, you could get a top performer for a few hundred dollars. I got Bill Robinson for \$450 and Pearl Bailey for \$350. Now, a guest gets \$7,500, \$15,000."

Berle is on only 13 times a season now, but he plans to cut it down to four appearances next season.

"This business, TV, is constant and hard work," he says. "And there's just as much pressure on me as there was when I was on every week."

Berle, however, is one of the lucky ones. He can see the goal in sight. He has an exclusive 30-year contract with NBC which he signed in 1951. But he won't have to work that long to retire.

"Under the terms of the con-

tract," explains Berle, "I have to do only 25 more shows within the next four years."

"I'm not a kid anymore. I'm going on 48 and I'd like a normal life. I've got a wonderful wife and home life and I'd like to give more to it. Right now, I'm really beat."

Takes Hard Work

Beat is a word you hear all over television. It is an exhausting medium. Martha Raye, for example, sometimes goes to a hospital for two days after her show, to rest and get some quiet.

One of the best known female clowns of our time, Martha is not reluctant to talk about her debt to TV. She began rolling in the medium in 1948-49 with Berle.

"Before TV, I wasn't so big," says Martha, "I had done nightclub work, movies, but had a big slump there for a while."

"It appeals to the ham in me. Where else can you get 42,000,000 people looking at you at once?"

But Martha, like all comedians, faces a problem, the danger of over-exposure.

"Once a month is the answer," says Martha. "Then they don't tire of seeing you."

Over Exposure Problem

Over-exposure is the constant worry of the TV artist. It caught up with Wally Cox who starred as "Mr. Peepers" from July,

Thursday, February 9, 1956

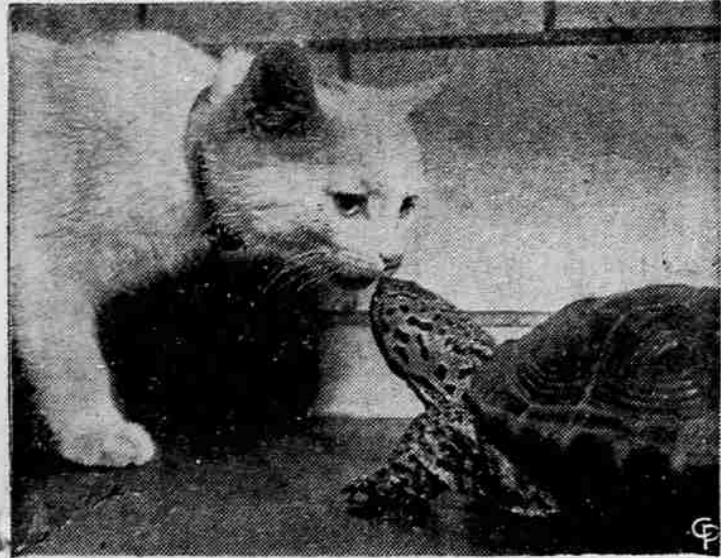
MAIL TRIBUNE—SEVEN

I'm not supposed to tell you, I think. You see, I've still got five and a half years to go on an NBC contract. But it certainly does give one pause, doesn't it?"

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DELICATE CONGRATULATIONS are extended turtle by Duchess, the cat, after hard-shell entry wins unusual pet class at New York's Madison Square Boys Club. (International)

Grange

Eagle Point Grange
Eagle Point Grange met Tuesday evening, February 7.

Grange opened in full form with seating drill. All officers were present and also an unusually large turnout of members.

Two applications for membership were read, also two applied for membership by demit from another Grange.

Bob Bitterling reported for the agriculture committee. Mrs. James Edge reporting for the educational committee talked about the origin of St. Valentine's day. Paul Olsen gave the legislative committee report. Grant Hubbell reported as insurance agent.

The H.E.C. display table held a number of items. Mrs. Grant Hubbell brought a couple of

coconuts from Guam, one in its original large outside covering, the other with the outer cover carved into birds, and showing half the inner coconut, as the base.

Mrs. Gertrude Stanley showed a box of unusual design of inlaid woods, also an antique shawl with bits of steel interwoven to form a pattern.

A portion of a large geode of amethyst crystals from Uruguay was brought by Paul Olsen. Amethyst being the accepted birthstone for February, it was also of interest to see a hand-carved face of amethyst crystal from old Mexico.

Mrs. Stanley asks members to bring dolls for the display table for the next meeting, Feb. 21.

After considerable discussion, it was voted that the Grange sponsor and promote a rural fire

protection district, as one of its projects.

Bob Bitterling and Cliff Moore were appointed by Master Mabel Wertz to be in charge and get the project started.

Adolph (Bill) Waltenberg's resignation as lecturer was accepted with regrets. He is still recovering from a long illness.

C. C. Hoover agreed to serve at least one more meeting as lecturer pro tem, until election can be held to fill the office.

The new password was received during this meeting.

The program had to be curtailed because it was growing late, but the "Indictment" was read. The "hearing" will be held at our next regular meeting on Feb. 21.

Serving refreshments of chili were Ida Kent, Ethel Leopard and Mrs. Lee Lucas.

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We asked Mrs. Stone if we might use the above in this advertisement.—Here is her reply—

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Feb. 1, 1956

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Thank you again, I am a truly satisfied customer.

MRS. WILLARD C. STONE
1206 East 11th
Medford, Ore.

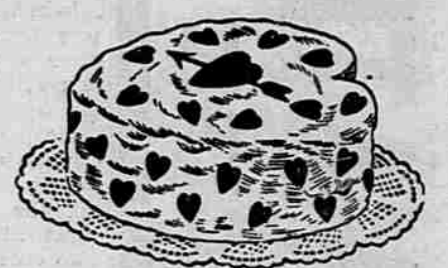
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