



ARTHUR GODFREY'S LESSON IN LIFE

*He is not the "Old Redhead" any more;
the controversial star who celebrates his
57th birthday this week has been
mellowed and relaxed by his ordeal with cancer*

By HERBERT KAMM

AT ITS ANNUAL dinner in New York last January, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences saluted Arthur Godfrey with a salvo of tributes and presented him with a plaque for 30 years of distinguished service to radio and television.

When the irrepressible redhead rose to acknowledge the honor, he found himself in the unusual predicament of groping for words. Finally, as he stood scratching his head in characteristic fashion, he blurted: "Golly, do I really deserve all this?"

It was a rare—and genuine—moment of humility for the battle-scarred veteran of the air waves. Even the cynics in the audience were moved.

Godfrey has long been noted as a consummate actor, a charmer who can turn on the guile—and turn it off—as any occasion demands. But it was, or so it seemed, a new and different Godfrey who stood before this audience of peers, awkwardly telling them that he was grateful for their esteem.

Since that January evening, a new and different Godfrey has indeed emerged from the tough, sometimes ruthless personality the public has come to know—the Godfrey who fired all of the "little Godfreys" of his radio and TV shows until there were none; the Godfrey who has battled and taunted network and sponsor; the Godfrey who has been something of an emperor.

The Arthur Godfrey of today is a more placid Godfrey—more gentle, more kindly, more understanding. It is a Godfrey entirely in consonance with another image—a man who, less than a year and a half ago, walked out of the shadow of death after an operation for lung cancer.

As the famed entertainer approaches his 57th birthday on August 31, he is a man happier—and at greater peace with himself—than he has ever been before.

"You know, life becomes a very simple proposi-

tion when you don't know how long you're going to be around," he told me in one of the few interviews he has granted since his cancer ordeal. "Things that used to seem important just aren't."

He is constantly aware of the "lucky break" he got through survival, and he means to make himself worthy of it.

"I got the break because of the great skill and courage of my physicians and because so many people prayed for it," he says. "I'll have to admit that I didn't pray for it, because I never ask anything for myself. Besides, I've already had too many breaks. I only ask to be worthy of whatever is granted."

Paradoxical as it may seem, Godfrey is more intent on keeping active since his operation, simply because he feels it is the best way to demonstrate his gratitude for being alive.

EACH DAY is more precious to him, and he goes about his work with an enthusiasm that awes even his closest associates. He is seen only occasionally now on television, in which he had been a fixture for 10 seasons. However, he is completely occupied in radio, the medium that launched him in October, 1929.

"I love this work. I love every minute of it," he says. "People have suggested that maybe it's time I thought of retirement. Me retire? Not till they put me away. To retire is to grow old, and I don't want to grow old ever. I do want to live a long time, because there is so much worth doing."

"My way of relaxing," he adds, "is not to do nothing, but to do something else. I find it very stimulating and restful at the same time."

Godfrey pointed out that, aside from his five-day-a-week schedule on CBS radio, he devotes many hours to his large Hereford ranch in Vir-

ginia, riding and breeding horses, piloting his airplane, and exploring progressive jazz which he has recently grown interested in.

His day usually begins at 9 in the morning and doesn't end until after 6 in the evening. He admits being a perfectionist about his radio program but describes his day as having "far less work and far more fun" than it had when he was a regular both on TV and radio. The reason: he feels closer to the audience and the people he works with.

"It takes from four to five hours a day to put the radio show together," he says. "Sometimes that easygoing sound comes hard. It's like pulling teeth if you're not in the right mood. You have to sit and noodle with the boys in the band for hours before the right feeling comes along. When it does, as it usually does, it's nothing but fun."

"The show also gives me a chance to meet a lot of people I might miss otherwise. Nearly every day an important guest drops in and we chat. No notes, no rigged questions, no rehearsal. Just an hour of getting acquainted. It's great!"

GODFREY TALKS freely about cancer, from which he has been declared "pathologically free."

"It may be some time before the researchers, with all their diligence, find the cure or, even more important, the preventive for cancer, but that doesn't mean that we should go around being afraid of it," he says. "The sooner cancer can be discovered and diagnosed, the quicker it can be removed surgically, and removal means the difference between life and death for the patient if accomplished in time. So, we must learn to live with this cancer menace. We mustn't fear it."

"The doctors have told me to go in peace," Godfrey says. "That's what I'm trying to do—in everything I do."

COVER:

Photographer Ozzie Sweet went up in a helicopter to shoot today's dramatic cover photo. Whether you're a novice or a veteran at the sport, you'll enjoy "10 Ways to Make Boating More Fun." It's on page 7.

Family
Weekly

August 28, 1960

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Address all communications about editorial features to
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