

“LOVE, LUCK, AND LOLLIPOPS”:  
CHILDREN’S TELEVISION PROGRAMMING IN PHILADELPHIA, 1948-1969

by

BRANDI SCARDILLI

A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-Camden

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

Graduate Program in American History

written under the direction of

Dr. Philip Scranton

and approved by

---

Camden, New Jersey May 2010

## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

“Love, Luck, and Lollipops”: Children’s Television Programming in Philadelphia, 1948-1969

by BRANDI SCARDILLI

Thesis Director:

Dr. Philip Scranton

This project explores children’s television programming in Philadelphia from the 1940s through the 1960s. Though Philadelphia was the third-largest television market during this period, very little scholarship on its shows exists. The city’s broadcasting infrastructure allowed stations to provide programming to air nationally, and many children’s shows that began as local Philadelphia fare became national hits. Personalities such as Dick Clark and Ed McMahon went on to national fame after appearing on Philadelphia television. Philadelphia stations created television series for children that were both entertaining and educational. The city was important to the history of the medium, and it was also at the forefront of the attempts to teach through television. The first efforts at in-school television were pioneered in Philadelphia, but the commercial stations had a commitment to education as well. Many shows had explicit educational goals, while others taught by example and encouraged social education. Though critics lamented the state of children’s shows as frivolous entertainment as early as the 1950s, Philadelphia stations rose above the criticism and met the criteria that child experts put forth for programming. By examining in detail the children’s shows that Philadelphia produced during this time period, it becomes evident that Philadelphia programming elevated what local television was expected to achieve. Shows were just as wholesome and enlightening, if not more so, than their nationally-known counterparts. Philadelphia programming deserves to be recognized as important in the history of children’s television and should be remembered as imaginative, creative, and full of passionate people willing to try new approaches to children’s entertainment.

On May 9, 1961, Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton N. Minow gave a speech to the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in Washington, D.C. In this speech, Minow famously called television a “vast wasteland.” However, he believed that television had the *potential* to provide meaningful content to viewers. “When television is good, nothing – not the theater, not the magazines or newspapers – nothing is better. But when television is bad, nothing is worse.”<sup>1</sup> Since it was the NAB’s responsibility to help decide what went on the air, Minow wanted the members to think carefully about television’s content. According to Minow, children spent as much time watching television as they did going to school. Since the television industry had such an impact on children, and society as a whole, the NAB had an “inescapable duty” to provide intelligent programming. “Is there no room on television to teach, to inform, to uplift, to stretch, to enlarge the capacities of our children?”<sup>2</sup> Minow admitted that while he enjoyed the occasional western or other form of frivolous entertainment, they were not appropriate as constant programming. The major networks were responsible for half of television’s schedule. Their hours, according to Minow, should be filled with shows that enlightened viewers about the world. The other half of the schedule, which consisted of local programming, also lacked the drive to produce quality series. “Too many local stations have foregone any efforts at local programming, with little use of live talent and local service.”<sup>3</sup> Shows should be imaginative and creative, experimenting with new formats and content. Minow was confident in the public’s capability to accept such positive programming. He was also confident that broadcasters could find the talent to create it if they made the effort to look.<sup>4</sup>

From the beginning, Philadelphia television had been everything Minow hoped local stations could be: imaginative, creative, educational, and full of passionate people willing to try new things. Television was not a vast wasteland there. Philadelphia was a pioneer in the field of children’s entertainment. The first radio program for children, *Uncle Wip*, aired in Philadelphia in 1921 or 1922. The city was also integral to the early stages of television development; the first public demonstration of the medium occurred at the Franklin Institute. Philadelphia was America’s third most populous city in the 1940s, and therefore the third largest television market after New York and Chicago. Some sources placed it fourth, after Los Angeles, but given the limited availability of coaxial cables linking major cities, it seems likely that Philadelphia’s proximity to New York kept it third for quite a while.<sup>5</sup>

Philadelphia’s status as a leader in the field of television makes its programming history important. Ed Cunningham, who produced a documentary on Philadelphia television called *Philly’s Favorite Kids*

*Show Hosts*, grew up watching local programming and now works as a radio personality at Philadelphia station WHYY. Cunningham described how Philadelphia's broadcasting infrastructure set it apart from other cities with local programming: "The presence of a large pool of local talent, plus the broadcast facilities to accommodate them, gave this market the opportunity to develop both children's and adult shows independent of anyone else, including New York." Cunningham also asserted that since the major networks did not develop many of their own programs in the early years of television, they relied on Philadelphia stations to supply their broadcasting. The main reason Philadelphia was a leader in early television broadcasting was, for Cunningham, the city's "inherent broadcasting strengths."<sup>6</sup>

Not only was Philadelphia a leading market in the early days of television, it was also a springboard for local talent to find New York success. Ernie Kovacs, Ed McMahon, Dick Clark, and others became famous across the country after starring in shows on Philadelphia stations. Philadelphia children's shows also made the move to New York studios, becoming nationally known. Chicago had only two local-turned-national hits (*Kukla, Fran and Ollie* and *Mr. Wizard*), but Philadelphia had several. Philadelphia was also the first city to attempt in-school educational broadcasting, which eventually became successful nationwide. This tendency for series and performers to begin in Philadelphia and find fame on a national level shows that Philadelphia children's programs were doing something special – they were elevating what local stations were expected to do.

Children's programming created by the three main stations in Philadelphia was fun and memorable. The shows' main purpose was to entertain, but many also had educational value. It is this commitment to learning that makes Philadelphia children's programming worth remembering. Intense scrutiny from researchers, child experts, and parents about suitable television programs for children was not necessary in Philadelphia. The positive elements of Philadelphia's programming demonstrate that the content was actually just as wholesome as the local stations' national counterparts.

Though Philadelphia was an important city in the early years of television, there is very little scholarship on the topic of its children's programming. Since so little documentation about the shows was saved, and there was no way to record episodes, many series were lost. But those shows for which records do survive deserve attention. It is important to understand how Philadelphia created broadcasting that was both educational and enjoyable, no easy feat according to the experiences of other local stations. This analysis of these shows spans from the first show on record in 1948, to 1969, when children's television

changed drastically with the premiere of *Sesame Street*. Philadelphia stations had talented performers who educated children in interesting ways. They made learning fun long before *Sesame Street* came on the scene.

The expectations put on programming by child experts also shows how special Philadelphia was. Philadelphia shows met those expectations and went above and beyond them. It is important to see how Philadelphia succeeded in producing educational shows, because the city was at the forefront of efforts to teach through television. This is a chronicle of Philadelphia children's television that shows its commitment to education *and* entertainment. Not every show had educational value, but these series were still a part of Philadelphia broadcast history. It seems fair to include them in a study of Philadelphia's programming because doing so underscores the reality that children were watching a balance of educational and entertaining shows. It would be beyond the scope and time frame of this project to compare and contrast local Philadelphia shows with the rest of the local stations across the country. However, by comparing the local to the national, we can get a reasonable view of how Philadelphia children's shows became an important part of television history. The local fare in Philadelphia raised the bar for broadcasters and performers, and exceeded the expectations of television critics like Newton Minow.

According to a pamphlet called *Children and Television* from 1959, eighty to ninety percent of school-age children watched television regularly. Seventy-five percent of sixth-graders watched television daily. The networks needed to provide enough entertainment for these television-savvy children. The first children's show ever on television was the DuMont network's *Small Fry Club*, which premiered in March 1947. It aired at seven o'clock at night, and was hosted by "Big Brother Bob." The half hour show featured games and prizes for the participating children. The other networks, NBC, CBS, and ABC, followed *Small Fry*'s example with children's shows of their own, some featuring puppets, others using a "kindly old uncle" host. Comedy and cartoons were the basic formula.<sup>7</sup>

Children also liked to watch shows that were aimed at adults. *I Love Lucy* was a family favorite. The variety show *Texaco Star Theater*, starring Milton Berle, was another. So many children began to tune in that Berle began calling himself "Uncle Miltie." He would tell the children watching at home that they should listen to their parents and go to bed as soon as his show was over. Berle may have made an effort to cater to his younger viewers, but his show still contained decidedly adult humor.

Adventure shows were also popular. Space explorers like Buck Rogers, Captain Video, and Flash Gordon mesmerized young boys. So did Western heroes like the Lone Ranger and Hopalong Cassidy, who were both on the air as early as 1949. *Superman* joined the ranks of children's show leading men in 1953. According to Ed Cunningham, the show "had some problems with young children attempting to fly like their hero, so much so that series star George Reeves had to warn children that his show was strictly make-believe, and not to try this at home."<sup>8</sup> Throughout the early 1950s, *Howdy Doody* was the most popular show for children under age ten. Animation continued to rule the schedule, and in 1956 CBS created the first prime-time cartoon series, *Cartoon Theater*, featuring Dick Van Dyke.

Some programming made attempts at teaching children. Philadelphia programming set an excellent example for broadcasters in terms of creating entertaining and educational children's fare, but the major networks did produce some informative programming, like *Mr. Wizard*, which dealt with science education. Preschoolers had *Ding Dong School*, designed to prepare them for a classroom setting. Beginning in 1950, toddlers also watched *Romper Room*, which was the first nationally syndicated show sold to individual stations, including Philadelphia. *Captain Kangaroo*, featuring "grandfatherly" Bob Keeshan, was a classic mix of fun and learning that began in 1955 and continued for another thirty years. Most of these shows aired in the evening. Saturday mornings became popular times for children's fare with the debut in 1950 of *The Big Top*, a circus show filmed in Philadelphia. Afternoon shows, like *Howdy Doody*, also drew wide audiences. Some shows even aired in the mornings before children went off to school. The majority of network shows aired at night to cater to families who gathered around the set. Advertisers wanted to ensure that the shows they sponsored were seen by the largest audience possible.<sup>9</sup>

Each local station had to find shows to produce for the rest of the broadcast day. Stations across the country rounded out their lineups with children's shows. Radio had included programming for young listeners, so it was only natural that television followed that example. The most popular and inexpensive format involved a host who introduced short films or cartoons. Westerns were also readily available at low cost. From 1948 to 1950, the majority of local children's programming involved shows with a western theme. Hosts were not usually famous and therefore came cheap. Dressed as sheriffs, engineers, space explorers, clowns, and other non-threatening authority figures, they entertained visiting children, who comprised the live audience. Sometimes puppets were involved. Children had always been drawn to them, and they were also inexpensive and did not take up much space. Shows typically aired for fifteen to thirty

minutes, in the early morning, late afternoon, and the weekend to accommodate older children's school schedules. Some local stations targeted their morning programming to very young children with the belief that toddlers could sit down to watch while mothers got their husbands and older children ready to leave the house for the day.<sup>10</sup>

Chicago's WBKB aired *Junior Jamboree* beginning in 1947. Los Angeles station KTLA had a show called *Time for Beany*. Some local shows became so popular that they started airing nationally. *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, a puppet-themed children's show from Chicago, was the first local show to gain national attention. It was also the first show broadcast in color. The show ran from 1947 to 1957, and appealed to all age groups. According to Ed McMahon in his memoir of the early days of television, its appeal was its downfall; sponsors had difficulty finding products that various ages could enjoy. He did credit the show for the rise in local programming, despite its advertising troubles. Local stations realized that sponsors were willing and able to sell to children, and the number of children's shows rose rapidly. By the early 1950s, there were over fourteen hundred children's programs being produced on local stations.<sup>11</sup>

Another local show that went national starred Bozo the Clown. A Los Angeles station aired *Bozo's Circus* in 1949. It became so popular that the station decided to license the rights to the character of Bozo, allowing local stations across the country to hire their own clowns and create their own shows. The basic format was that of a variety show, with cartoons, skits, performances, and games mixed throughout. Two hundred and forty local stations bought the character, and Bozo soon gained international fame as well, airing in forty different countries.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, local programming was still overshadowed by the shows produced by major networks. According to children's show historian Tim Hollis, nationally available shows like *Howdy Doody* and *Captain Kangaroo* were "bigger-budgeted versions of what local stations had already been doing." They were considered classics because so many children had the chance to view them. Most local broadcasters either did not have the technology or the desire to record their programming, so there is no longer footage, or even pictures, of many local children's shows, Philadelphia included.<sup>13</sup> The small amount of footage that has survived, however, shows that Philadelphia's local television was similar to the types of shows that aired nationally.

Philadelphia had three major television stations: WPTZ (also known later as WRCV and KYW), WFIL, and WCAU. WPTZ, the city's first station, was at that time an affiliate of NBC and aired on

Channel 3. WFIL Channel 6 was part of ABC, and CBS had WCAU, Channel 10. WPTZ began in 1941, WFIL in September 1947, and WCAU in March 1948. In an advertisement from 1961 in *Madison Avenue* magazine, WCAU boasted that it reached almost seven million viewers, making it the most popular of the stations. Each affiliate's reach extended beyond the city to include areas of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and even Maryland.

A survey by the Television Association of Philadelphia and *TV Digest* from April 1950 revealed that Philadelphia children tuned in mostly between five and seven o'clock in the evening. They typically watched three and a half hours of television a day, while adults watched about four and a half. The major criticisms of television that Philadelphia families cited were the existence of too much advertising, too many Westerns and not enough sports programs, and a dislike of Milton Berle.<sup>14</sup> For those who preferred a more wholesome comedian, there was Ed McMahon. McMahon dubbed himself the "Mr. Television" of Philadelphia because WCAU had him do "everything from cohosting a cooking show to having my own late-night talk show...I hosted just about every type of program WCAU could create."<sup>15</sup> In their first few years of operation, Philadelphia stations needed inexpensive programming to fill up their time slots, and recruiting Renaissance men like Ed McMahon was an easy way to figure out what kinds of programming worked, and what did not.

Virginia Rumsey's 1952 thesis for Drexel University, "Children's Story Programs on Radio and Television Broadcasts in the Philadelphia Area," stated that most television stations only produced enough children's programming to satisfy the Federal Communication Commission's requirements.<sup>16</sup> WFIL producer Lew Klein remembered the situation in Philadelphia differently. He argued that catering to children's audiences was the "main part of our broadcast day."<sup>17</sup> He felt that Philadelphia's television personalities made an effort to care about the children they entertained.

A study by the Philadelphia Home and School Council in 1953 found that parents liked circus shows like *The Big Top* and puppet shows like *Willie the Worm*. *Romper Room* also rated highly for young children, as did *Chief Halftown*, and educational shows like *Operation Blackboard* were approved for older children. Nationally aired shows like *I Love Lucy*, *Rin Tin Tin*, *Mr. Wizard*, and *Ozzie and Harriet* were also accepted by Philadelphia parents. Children liked the serious shows, but they also enjoyed *Howdy Doody*, *Bandstand*, and Pete Boyle's programs. Upon closer inspection, those shows had educational value that



parents may not have noticed. Philadelphia children were in good hands when it came to what the stations chose to put on the air.<sup>18</sup>

Puppets were just as popular in Philadelphia as they were nationally. Westerns were as well. In fact, WPTZ's *Frontier Playhouse* was the highest-rated local television show in the country in 1949. Philadelphia also had western-themed hosts like Rex Trailer, Sally Starr, and Chief Halftown, though they did not necessarily introduce stories of the frontier. Other personalities were a part of Philadelphia television on several different shows. Gene Crane, who had been with WCAU radio since 1945, went on to local fame as a carnival show ringmaster. Dick Clark, before gaining national attention as the host of *Bandstand*, was the announcer on *Paul Whiteman's TV Teen Club*, a showcase for young singers.<sup>19</sup> These shows and others formed the building blocks for creating positive local television. Philadelphia stations proved that the critics of children's television did not need to worry about Philadelphia fare. For every show that may have caused concern, there were others that went above and beyond the caliber of typical local programming. Children who watched the commercial television were usually exposed to positive elements. Those children who also watched the city's educational television offerings were in even better hands.

Educators were determined to find ways to use television to their advantage. It seemed only natural to open up channels specifically for use in schools and universities. During the day, some commercial stations set aside airtime for in-school broadcasting. In 1952, the Federal Communications Commission allotted 242 stations specifically for noncommercial use, with Philadelphia assigned to UHF Channel 35. Philadelphia had already been using air time for classroom instruction long before it caught on nationally. As early as 1947, the Philadelphia school district was airing one educational broadcast per week during school hours, making it one of the earliest, if not *the* earliest, users of in-school television. By 1952, more than a thousand television sets had been installed in the city's classrooms, airing thirteen broadcasts a week. Topics ranged from art and music to science, social studies, health, reading, and even math. The endeavor owed its success to Philadelphia organizations like the Franklin Institute, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the universities, and the Orchestra. They donated materials, filming locations, and on-screen teachers. WPTZ, WFIL, and WCAU offered time slots for the programs. Teachers attended summer training sessions to learn how to interact with the programming in the classroom. Educators gave

overwhelmingly positive reviews to the new teaching tool, and parents were also on board. Soon Baltimore and Chicago school districts developed their own programs in conjunction with local stations.

The first exclusively educational station under the FCC's ruling, Houston's KUHT, began broadcasting in May 1953. An article in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* from 1959 stated that there were thirty-four operational noncommercial stations across the country. The same article found that half a million children and college students had televisions in their classrooms, giving them a variety of learning opportunities. For instance, Pittsburgh students watched television programs featuring Robert Frost reciting his poetry. Students in Indiana received instruction from an educational television council, which shared resources and funding throughout the region. Some schools in Maryland created a network that linked all of the schools in one county so that they could receive daily instruction. The Fund for the Advancement of Education was established to finance the in-school television venture, providing ten million dollars to fifty different school districts.<sup>20</sup>

Edith Kern wrote in *The Modern Language Journal* in 1959, "good pictures that are significantly integrated into a lesson may often convey more of a city or a way of life than an excellent description...the introduction of grammatical rules or historical or geographical data can be made more impressive on a television screen than on the blackboard of a classroom."<sup>21</sup> Kern cautioned that despite its advantages, in-school television did not suit every style of learning, and lacked the stimulation of live discussion. It was difficult to time lessons around the broadcasts, and it was expensive to buy television sets for every classroom, so there was the problem of viewing space. Overall, however, the feedback for the endeavor was positive. Experiments showed that students learned as much from in-school television as they did from their regular teachers. Team-teaching between the program instructors and "live" teachers proved most effective, giving students the opportunity to ask questions of the teachers in front of them as well as learn from the broadcasts. Students watching in-school television were also found to make more use of the library; they took responsibility for their own education because in-school television encouraged their curiosity about subjects that had earlier been out of reach.<sup>22</sup>

In-school television also benefited the teachers. They shared lesson preparation with the television teacher, and thus could spend more time on individual students, answering questions and sparking discussion. Some teachers preferred the team-teaching to their typical schedule. When classrooms did not have television sets, the students were sent to the auditorium or cafeteria to use that room's set. In a larger

setting, several classes could learn together. The teachers shared responsibilities, and the exposure to their colleagues encouraged improvement. Several educators noticed that teachers learned new and better techniques by interacting with each other. “On the basis of the experimentation to date, it appears that when schools and colleges have learned to capitalize on the full potential of the medium, students at all levels will receive a far broader, deeper, and richer education than has been possible heretofore.”<sup>23</sup>

In Henry Cassirer’s article in *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television* from 1954, he found that “many people associated with educational television initiatives believed the medium had the potential not only to teach children in the classroom but to provide in-home broadcast alternatives to commercial television and what some saw (even then) as its violence and triviality.”<sup>24</sup> In Philadelphia, WFIL had always been conscious of commercial television’s potential for education. In January 1951, the station decided to air shows that were geared specifically towards adult education. *Studio Schoolhouse* premiered a half-hour before *University of the Air*, which became the more documented, and more emulated, venture. Both programs were designed to coincide with the timing of college classes. Twenty universities took part in the experimental phase that used WFIL programming as part of the curriculum; the station was the first one to attempt such an approach to learning. *University of the Air* was also popular for viewers at home. It appeared on television schedules throughout the 1950s. Both shows continued into the late 1960s.<sup>25</sup>

Some expressed concern with the idea of educational television. Gilbert Seldes, a popular culture critic, felt that explicitly educational channels would prevent commercial networks from airing informational programming. “The commercial broadcasters will be under no obligation to vary their programs to create appetites of many kinds, to interest people of several levels. They will be quite justified in saying, ‘Art? Art’s on channel X.’” Seldes felt that educational channels would not be able to compete with commercial ones. *The New York Times*’s Jack Gould took a more optimistic approach, calling educational television “an alternative and complementary service” to commercial fare.<sup>26</sup> Programming in Philadelphia, especially children’s shows, did not have to draw such a distinction, because of Philadelphia’s commitment to informative entertainment.

Luella J. Martin’s Penn State thesis from 1954, which explored Philadelphia’s use of educational television, described the programming that was available to both students and home viewers. “The Philadelphia Public Schools have an outstanding program of educational broadcasting over commercial facilities. Their first experience was with educational radio, but they have expanded into the field of

television as a public relations method and as an integral part of the school curriculum.”<sup>27</sup> Besides WFIL’s offerings, another popular show was *Operation Blackboard* on WPTZ that aired in the mornings in the early 1950s. It was produced by the public school system but aired on the commercial network. All three of the major stations, WFIL, WPTZ, and WCAU, offered portions of their daily programming for in-school broadcasting. The national networks also began to use air time for educational programming. NBC aired children’s show *Mr. Wizard*, CBS produced *See It Now*, a news show, and ABC aired *March of Time*. Philadelphia’s local stations had been broadcasting these types of shows in the evening since 1948. WPTZ produced *Young Philadelphia Presents*, which documented school activities. *Let’s Make Music*, which displayed techniques of music instruction, and *Careers in Science*, which featured demonstrations of various equipment used in scientific careers, were both broadcast by WFIL the same year. WCAU’s offering was *Formula for Champions*, a celebration of student athletes. These four programs were intended to show parents the benefits of learning through television. Viewers responded well to the tactic and more educational series were produced.<sup>28</sup>

Martin’s thesis went on to discuss in-school programming. On March 1, 1949, two television manufacturers, RCA-Victor and Philco, loaned about fifty sets to twenty-five schools in the Philadelphia district. The local stations began airing four educational programs per week during school hours. The Home and School Association bought its own receivers when they realized that the experiment was successful. According to Martin, even some schools that could not afford televisions arranged for students to view the programming in local homes. By the next semester, stations were broadcasting seven in-school programs per week for a variety of age groups. These programs also catered to viewers at home, but were primarily produced to supplement school subjects. *Try It Yourself* on WCAU was an art show for elementary students. WFIL’s *Billy Penn, M.C.* was a junior high civics lesson. *The World at Your Door* was WPTZ’s high school social studies offering. These and other shows revolutionized education and set an example for other local stations to collaborate with their own school boards.

The endeavor was well-organized. The school curriculum office and the television stations sent out monthly schedules so teachers knew which programs were airing and could plan their lessons accordingly. <sup>29</sup> The schedule from October 1955 included shows such as *Delaware Valley, U.S.*, which aired for fifteen minutes every Tuesday. The lessons featured discussions on topics as varied as the recent floods in the area as well as a glimpse at chewing gum production. The show’s purpose as written in the schedule was “to tell

the story of chewing gum and to point out that the schoolroom is never the place to find it.”<sup>30</sup> There were also more serious programs like Wednesday’s lesson *R for Reading*. This show supplemented early elementary approaches to teaching reading: “It is hoped that these lessons will motivate pupils and acquaint parents with current methods in our schools.”<sup>31</sup> Not only was the program geared toward young students, it was also a method for parents to see what their children were learning in school.

Many more programs were developed throughout the 1950s. By 1959, there were fifteen hundred in-school television programs being produced by Philadelphia stations, including by WHYY, the educational channel 35. The length of lessons grew from fifteen minutes to twenty-five, and sometimes to an hour. Some classes were held in auditoriums to accommodate the maximum number of students. The city established the Division of Radio and Television in 1955 to oversee the project. The Division helped prepare lessons, distributed schedules, and worked with curriculum experts to meet children’s learning needs. The public school system’s study of television teaching from 1960 concluded that “we have always known that television could not replace the teacher. However, the experiment has demonstrated the effectiveness of the ‘teacher-team’—the combination of studio and classroom teachers—for successful teaching and learning.”<sup>32</sup> Philadelphia’s role as a pioneer of in-school television further proved the city’s importance to the television industry. The local stations produced shows that were used extensively in classrooms, as well as commercial shows that were created for entertainment but had elements of learning. This balance made Philadelphia’s experiences with educational television that much more vital to helping children grow.<sup>33</sup>

Philadelphia had always been a leader in instructive television, but it wasn’t until 1963 that the city got its own widely available educational channel, WHYY, which stood for “Wider Horizons for You and Yours.” In the 1950s, W. Laurence LePage, president of the Franklin Institute, helped found the Metropolitan Philadelphia Educational Radio and Television Corporation, which focused on creating educational series for the city. WHYY was founded in this spirit of community cooperation, first on radio (91FM), which began in 1954, and then television, with UHF Channel 35 set aside for the new station in 1957. This was the twenty-third public television station to be granted a license by the Federal Communications Commission. The Philadelphia Board of Education, as well as a hundred other local institutions, had pooled their funds and resources to get the project off the ground. Philadelphia’s mayor at the time, Richardson Dilworth, praised the venture as “an example of the spiritual awakening of the city.”

The only problem was that many televisions in the 1950s were unable to transmit UHF (ultra high frequency), instead relying on VHF (very high frequency, channels 2-13). Most Philadelphians were not able to watch the cultural and informative programming WHY Y had to offer. Eventually, in 1963, VHF Channel 12 from Wilmington, Delaware folded and WHY Y received the rights. September 12, 1963 was WHY Y Channel 12's first broadcast day. Production continued out of Wilmington for a year until studio space was found in Philadelphia. The station was, and still is, supported by donations from citizens and corporations, and by foundation grants. According to the book *Invisible Philadelphia*, published in 1995, about three thousand volunteers work to encourage membership with the station. Half of WHY Y's funding comes from its members.

Public television had always been a destination for quality children's programming. WHY Y's original purpose had been to work with Philadelphia schools in creating in-school television for primary and secondary classrooms. The station aired educational programming from nine a.m. to three p.m. to coincide with the school day. For several years after acquiring Channel 12, WHY Y used Channel 35 for the in-school broadcasts.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, WHY Y Channel 12 concentrated on providing quality programming for everyone. The station was even involved in supplying programming for the National Educational Television organization. In 1967, President Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act, which established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, providing funding to public television. Two years later, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) signed on the air, and WHY Y became its Philadelphia affiliate. One of PBS's first shows was *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, a children's program that began in Toronto, moved to Pittsburgh in 1963, and went national in 1967.<sup>35</sup>

The debut of the WHY Y channel was covered extensively in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The first broadcast, at seven p.m. on September 12, 1963, was a preview of the possibilities of educational television, along with dedication ceremony called *Giant Step*. The governors of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware were all in attendance, as well as the Federal Communications Committee chairman. Making it a truly community event, the Temple University Choir was on hand to sing. At nine p.m., Chicago's Second City improvisational group performed a comedy routine. Other notable broadcasts from the channel's first few days included footage from the Villanova Intercollegiate Jazz Festival, a program called *Marcel Marceau on Mime*, a Swedish ballet, and a documentary called *Rise of Russia as a World Power*. "With this razzledazzle of programs," the *Inquirer's* Harry Harris wrote, "WHY Y-TV emerges from its

relative obscurity on UHF...” where it had only fifty thousand viewers. With the new station, it was estimated that seven million viewers were able to watch and learn from the channel. Philadelphia’s television viewers were lucky to have so many options when it came to informational broadcasting, both on commercial and educational stations. Children and adults could watch together, but since the early days of television, adults had been determined to monitor children’s viewing.<sup>36</sup>

The parents of the first generation to grow up with television faced a problem. They were unsure of the best approach to the new medium. It was widely accepted that children were more susceptible than adults to messages given out by television; and by the mid-1950s, Americans began to realize that children were going to be spending a great deal of time in front of the television set. Adults felt they should use that time wisely, by creating shows that fostered learning and contributed positively to childhood development. Some felt that goal was achieved; others remained unconvinced. Some even felt that television viewing was dangerous to children’s mental health. They were concerned about imitation of bad behaviors.<sup>37</sup>

There have been countless studies about television’s effects on children since the beginning of the medium. Parents, producers, and child experts have felt the need to form opinions about the intrusion of new influences into children’s lives.<sup>38</sup> Though this is an understandable concern, it is not a realistic goal to determine whether Philadelphia children’s shows were *detrimental* to their viewers. This study focuses instead on the *positive* qualities that the local shows had; most notably their commitments to education. It is important to compare adults’ reactions to television with the programs produced by Philadelphia stations to show that the concern about inappropriate shows was, for the most part, unnecessary in Philadelphia. The shows produced by the three local stations provided a reliable place for children to learn, whether they were discovering social behaviors or the alphabet. These shows created an educational advantage for the viewers along with meeting the primary goal of entertaining children. Nationally, however, many commentators felt that children’s programming lacked such benefits.

An article in the *New York Times* from March 25, 1962 decried the lack of instructional television. Author Robert Saudek praised *Watch Mr. Wizard*, which aired on NBC beginning in 1951 as a weekly attempt at teaching science in an engaging manner using household objects. But with the exception of *Mr. Wizard*, Saudek was appalled that less than one percent of children’s programming on the major networks was “designed to stimulate or challenge” its viewers.<sup>39</sup> Saudek felt that Minow’s “vast wasteland” idea

made sense in light of his findings. He cited more statistics: only nine percent of national children's programming had educational value. Saudek also acknowledged local television, writing that "entertainment and adventure programs overwhelm the children's schedule."<sup>40</sup> However, in Philadelphia, this was not the case. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, taking closer looks at the programming reveals that many shows had underlying educational value even if that was not their goal. Shows such as *Bandstand* may have seemed frivolous on the surface, but closer examination reveals that viewing the show was a positive experience for children.

In August 1955, NBC established a committee to study children's programs. The major weaknesses they found were too much violence, improper grammar, and "frenetic action." These issues prompted the committee to target westerns, which they recommended for cancellation. Philadelphia was guilty of airing this type of children's show. In fact, in October 1959, westerns constituted five of the top ten series in Philadelphia. Philadelphia did have nonviolent shows to compensate for the gunplay of shows like *Hopalong Cassidy*, but that's not to say that Philadelphia's only violent shows were westerns. Popular cartoons like *Popeye* aired every day. However, even that type of mindless entertainment was counterbalanced by host Sally Starr, who emphasized good behavior. Many Philadelphia shows had hosts who were positive role models. The NBC committee found that children would benefit from, and also enjoy, shows featuring arts and crafts, field trips, international music, and storytelling. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Philadelphia had shows with these criteria. *Pixanne* took children on field trips. Gene London was a master of storytelling. In-school programming exposed children to folk music. *Romper Room* fed children's creativity with arts and crafts.<sup>41</sup>

*Television for Children*, a pamphlet produced in 1962 by Boston's Foundation for Character Education, concentrated on the role of the broadcaster in creating programming. His goal was to appeal to a variety of ages and interests. He also had to appease adults watching along with their children, and therefore he took on the responsibility of wholesome programming. The Foundation was appalled by the "seemingly endless supply of ancient cartoon comedies" that had "consistently poor technical [and] production quality."<sup>42</sup> Though this type of programming continued to be easy and cheap to produce, the Foundation encouraged broadcasters to find better quality alternatives. Producers could learn from educational broadcasters, whose purpose was to "develop new content areas and fulfill needs which the commercial broadcasters do not regularly satisfy."<sup>43</sup> The Foundation did acknowledge the enormous



pressure on broadcasters that made purely educational television difficult to imitate. They were expected to produce shows that satisfied sponsors' demands, entertained children while appeasing adults, could be produced within budgets, were filmed in a timely manner, and created enough programming to fill the stations' time slots. From this perspective, it seems only natural that broadcasters would forego educational content for programming that turned a profit.

The Foundation called for reforms in the quality of programming, regardless of broadcasters' issues. Some of the shows they felt would most benefit children were those fostering curiosity and containing elements of adventure, fantasy, and social interaction, especially the types of interaction that encouraged honesty and other moral traits. Philadelphia had no shortage of these types of shows. The circus shows like *The Big Top* were adventurous, *Bertie the Bunyip* was pure fantasy, and all of the shows' hosts liked to engage their audiences with lessons about proper behavior. The Foundation also preferred programming with scientific value, demonstrations of hobbies, and exposure to literature, which Philadelphia had in spades. An episode of *Pixanne* discussed the moon. Lorenzo the Tramp made dancing his hobby. And Pete Boyle loved storytelling. The Foundation put special emphasis on the main characters and hosts. They needed to "project warmth and sincerity" while holding children's attention. Children who were studio audience members also had to appear laid-back and "not markedly superior" to the viewing audience. There were several Philadelphia shows with live audiences, and all of their guests were local children. As for the hosts, from *The Gene London Show* to *Popeye Theater* with Sally Starr, viewing even a minute of footage makes it obvious that these performers were the embodiment of warmth and sincerity. These are just a few examples of Philadelphia programming that had already met the goals of children's television reformers.<sup>44</sup>

While studies of programming discussed what types of shows should be produced, studies focusing on children's well-being, like Robert Lewis Shayon's *Television and Our Children* from 1951, revealed children's reactions to what was already on the air. "Here are the children, and there is television, and whether we publicize the grim fact or not, the two new worlds are locked in irrevocable embrace," Shayon wrote.<sup>45</sup> He acknowledged that though television was widely disparaged by some parents, teachers, and public officials, it was also hailed as a wonderful addition to the home, mostly as a built-in babysitter. Shayon allied himself more with the critics, and cited many recent studies that proved television's ill effects. A poll from Evanston, Illinois found that parents cited television's violence, sensationalism, and

excessive stimulation as reasons children should not watch. New York City's United Parents Association calculated that five- to six-year-olds viewed the most television, and this made them less willing to play outside, averse to arts and crafts, and even interfered with their eating habits. Teachers felt that television dulled children's senses. Norman Cousins, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* from December 1949, decried the "grinding lack of imagination and originality" on television. Shayon did admit that the reactions to television were well-balanced. "For every parental dissent there is a parental huzzah. For every teacher shock and gloom—another teacher acclaim. The severest critics often admit TV's good features and point to great possibilities. The same survey shows applause for, as well as condemnation of, identical programs."<sup>46</sup> Even surveys about television's effect on school performance were not conclusive. Shayon felt that it was up to parents to guide their children and monitor their viewing habits.<sup>47</sup>

Shayon addressed concerns about how much television was too much. For many educators, three hours of viewing per day was excessive. Florence Brumbaugh, a teacher at an elementary school in New York, surveyed children to find out their habits. She found that many children used their allowance to buy food to share while watching television with friends. One respondent identified four reasons he liked television. "It gives you stories like a book, pictures like movies, voices like radio and adventure like a comic. Television has action while you stay in one spot."<sup>48</sup> Another student wrote that she typically had to depend on rides from her mother in order to see a movie. "But now that we have television, on the rainiest of days, who wants to go to the movies, when I can watch a cowboy film? Another thing, at night I have an excuse for staying up late." Shayon pointed out that not only did television grant children more freedom, they were also exposed to "knowledge, adventure, excitement, contact with the grownup world...these, then, are all our children's important emotional needs."<sup>49</sup> Television was a constant companion that taught children about the world and interacted with them, in that it gave them a sense of purpose. But it was parental values that most influenced children, and therefore some felt that family viewing was the best way to monitor children's exposure to programs. Shayon cited the example of the Smart family of Pasadena, California. Mrs. Smart wrote to her local newspaper that she and her husband "know what programs the children see, because we watch TV with them. We often get out the globe to see where some place is in relation to our own." Maude Eaton from Washington, D.C. advocated the same approach. "When we know what the children are seeing and hearing, we find it possible to bring out ideas and ask and answer questions."<sup>50</sup> Shayon concluded that though television was far from perfect, parents could make it their

priority to actively participate in children's viewing, and when parents respected their opinions, children would be more willing to compromise.<sup>51</sup> Shayon's book explored children's viewing just as television was becoming a fixture in the home, but the debates have continued throughout television's history.

Articles in scholarly journals also contained opinions on children's programming in the early years of television. In 1949, the *College Art Journal* published "Art Education Through Television," by Hans van Weeren-Griek. Though mainly focused on the idea of viewing art by watching television, the article asserted that children in particular could benefit from the opportunities television offers. "What television really does is to bring the things we want to talk about to people into their homes and into schools, reaching a wider audience than ever before."<sup>52</sup> Television was not just a new form of communication; it was a new way of expressing oneself. By holding television to the standards of "fine art," children would be exposed to a new way of learning. Van Weeren-Griek felt that though the television picture was not yet "aesthetic" enough, those on television could overcome that with wholesome content. He wanted to bring artists, composers, and writers into the television business so that viewers were exposed to various forms of art that they would not have been previously.

Though Van Weeren-Griek was writing as television was just starting to become mainstream, he held it to extremely high standards. He had that in common with later critics who had fully realized the power of the new medium. For example, in *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television's* 1952 article "The Television Code," Frank Orme stated somewhat dramatically that "physical science has given us the atom bomb; it has also given us television. Television, of the two, is intrinsically far more powerful."<sup>53</sup> While television was not capable of physical destruction, it *could* corrupt children's minds. Orme took issue with violence on television, especially westerns and crime shows. He felt that even though good usually defeated evil, the heroes did not win because of their intelligence or resourcefulness, which would seem to be a positive association for children. Instead, good fought evil using a combination of physical prowess and luck. If positive role models participated in such violent shows, they would be a better fit for children. As it was, Orme lamented, broadcasters continued to produce heroes with brute strength.

Though Philadelphia was certainly guilty of airing westerns and cartoons featuring muscle men like Popeye, the personalities introducing those shows prized intellect over the ability to throw a punch. Kindly Uncle Pete Boyle demonstrated his artistic flair with his sketches, and Chief Halftown looked like he stepped right out of a western, though he was actually a pacifist. It was this exposure to new ideas,

without formal instruction, that concerned Melvin and Lois DeFleur in their 1967 *American Sociological Review* article titled “The Relative Contribution of Television as a Learning Source for Children’s Occupational Knowledge.” They argued that children gained a basic knowledge of careers by watching television. Viewers soaked up information even if the program they watched did not have explicit educational goals. The DeFleurs called this “incidental information.” They concluded that television was a better transmitter of incidental information about careers than personal interaction was. It seems safe to assume that this is true for other aspects of learning as well. Children received incidental information about manners and how to treat others by watching Philadelphia television. The DeFleurs did worry that too many stereotypes could damage a child’s perception of what they learned from television, but admitted that “given the limited amount of objective research data...we can do little more than note that television appears to be an important agency of socialization for children concerning the adult world.”<sup>54</sup> Television shows were helpful resources for children in terms of incidental information. Television broadened their knowledge of social interactions, even if what they were viewing did not have that intent.

Research into children’s television and its effects continues to this day, revealing similar findings to those studies conducted earlier. *Children and Television: Fifty Years of Research*, a bibliography of studies on media influences since the 1950s, asserted that “early viewing has lasting associations with academic achievement.”<sup>55</sup> Children who watched educational television at young ages were better equipped to handle school. *Children and Television* argued that children who watched nothing but entertainment television suffered negative impacts in school; they were less proficient in reading and tended to be more violent.<sup>56</sup> This conclusion generalizes television as the main source for understanding childhood behavior, but it does drive home an important point. Children were so dependent on television even in its early years that its content stayed with them after they stopped watching. This helps to explain the sense of nostalgia people feel when reminiscing about their favorite programs as children. They remember the lovable and kind characters over the negative images.

Heather Hendershot’s *Saturday Morning Censors* studied cartoons. She asserted that cartoon violence had not been considered dangerous to children until the 1950s, when broadcasters began airing them as strictly children’s fare. In the late 1960s, children who watched television on Saturday mornings were exposed to cartoon versions of westerns, with heroes and villains fighting battles to the death. She cited a study that called these shows “morally repellent pseudoscientific space fantasies.”<sup>57</sup> According to

*Television: A Guide to the Literature*, the first documented study of violence on television was undertaken by the National Association of Educational Broadcasters in the 1950s. The Association monitored New York television for a week and found that there were more than six threats or acts of violence for every hour of programming. While there is no data available for Philadelphia, given the frequency of westerns and cartoons, it seems likely that the numbers were similar.<sup>58</sup>

Advertiser Cy Schneider felt that immoral actions on television were no cause for concern. “Television is not there to instruct kids. Kids don’t want to be instructed,” he told historian Jeff Kesseloff in *The Box*. “They go to school for that.”<sup>59</sup> He felt that television, though mainly an advertising medium, was meant to entertain. Bob Keeshan, who spent many years on children’s television as Captain Kangaroo, did not agree with Schneider. “That’s nonsense,” he told Kesseloff. “Of course, television is a mass medium, but whether they like it or not they are part of the nurturing system.”<sup>60</sup> Television critics and advocates continue to debate the value of television for children. Though Philadelphia television may have been guilty of many of the offenses critics ascribed to it, it is important to remember that television is a business, and no matter what is on the air, it is the parents’ responsibility to know what their children are watching. Lynn Spigel put it best in her book *Make Room for TV*. “If the machine could control the child, then so could the parent...it was they, after all, who were in command.”<sup>61</sup> With the exception of those ubiquitous westerns, parents in Philadelphia had a wide range of positive shows from which to choose.

Just as critics attempted to make sense of the effects television had on children, various concerned citizens compiled guidelines to determine the qualities of the best children’s programming. They were not so much concerned with whether television harmed children, but with the best approach to creating programming that would benefit children, while entertaining them as well. Philadelphia met these guidelines and in some cases improved upon them. Every children’s show host to come out of Philadelphia attempted, whether consciously or unconsciously, to follow the “rules” that experts laid out for children’s programs.

Burr Tillstrom, the creator of *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, wrote an essay for *The New York Times* in April 1949. He cited the two most important elements of children’s television as simplicity and good taste. Designing programs that catered specifically to a certain age group was difficult, because when children came home from school, it was considered family time, so it was important for children’s show hosts to be

sincere. “The wise showman won’t try to do any faking before a young audience; neither will he attempt subtleties.” Tillstrom believed that children knew when they were being patronized, but at the same time, simple sets and uncomplicated stories were the best approach to attract child audiences. Fact-checking was essential. Mistaken pronunciation or false historical details elicited a strong response from viewers. “As long as the program planners make sure that the children never see or hear anything unkind, however, the correspondents are correspondingly gentle.” Tillstrom also stressed the importance of imagination. He felt that all children loved fairy tales and fantasy, so children’s shows should attempt to make these types of stories come alive for the viewer. Lastly, Tillstrom liked the idea of the host having a rapport with his viewers. “Children love to feel that they are a part of the show; and if your audiences are part of you, you are pretty certain of their loyalty.” This interaction benefited from a sense of spontaneity, which in itself was an appealing concept to children. Even when shows lacked a fantasy element and injected emotion into the plot, Tillstrom maintained that “pathos sometimes comes into our programs, but we make it gentle and we see to it that we invariably close on a happy note.”<sup>62</sup>

*The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* published an article in 1952 by May Seagoe called “A Score Sheet for Children’s Television.” In it, Seagoe presented ten criteria for quality children’s programming. The show needed an identifiable leading character, whether puppet or human. A child’s desire for escape and stress release necessitated some level of emotional involvement with the show’s storyline, but that storyline should not last for more than one episode. The main character must always come out on top, to show children that they could handle their problems. Like Tillstrom, Seagoe advocated a simple, straightforward plot. That plot should revolve around adventure, because “romance and subtle psychological situations” did not hold a child’s interest. Fantasy programs were acceptable, as long as they did not stray too far from reality. The story line should “present some thought of social or personal significance.” Dialogue should be kept to a minimum, with action taking precedence in the plot. Seagoe felt that finding the solution to a problem appealed to viewers more than comedic dialogue. The plot should also be direct and executed well, with good production values. Seagoe felt that audience participation, such as laughing at characters’ jokes, or acting out the story after the show aired, was essential for children learning social skills.<sup>63</sup>

Seagoe wrote another article in 1952, for the *Educational Theatre Journal*, called “Issues and Criteria for Children’s Television.” She reiterated some guidelines from her other article, but added plenty

more. She insisted on proper representation of minorities and occupations, and overall good taste in storylines. Most of all, she wanted characters on television to be good role models, encouraging proper social development. For instance, television allowed children to “be with other children, to learn the same new phrases and clichés, and to share the current knowledge and vernacular.” By watching television, children would also learn about their own views of right and wrong. As Seagoe mentioned in her other article, television was a positive outlet for aggression. By interacting with the television instead of acting out, children were able to express themselves in healthy ways. Seagoe believed that it was the job of producers to stay informed on what appealed to children by studying literature, radio, movies, and comic books. Producers also had to think about entertaining adults to some degree; good children’s shows had some elements that adults could enjoy. Contradicting just about every other person to study children’s television, Seagoe claimed that “of the existing offerings, parents like best the show done especially for children, the ‘western,’ and the family type show.” She did not specify any details about these parents, or where she got her information. But she may have meant that parents liked that westerns appealed to both children and adults. Seagoe admitted that it was a parent’s job to view programs with children and discuss the content with them, and that producers should take the opinions of parents and psychologists into account when creating children’s programming.<sup>64</sup>

Ten years after Seagoe’s articles, Ralph Garry published a book called *For the Young Viewer*, which analyzed local programming across the country. He sent out a six-page questionnaire to every television station, and received responses from 252 of them, Philadelphia included. From the feedback, he gleaned the most important aspects of creating a local children’s show. There were five categories that emerged: exploration, doing, storytelling, orientation, and multipurpose. “Exploration” shows transported children out of their living rooms and into new environments, expanding their knowledge of the world. Philadelphia programs like *Pixanne* and *The Candy Apple News Company* were exploratory. “Doing” shows focused on children’s activities, including skill-building and performances, like *Chief Halftown’s Star Performers*. “Storytelling” shows allowed children to explore their feelings through fictional characters, and sometimes integrated art and music. Philadelphia’s Gene London illustrated the stories he told to his child viewers. “Orientation” shows taught children what they should expect from life, and how they were expected to act. Series that advocated proper behavior, like *Romper Room* and *Tottle*, exemplified this approach. “Multipurpose” shows were a mixture of the first four categories. Garry wrote that “when

the parts are assembled imaginatively, the result can be a constructive fusion of many elements of aesthetic value that would ordinarily be too difficult or too costly to produce as complete programs.” Variety shows like *Cartoon Carnival* fit this mold.<sup>65</sup>

Once he established the main types of children’s broadcasts, Garry shared his own advice for producers. He suggested that language mattered; hosts should not talk to a preschooler the way they talked to a nine-year-old, just as nine-year-olds and young teenagers had very different vocabularies. Character names were also important. Funny names were good, as long as the joke did not go over a child’s head. He cautioned against too many close-up camera shots, suggesting instead that a “dollying in” be used to slowly hone in on an object or character. Garry stressed the need for children to orient objects within scenes. Movement should not be too slow, however. Children were constantly moving, and thus enjoyed programs that had sequences of movement. The host’s movements were also important. He should not be too demanding, and make sure that his expressions and other nonverbal communication made him a calming presence. Garry felt that a favorable host character was an unthreatening aunt or uncle figure. Any children in the studio audience should be “real” children, not overly coached. Children at home needed to be able to identify themselves as a realistic member of the viewing audience.<sup>66</sup>

Philadelphia television met the guidelines for children’s television, creating a list of memorable shows on the three major stations from the 1940s to the 1960s. The local commercial programming for children can be divided into three sections: explicitly educational shows, shows that involved a measure of social education, and shows produced purely for entertainment. Some series were produced without instructive goals, but ended up teaching children about the world in unconventional ways. These shows were full of “incidental” information for child viewers. The shows that were only about having fun deserve recognition as well as the educational shows, because they reinforced the idea that Philadelphia created imaginative programming. Some series were so good that they gained the attention of major networks and were broadcast nationally. Each of the shows in these next three sections exemplifies what was special about Philadelphia television. The primary goal was always entertainment, but education was usually integral to the show in one form or another. In order to discuss how the local broadcasts compared to national fare, Philadelphia shows’ national counterparts are included in the discussion.

#### EXPLICITLY EDUCATIONAL SHOWS



*The Howdy Doody Show* was by far the most popular children's show in the early days of television. It ran from December 27, 1947 to September 30, 1960 on NBC, first on weekday afternoons, and later on Saturday mornings. "Buffalo Bob" Smith was the human host who interacted with various puppets, including Howdy, the freckle-faced boy in a kerchief. They all lived in Doodyville, a circus town with a variety of eccentric characters. Phineas T. Bluster was the mayor who served as the show's villain. Captain Scuttlebutt docked his ship in town. Chief Thunderthud and Princess Summerfall Winterspring were Indians from a nearby village. There was another human character, a silent clown named Clarabell, played by Bob Keeshan. (Keeshan would go on to further fame as the host of his own children's show, *Captain Kangaroo*.) *Howdy* used many of the same techniques as other children's programming. There was a child audience called The Peanut Gallery who interacted with the characters. Buffalo Bob sang songs and told stories, and the characters acted out plays or fairy tales.

The loud and energetic nature of the program earned it some criticism.<sup>67</sup> Roger Muir, *Howdy's* producer, defended the show's puppet antics. "The critics used to blast us because it was such a noisy show, but behind everything was a positive attitude. The songs, 'You don't cross the street with your feet, you cross it with your eyes.' 'Be kind to animals.' They weren't educational in a 'Sesame Street' sense, but 'Howdy' was a good show for kids."<sup>68</sup> Buffalo Bob encouraged children to obey their parents. The show even ran a mock election by creating a "Howdy Doody for President" campaign. Though it was mostly a marketing ploy, the approach did allow the show to teach its viewers about the electoral process.<sup>69</sup> *Howdy* was the perfect example of a national show that tried its best to teach children while entertaining them.

*In the Park* was a puppet show created by Paul and Mary Ritts that aired Sunday afternoons on Philadelphia's WCAU from December 1951 to May 1953. Bill Sears was the host who interacted with the puppets on a park bench. Historians draw comparisons with *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, but *In the Park* was much more educational. Sears and his animal friends, puppets like Sir Geoffrey the Giraffe, Albert the Chipmunk, who lived in a treehouse, Calvin the Crow, and Magnolia Ostrich, solved problems while also providing enjoyable storylines. The show was so successful on WCAU that CBS decided to broadcast it nationally, expanding it from fifteen minutes to thirty. Though it only lasted two seasons, it was considered a classic series.<sup>70</sup>

The episodes were morality tales that reinforced proper behavior for children. Calvin had bad habits that "were presented to steer children away from smoking, boasting, and lying." Magnolia was the

voice of reason who used common sense to solve problems. As Jeffery Davis explained in *Children's Television, 1947-1990*, "much of the show's charm stemmed from the way the stories allowed viewers to relate their own experiences to those of the puppet actors." Typical themes included jealousy, friendship, and rivalry. Davis concluded that the show did not preach to children, but instead led by example. He called it "one of the best puppet shows ever produced for television."<sup>71</sup> *In the Park* was one of the first explicitly educational shows produced on a local Philadelphia station, and its move to national broadcasting showed the success of the format.

*Filbert the Flea* was a WFIL Channel 6 show that aired weekday afternoons. It began as the first in-school radio program in Philadelphia. Creator Skipper Dawes developed the character when he was the station's educational director in 1942. *Variety* praised the series for "keeping up with the times."<sup>72</sup> The radio show featured Filbert "engaged in exploits connected with National defense and public service drives" while living on top of a tiger named George. When the show changed format to television in 1953, Filbert fought against enemy spies from his home in a shack at a Philadelphia dump. Dawes narrated the episodes and provided musical accompaniment to still illustrations. *Variety* criticized the show for its lack of sophisticated animation but admitted that "the combination of one character, small and brave, and the other large and gentle is appealing for moppets." The friendship between Filbert and George was based on mutual respect, which was a positive message for child viewers. Though *Variety* did not elaborate on the politically-minded, Cold War-related plotlines, it is safe to assume that they were sufficiently tailored to school-age children. The social awareness, as well as the lesson in loyalty, made Filbert an informative addition to Philadelphia children's television, though it also had the distinction of being based on an expressly educational radio program.<sup>73</sup>

The Lit Brothers department store in Philadelphia sponsored a show on WFIL Channel 6 called *Lit's Have Fun*. The host, Shelley Gross, interacted with Lit's mascot, the "Magic Lady," in the store's auditorium. In December 1951 the show was renamed *Lit's Have Fun at the Zoo*, and began broadcasting from the Philadelphia Zoo on Saturday mornings. A *Variety* review of the show described it as a field trip with two "youngsters who serve as models for children's wear and as a pitch for anything in the juve department in the commercials. The children also visit the animals, to which the camera devotes major attention."<sup>74</sup> Despite *Lit's* materialistic leanings, the show introduced children to the zoo's animals. *Variety*

called the show a “pleasant and educational half-hour” that appealed to children and adults. Though on a different network, this show was incredibly similar to another zoo show, *Meet Me at the Zoo*.<sup>75</sup>

*Lit’s* competitor *Meet Me at the Zoo* began on WCAU in 1953 and CBS picked it up soon after. It aired Saturday afternoons, broadcast from Philadelphia’s Zoological Garden. The announcer Jack Whittacker introduced three visiting children to the zoo’s animal residents. *Variety* praised the content as educational for both adults and children. The episode *Variety* reviewed focused on reptiles. “The lowdown on snakes, turtles and lizards was offered by [zoo employee Roger] Conant, aided visually by film strips and the live handling of some of the subjects discussed.”<sup>76</sup> *Variety* was confident that although the show’s primary aim was teaching, children would certainly enjoy the content.

*Romper Room* was a local Philadelphia show, but it was also on television in other forms across the country, thanks to an innovative concept started by Bert Claster in Baltimore. Claster was one of the first to create franchised television; local stations would lease the content and characters of *Romper Room* for production in their own cities. Due to a lack of preschool programming in Baltimore, Claster produced a show that had a kindergarten setting. He recruited his wife Nancy to run the classroom, and the show aired on WBAL in Baltimore beginning in February 1953. When the concept became popular, one of the local stations in Norfolk, Virginia approached Claster to ask for permission to create its own version. Claster and his wife were protective of their show, so they allowed the station to have a copy of the program, and encouraged other local stations to do the same. They wrote a curriculum and planned to train the on-air teachers. That way, stations could pay them for the format and use their own production budget to air the show. The Clasters retained creative control. They supplied scripts and wrote the lesson plans. The teachers who came to Baltimore for *Romper Room* training were under strict guidelines on their appearance, age, and clothing. The teachers were known as “Miss” along with their own first names. Each episode began with the teacher winding up a jack-in-the-box and reciting, “The jack-in-the-box jumps out of his house, and that means it’s time for *Romper Room School*.” The children then said the Pledge of Allegiance. Before snack time, the students said grace. The ending of each show featured a “Magic Mirror,” an empty frame that the teachers held up in front of the camera. They then said hello to the children viewing the episode, using their names. The names were taken from the fan mail the show received. Another common trait was the blackboard featuring Do Bee, who instructed the students on proper behavior. For example, “Do Bee a Milk Drinker.” There was also Don’t Bee, Do Bee’s negative sibling. He said things like “Don’t Bee a Food

Fussy.” The rest of the episode was filled with poetry, rhymes, simple arithmetic, and examples of proper manners. Seven or eight children attended the “school” during each episode, and viewers followed along with the lessons at home.

Philadelphia was one of the first cities to produce its own incarnation of *Romper Room*, on WFIL in July 1954. Norfolk, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Scranton, Pennsylvania also picked up their own versions, and a few years later the show had been leased by over a hundred stations. By the 1960s the franchise had even gone international, airing in Canada, Australia, and Japan, among other countries. Miss Claire was the teacher at WFIL. She had experience in radio and teaching Sunday School. The show was on for an hour every morning and included cartoons that aired during snack time. The set was a playroom, with toys, small furniture, and play sets. When children drew pictures on the show, viewers at home were encouraged to mail their own creations in to the studio. According to the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia website, Miss Claire had a “light manner.” She felt that if serious subjects were taught “with a bright touch and a man-to-man attitude,” pupils were more willing to learn. They were educated while they thought they were playing. This approach shows *Romper Room*’s genius; it was school, but it was also fun for both the studio students and the children at home.<sup>77</sup>

In a *Life* magazine article from September 1956, the author declared the show “a cut above the average...spry, bright and instructive.”<sup>78</sup> The show was a real preschool; parents enrolled their children for stints on the program, and the cameras caught all kinds of real-life learning experiences, as well as those that could only happen on television. *Life* discussed a teacher in Tulsa who had to discipline her class when they became rowdy during commercial breaks. Some children had to be taught to ignore the cameras; some were afraid of the equipment. *Time* magazine called the show “children’s television at its best” in 1963. “Millions of five-year-olds went off to kindergarten last week, and millions of parents told them not to be afraid, it would be just like Romper Room.”<sup>79</sup>

Another Philadelphia show that catered to preschoolers featured a typical character seen on local stations: a clown. However, Howard Jones, who starred in the *Happy the Clown* show on WFIL Channel 6 from 1956 to 1968, was an educational comic. About a dozen children would fill the studio each weekday to visit Happy at a train station, where the Happyland Express waited on the platform. He taught the children songs and supervised them on the sliding board. Jones also facilitated creative play and puppet shows. He talked about the news and the weather, and introduced cartoons. He was also fond of magic

tricks. There was a religious aspect as well; Happy taught the children hymns. There is no evidence that parents had a problem with the spiritual elements on this or any of the Philadelphia shows.

Sometimes the children would ride in Happy's golf cart, named Chippy. The most popular feature of the show was the use of "marching sticks," six-inch wooden dowels that Happy gave to the studio audience to bang together to keep time to the music while they marched. Station supervisor Lew Klein remembered that children cherished the marching sticks. *Happy* became so popular that children joined a year-long waiting list to be selected for the show's audience.<sup>80</sup> Like *Romper Room*, *Happy* prepared children for a school setting. The morning routine, the songs and stories, and the elements of formal education combined to bring a much greater purpose to a simple clown show. There is no evidence concerning whether Jones set out to create a school setting for the children on his show, but through his commitment to his audience, Jones gave children a way to learn through music and magic.

In *Madison Avenue* magazine from October 1961, an advertisement for WCAU declared that amiable host Gene London had "an enthusiastic following of hundreds of thousands of children."<sup>81</sup> The ad also proclaimed that, like *Happy the Clown*, children had to wait for as long as a year to become guests on his show. Gene London, whose children's program *Cartoon Corners* aired every day on Channel 10 from 1959 to 1977, was a storyteller and artist who encouraged children's creativity. London produced, wrote, and starred on the show. It was set in a general store, and London played a clerk. His boss, Mr. Dibley, was described as grouchy, but never seen. The nearby Quigley Mansion, a painting seen through the window, was haunted, and there was a confetti factory next door. The general store had a Magic Window that the children asked, "Magic Window on the wall, what's the best story of them all?" The Window would show footage of landscapes and London announced that they were entering Storyland. Due to London's increasing popularity, the show's name was changed to *The Gene London Show*.

London used props at the general store to act out stories based on fairy tales. He even put on a production of *The Wizard of Oz* in 1967.<sup>82</sup> The documentary *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts* praised London for his ability to please both children and adults with his storytelling. On the show, he did arts and crafts with the child audience, and used art to make his stories come alive. The show focused on "the values of trusting your imagination and following your dreams."<sup>83</sup> London never talked down to his viewers. The show also included child-friendly news segments, information on healthy habits, guest stars, and guest animals. To add to the storytelling element, London also introduced cartoons. Philadelphia organizations

like the Board of Education, the Zoological Garden, and The Franklin Institute contributed materials to enhance the show's educational content.<sup>84</sup> Inspired by *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, London delighted in frightening his audience. "How I loved being scared out of my wits," London recalled of his own childhood.<sup>85</sup> *Cartoon Corners* showed children the importance of creativity and of sharing the joy of learning. London was always smiling, and it was obvious to any viewer how much he enjoyed his job. The show had an emphasis on art and stories, but also made a point to expose children to current events. This blend of magic and realism created a wonderful atmosphere for children to learn. London's show harkened back to *Mr. I. Magination*, a Sunday afternoon CBS program that dramatized literature. One actor played the lead in every episode. Its airdates are unknown, other than the fact that in 1950, the show was given an award "for the skillful blending of education and entertainment, for a lack of condescension in dramatizing literary classics and original stories for young viewers."<sup>86</sup> Gene London employed this same concept in his storytelling, and his incarnation was much more popular, and lasted longer, than the national predecessor.

*Tottle* featured a family of puppets that historian Tim Hollis called "highly creative."<sup>87</sup> Marshall Izen manufactured and performed the puppets; he also wrote songs for the show and appeared at the opening and closing of each episode. The series aired once a week on WCAU in the early 1960s, which was rare for a Philadelphia program; most children's shows aired daily. However, the producers made good use of the limited time the show was on the air. Hollis described *Tottle* as "more educational than not,"<sup>88</sup> while Ralph Garry, in his 1962 book *For the Young Viewer*, found that the Tottle family's adventures provided children with a "framework for learning how to cope with life's problems in a sound, emotionally healthy way."<sup>89</sup> Mother, Father, Taffy, and Coslo Tottle were a typical family that dealt with everyday issues child viewers may have faced.

Izen catered to his audience – he portrayed their problems without patronizing them. Garry felt that the show realistically exposed children to social situations and helped them decide the best course of action. One episode centered on Coslo's bad behavior in school. He tried to keep it a secret from his parents; he even went so far as to intercept the mail and destroy what he thought was the disciplinary letter. The letter was actually a permission form to join the football team, and Coslo could not try out because he did not have the form signed. By the end of the episode, Coslo had realized his mistake, and he learned that lying was not proper behavior. Another learning device on the show was the use of parallels. The *Tottle* puppets had their own puppets, and Taffy and Coslo acted out stories and feelings with them. In one

episode, Coslo became selfish and wished for more toys. He and his sister acted out the story of King Midas with their puppets, and in doing so Coslo realized that greed was not an attractive emotion. *Tottle* made sure to include life lessons in each episode. A psychologist was even hired to supervise the scripts. This shows *Tottle*'s serious dedication to bringing quality television to Philadelphia children.<sup>90</sup>

*Pixanne* was one of Philadelphia's most popular children's shows of the 1960s. The host, Jane Norman, created the character and played her during the show's run on WCAU Channel 10 and beyond. *Pixanne* was a pixie who lived in the Enchanted Forest with various human and puppet friends. *Pixanne* aired Monday through Friday for fifteen minutes a day; on Saturdays the show was a half hour, when children stopped by the Forest. It was geared towards children from preschool to age nine. Norman wrote original songs for *Pixanne* to sing, and she also played news segments and educational films during the show.<sup>91</sup>

Norman began her career as a kindergarten teacher in Philadelphia. She dreamed of creating her own children's show that would combine her talents for instruction and theater. In 1960, she took it upon herself to tell the Philadelphia stations that she was available for a television show. She approached WFIL, who turned her down because they already had the female personality of Sally Starr. The station across the street, WCAU, was more interested. She auditioned by singing and telling stories, drawing on her teaching experience. The station manager asked her to come up with a character and a concept for a show. Norman idolized Mary Martin, who had played Peter Pan on Broadway, so she decided to draw inspiration from that performance. Norman created a mix of a Tinkerbell-like pixie and Peter Pan, and *Pixanne* was born.

Like Pan, her character also wore a short green costume with a feathered cap...and flew through the air. That presented a challenge to the station, so Norman hired Peter Foy, Mary Martin's flying coach. Norman recalled how Foy put her in a harness, and for eight hours one day in the studio, she perfected her flying. She insisted on using only one wire: having more than one would spoil the illusion of flight. It was a difficult balancing act to keep from spinning in place. But Norman mastered the technique, and the studio shot all of the necessary flying sequences while she was still on the wire. That footage served as the opening and closing to the show for its entire run. By the end of the day, Norman was covered in bruises, but she felt the experience had been well worth it; she was determined to look realistic while flying.<sup>92</sup> Norman wanted children to be immersed in her fantasy world.

Norman created several characters for the show besides Pixanne. Each had educational value. One was Windy Witch, who used her magic for the good of the forest. In one episode, she decided to give up her witchcraft because witches had a bad reputation. Norman wanted to show a character using magic powers not to scare her neighbors in the Forest, but to benefit them. There were puppet characters as well, named Oggie Owl and Fliffy Butterfly. Norman wanted to bring a sense of “reading readiness” to the show, so she would read stories with her puppet friends. There was also a French-speaking character named Suzie Witch. Norman felt that children should have exposure to a foreign language. According to her website, *Pixanne* was the first local children’s show to shoot on location. She traveled to the World’s Fair in Montreal, brought cameras on a Coast Guard boat, took rides on roller coasters, and even swam with dolphins. She also filmed segments at various zoos, orchards, and museums.<sup>93</sup> Norman felt it was important to expose children to the outside world. “She presented concepts and values in a way that youngsters could understand and appreciate.”<sup>94</sup>

WCAU canceled *Pixanne* in 1969 to make time for a morning talk show, and Norman and her husband brought the show to New York City’s WNEW-TV. They were hired, and as the *Pixanne* website boasted, the show “out rated all of its competition, this time in the Number 1 market!”<sup>95</sup> About a year after producing the show in New York, Norman purchased the show’s rights herself in 1970 and syndicated it nationally. She relished the idea of bringing Pixanne to a national audience, and the show’s returns proved that it was a good move. Pixanne consistently out-rated all other shows in its afternoon time slot. All in all, it ran for seventeen years.

Pixanne truly was a one-woman show when it was on the air in Philadelphia. The show was her creation; she wrote and produced each episode, played every character (besides the puppets), and performed ten stories and songs a week. Naturally, when WNEW picked up the show, the production budget grew.<sup>96</sup> However, Norman never lost her commitment to education. Her characters stressed the importance of reading, kindness, and being knowledgeable about the world. She reflected, “Those of us who are on television can never ever take for granted our wonderful audiences and fans.”<sup>97</sup>

The first black host appeared on Philadelphia television in the 1960s, when Matt Robinson became the star of *Candy Apple News Company*, a show set in a newsroom with a mixture of human and puppet characters. Robinson was the editor-in-chief, and his “TV newsmagazine” aired on WCAU Channel 10. Robinson, who would go on to national fame as Gordon on *Sesame Street*, interacted with his assistant, a



woman named C.B., and other employees: puppets like Boris Bat, Morgan Mole, Alistair Cuckoo, and Sharks O'Sullivan. There was also a talking radio that made announcements to the newsroom, and a segment that involved Robinson dressing up as Rick, a Canadian Mountie. The show had a specific purpose: to show children that they could make a difference in the world. The characters in the newsroom related news stories involving children, and they highlighted viewers who were working to better their communities. The show also encouraged literacy. Boris Bat was in charge of book reviews, recommending different children's books each week in his segment "Boris Bat and Better Books."<sup>98</sup>

In August 1967, WFIL hired former Lutheran minister Carter Merbreier and his wife Patricia to host a children's show called *Captain Noah and His Magical Ark*. Set on a ship, this show was similar to its contemporary *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, which featured another older gentleman imparting his wisdom to viewers. *Captain Noah* started out as a weekly show, but began airing daily in 1970. In 1981, it went back to a weekly format, and finally ended in December 1994. The theme song was called "I Can Sing a Rainbow," which taught children their colors. Captain Noah's main goal was always education. Merbreier was told by one mother that he was the grandfather her children never had. "That made me feel wonderful," he recalled. "We've never put on a show that would not be a positive influence for the children."<sup>99</sup>

Features on *Captain Noah* included a word of the day, American folklore and history, and life lessons. Sports stars stopped by to impart wisdom; Charles Barkley was a favorite guest in the 1990s. Captain Noah was also a Phillies fan, and the Philly Phanatic appeared on the show. Other segments encouraged viewer creativity. Children sent in their artwork, and the Merbreiers showed the pictures onscreen to a tune with the lyrics, "Send your pictures to dear old Captain Noah." It was a morning show that children could watch and be guaranteed a wholesome, educational experience. The Philadelphia Council of Churches produced the show, but it was nationally syndicated to twenty-two other stations.<sup>100</sup> Series like *Captain Noah* and the others in this section made conscious efforts to provide positive learning environments for children, but some shows achieved the same goal in less explicit, and sometimes unintentional, ways.

#### SHOWS WITH SOCIAL EDUCATION

Bob Keeshan played Clarabell on *Howdy Doody* before appearing on his own children's show, the classic *Captain Kangaroo*. It began in 1955 on CBS, and featured Keeshan as a "grandfatherly" captain whose coat had enormous pockets, which inspired the second half of his name. Aimed at preschoolers, the

show had a calm and gentle atmosphere. The captain would read aloud, visit the fellow residents of his Treasure House, and interview guests like comedian Bill Cosby. Keeshan encouraged children to be polite and respectful, and to play fair. Parents and programmers adored it, and Keeshan won numerous awards for his integration of life lessons into the entertainment of the program. With twenty-nine years on the air, it became the longest-running children's show on network television, a record that WFIL's Chief Halftown broke when local stations are taken into account. Keeshan's goal for the show was simple: "To make the child viewer feel good about him- or herself. Children can withstand all kinds of deprivation, all kinds of maltreatment, if they just know they are loved by someone who cares."<sup>101</sup> This attitude was echoed by the majority of Philadelphia children's hosts, in actions if not in words.<sup>102</sup> Keeshan exemplified the idea of social education. He wasn't teaching children to read or count or sing songs. Simply by setting a good example, he showed his viewers how to be kind, and helped them become compassionate members of society.

*Willie the Worm* aired on WCAU Channel 10 beginning in 1950, under the name *Junior Hi-Jinx*. Willie was a talking worm made from a rubber hose, wearing sunglasses and a hat. He and other puppet characters acted out stories and introduced cartoons. There was also an unseen character named Newton the Mouse who turned on the projector to show the cartoons. Timothy Turtle was another friend. He had a high-pitched voice and bobbed his head back and forth. The human host and creator, Warren Wright, had to translate what he said to the audience. The show aired for a half hour every day, until it was shortened and made into a segment on Gene Crane's morning talk show. It was still around in 1957, under the title "Storybook Land." Willie starred as the characters in the stories presented on the show.

In December 1951, the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* declared *Junior Hi-Jinx* the "Best Local Children's Show."<sup>103</sup> There is no evidence to describe exactly what made the program so special, but it seemed to have an emphasis on the importance of talking nicely to friends, and helping others. Willie and his costars were always polite to each other, and the young children for whom the show was created could learn from their example. On Philadelphia television, even rubber hoses were good role models.

Philadelphia children's television was full of white hosts and personalities before Matt Robinson of *Candy Apple News Company* came along. Chief Halftown was the notable exception in the 1950s. His shows remained on Philadelphia station WFIL Channel 6 for almost fifty years, a feat made more exciting by the fact that he was a full-blooded Seneca Indian.<sup>104</sup> "His native pride and sense of spirituality prevailed

and these were the very attributes that endeared him” to Philadelphia children, according to TVparty, a website dedicated to local children’s show hosts.<sup>105</sup>

Traynor Halftown started at WFIL in 1950 on a show called *TV Teepee*. The network needed a noontime host for the children who came home from school for lunch. This show included puppets named Gillagaloo Bird and Cedric the Bear, and had a live audience of children. It was mostly a showcase for cartoons. The job was supposed to last six weeks, but the response to Halftown was so positive that he stayed on. One of the sponsors was Bosco chocolate syrup, and Halftown made sure to drink chocolate milk on the show. After a few years, WFIL decided to start airing soap operas at noon, so Chief Halftown moved to Saturday mornings, where he hosted a talent show featuring local children called *Chief Halftown’s Star Performers*. Between acts Halftown roasted Armour hot dogs to appease the sponsor. He would also discuss Native American history and mythology; there were rumors that his grandfather had been a medicine man. This Saturday show lasted until 1999, making it the longest-running children’s show, and one of the longest-running television shows, in history.<sup>106</sup>

Children had been exposed to the Hollywood version of Native Americans, which portrayed them as savages, but when Chief Halftown came along, he changed the way children (and adults) perceived his people. He was a gentle, soft-spoken man whose serene wisdom charmed Philadelphia children. He dressed in a traditional feathered headdress, buckskin, and beads. He displayed artifacts from Native American history on his shows. He told folklore, explained tribal customs, and taught children chants and sign language, as well as arts and crafts.

*Variety* called *Chief Halftown’s Star Performers* “the happy hunting grounds for new acts.” This show featured viewer participation; children were told to write to the studio to vote for their favorite performers. The prize was a twenty-five dollar savings bond. *Variety* pointed out Halftown’s attention to Native American culture. The episode reviewed by the magazine featured a lesson about using a bow and arrow. The article praised Halftown for his “warm, pleasant personality with no whooping it up.”<sup>107</sup> The article also mentions *TV Teepee* airing at five o’clock, so Halftown was presumably splitting his time between the two shows as of 1952, when it was published.

Though his primary function was as host, whether of cartoons or local talent, Halftown chose to fill his screen time battling stereotypes and exposing children to Indian culture. His catchphrase, “Ees da sa sussaway” was what he said before starting each cartoon. It supposedly meant “let’s get started” in Seneca.

<sup>108</sup> “I had no idea what it would come to, but I vowed that I would be myself,” Halftown told the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia website. “I wouldn’t talk like a Hollywood Indian...I made it clear that I was an Indian and no one was to tell me how to be an Indian. I was always disturbed that in the movies, you never saw an Indian laugh...I was not going to be a dull Indian.”<sup>109</sup>

Another long-running show was *American Bandstand*, which was “the first network series devoted exclusively to rock-and-roll music.”<sup>110</sup> *Bandstand* began as a local Philadelphia show with a complicated history. In 1949, the WFIL station managers realized that it would be cheap and easy to use short music segments to fill airtime between shows. These precursors to music videos featured stars like Tennessee Ernie Ford, Burl Ives, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Nat King Cole. WFIL Vice President Roger Clipp purchased these segments to save money when the price of B movies went up. Instead of interspersing them between shows, Clipp created a series featuring them called *Parade of Stars*. This afternoon show began in March 1951 and was hosted by two local disc jockeys. Bob Horn, a WFIL radio personality, took over in summer 1952. At this time the station allowed local teenagers to hang out at the studio and listen to the music. It became a popular broadcast among teens, who crowded the station for a chance to hear (and dance to) new music. These informal dance sessions were not typically aired on the program, but when the idea for *Bandstand* was developed, the director, Lee Davis, felt it would be a nice touch to include the dancers and use less of the filmed segments. Bob Horn stayed on as host, and *Parade of Stars* evolved into one of the most famous and longest-running shows in the history of television.<sup>111</sup>

*American Bandstand* ran nationally from August 5, 1957 to October 7, 1989. Before that, it was known only as *Bandstand*, originating in Philadelphia in 1952. To differentiate it from *Parade of Stars*, Bob Horn hosted from a set dressed as a record shop. It featured film clips of musical acts as well as a live audience of dancing teenagers rocking around the clock to the latest tunes. It became the highest-rated show on Philadelphia afternoon television. In July 1956, twenty-six-year-old Dick Clark took over hosting duties. He had been the announcer on another WFIL music and talent show, *Paul Whiteman’s TV Teen Club*, which aired from 1949 to 1954. The teen audience danced along to the musical acts on that show, though the cameraman was mainly concerned with the on-stage talent.<sup>112</sup>

Sixty-seven ABC affiliates across the country picked up *Bandstand* in 1957, whether for its full ninety minutes, an hour, or a half-hour. It was still broadcast from WFIL studios until 1963, when production moved to California. Within a month on the air, it became the number one daytime show in the

country.<sup>113</sup> The national set remained simple, though almost two hundred dancers were in attendance each day. There were bleachers, a podium for the host, an autograph table (for guest singers like Frankie Avalon and Chubby Checker, who introduced his new song “The Twist” on the show, turning it into a major dance craze), and a signboard showing the top ten hits for the week. The show was popular with children and adults. It was briefly mixed up in the payola scandal of 1959 when Dick Clark was accused of accepting bribes to play songs on the air. He vehemently denied it, and the show continued uninterrupted.<sup>114</sup> Ed McMahon fondly remembered the popularity of *Bandstand*. He called it a phenomenon. Teenagers were crazy about it, and it made stars out of its guest performers. It was an early incarnation of must-see TV.

*Bandstand* was all about teenagers having a good time – seeking educational value in a program about rock and roll seems pointless. However, what *Bandstand* did offer was a lesson in tolerance. Though Philadelphia had been informally segregated during the early years of the show, *Bandstand* showed blacks and whites dancing together on live television. Dick Clark recalled that few black children came to the studio, but those who did were given equal dancing opportunity. “I can remember the very first time I talked to a black teenager on national television. It was on the rate-a-record portion of *Bandstand* in which kids listened to a record and gave it a rating. I talked to the black kid, the show ended, and for the first time in a hundred years, I got sweaty palms...I didn’t know what the reaction would be.” When days passed without a single protest or phone call, Clark saw fit to include more black dancers. Soon teenagers of every ethnicity were welcomed on the show. Clark modestly recalled that “we didn’t do it because we were do-gooders. It was just a thing we ought to do, and it worked. And if the whole world could have done it that way, wouldn’t it have been great? That was probably the show’s greatest contribution, bringing blacks and whites together in a social atmosphere.”<sup>115</sup> This enlightened attitude displays *Bandstand*’s value as a show for children. It didn’t preach; it taught by example.

Another positive element to the show was Dick Clark’s paternal sensibilities. Though just out of his teen years himself, Clark was mindful of the songs he played. When fellow Philadelphia children’s show host John Zacherle released a record called “Dinner with Drac,” Clark felt it was too gory for *Bandstand*. Zacherle recorded a more family-friendly version, and Clark aired it. When fans wanted to buy the song they had heard on the show, the recording studio had to re-issue “Dinner with Drac” with the less offensive lyrics.<sup>116</sup> Clark’s influence over his audience was that strong. Luckily, he was a positive role model for his dancing teens.

Clark was aware of his impact on viewers. In a *Philadelphia Inquirer* interview on the eve of *Bandstand*'s national debut, Clark described Philadelphia as the perfect place from which to bring the country new tunes, because "it sets the music trend for an awful lot of the country." He claimed that The Crickets' "That'll Be the Day" started playing in Philadelphia three weeks before the rest of the country discovered it. *Bandstand* was the place to be if teens wanted the inside scoop on new music. Clark's attitude was definitely a contributing factor to the mood of the program and the behavior of his dancers. He proudly recounted that although some teen girls couldn't help screaming (and sometimes crying) over famous guests like Pat Boone, they didn't "go in for tearing buttons and clothes off people."<sup>117</sup> *Bandstand* was a respectable Philadelphia program that, although enjoyed by teenagers and older children, taught its viewers about tolerance and proper behavior.

Pete Boyle, known as "Uncle Pete" to Philadelphia children, hosted several shows simultaneously on WPTZ throughout the 1950s. He began his career on the western *Frontier Playhouse* as Chuckwagon Pete, a character who eventually got his own program. Boyle was a cartoonist who introduced short films like *Our Gang* and *Laurel and Hardy*, as well as silent films, which he narrated. Between the movies, Boyle would show children how to draw. On some shows, he even ate lunch during the broadcast. Though he was in his fifties, he talked to children in a direct manner; he never patronized them. He had a sidekick named Snooper the Squirrel, a puppet created by his friend Lee Dexter, and interacted with Little Johnny, the mailman. *Pete's Gang* featured a show-and-tell portion, where child guests presented their hobbies and collections.<sup>118</sup>

*Variety* reviewed *Lunch with Uncle Pete* in 1953, claiming that the show "won't get kudos from Mama," though the reviewer failed to give a legitimate reason why not. "Although Pete Boyle exhorts his nieces and nephews 'to eat up like Uncle Pete' (a man of considerable girth), segment is either aimed at two television homes, or gives sprouts another reason for not eating." The article implied that the show would not be enjoyable for adults, but since it was very clearly aimed at children, the review was unfairly critical. "Two films, heart-to-heart talks with the youngsters, cartoon drawings, birthday greetings, etc. have session jampacked." The reviewer seemed to feel that the show was a distraction for children who were home on their lunch hour and were expected to eat, but this is contradicted later in the article: "Advice is given throughout...clean plate, finish milk...watch traffic and say prayers." The article did point out the personal level on which Boyle interacted with his audience as a positive.<sup>119</sup>

Another *Variety* review, for *C'Mon to Uncle Pete's*, described that on the Saturday morning show, Boyle told stories "of the whimsical and pointless kind generally believed to have moppet appeal." He drew cartoons on this program as well, to introduce the animated films. "Films appear to give the narrator a bigger charge than the kids, and Boyle's laugh comes through trifle too hearty." The article also stated that Boyle's expressions, like "hard as a producer's heart," were too mature for his young audience to understand.<sup>120</sup> This may have been a valid criticism, but in the documentary *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*, it was portrayed as a positive that Boyle never talked down to his viewers. He seemed to be simply a kindly older man who liked to draw, and enjoyed entertaining children with his stories.

It was not just *Variety* that criticized Boyle, however. The Philadelphia Home and School Council's Television Evaluation Report from July 1955 showed that "Boyle is an idol of the young fry. The parents plead, however, that he say something to remove the temptation from youngsters to follow the examples of the children in 'Little Rascals' when they show disrespect to adults," and other mischief; "our children can think up enough trouble to get into."<sup>121</sup> A children's host who seemed on the surface to be a genial and gentle presence certainly created a lot of controversy. Though none of these criticisms were *too* harsh, it is important to note that even non-violent shows were judged by parents and educators. Overall, though, Boyle seemed to at least attempt to be a positive role model.

In 1955, a woman named Sally Starr was hired to host a cartoon show. But she became so much more than just the friendly blonde cowgirl who introduced *Popeye* and *Clutch Cargo* cartoons. More than any other personality from Philadelphia television, Sally Starr appealed to children and became an icon in the Delaware Valley. She began her career as one of the first female disc jockeys on Philadelphia radio in the 1940s. She had been married to another children's television host, Jesse Rogers; the marriage ended before she left radio. Starr was born Sally Beller but adopted her mother's maiden name for work. She was also known as "Aunt Sal" or "Your Gal Sal." All of her shows were ad-libbed and aired live each day. She began the episodes with the sentiment, "I hope you feel as good as you look 'cause you sure look good to your gal Sal." There was a viewer mail segment, delivered by an off-screen Pony Express rider, whose presence was signaled by hoof beats, and a crew member threw Starr the mail sack. She also had a horse named Pal who sometimes appeared with her. Whenever a blooper occurred on the live broadcast, Starr cried, "I made a boo-boo!" while pulling on her cowboy hat. She ended each broadcast by saying, "May the

Good Lord be blessing you and your family, bye for now!” Yet another catchphrase was “Love, luck, and lollipops,” which she said while blowing a kiss to the audience.<sup>122</sup>

Her show went through several incarnations, but she was primarily known as the host of *Popeye Theater* from 1957 to 1971 on WFIL Channel 6. The *Popeye* cartoons had been created for the movies, but their producers quickly realized the show would be lucrative for television. Some local stations showed them individually or compiled them to fill out a half hour of programming, while others used them as part of a show with a host.<sup>123</sup> WFIL chose to have a cowgirl introduce the adventures of a sailor, but no one seemed to find that odd. The art department even created a cardboard cutout of Popeye that Starr stood behind to give voice to the character. Though the *Popeye* cartoons were pure fantasy, Starr injected life lessons into the broadcasts. “I didn’t mind seeing [the cartoons] over and over. I enjoyed them,” she told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1979. “The camera would catch me laughing my head off! I’d keep making comments...saying Bluto wasn’t going to get Olive or beat Popeye because he did bad things.”<sup>124</sup> Starr’s moral compass guided the show through engagements with *The Little Rascals*, *Clutch Cargo*, and *The Three Stooges*. Starr even appeared in a *Three Stooges* movie, *The Outlaws is Coming*. Historian Tim Hollis noted that the Stooges actually visited her show as well, due to Philadelphia’s prominence in the television market. Other famous visitors, like Roy Rogers, Jerry Lewis, Jimmy Durante, and Gene Autry, all stopped by during broadcasts. Starr remembered *Clutch Cargo* as a strange cartoon; it was animated, except for the characters’ lips. Live-action footage of the actors’ mouths speaking the dialogue was inserted into the animation.<sup>125</sup> Starr’s show may have focused primarily on cartoons, but her warmth and morality set a wonderful example for Philadelphia children. They thought of Sally Starr as a second mother. In a way, she filled that role, teaching children the importance of loving each other, and spreading her cheer and kindness.

Philadelphia stations, like most other local broadcasters, worked well with puppets. *Bertie the Bunyip* was one such puppet show. It was similar to another local program, Chicago’s *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, which was a locally produced show beginning in 1947 that both children and adults enjoyed. Kukla was a boy puppet, and Oliver J. Dragon was a dragon puppet with one tooth. Fran Allison was the human host who stood in front of the puppet stage and interacted with them. There was no script; Fran would improvise conversations with the puppets based on a loose outline. According to Ed McMahon, “what made the show popular was that the characters were very well developed, with families and histories and...



very human qualities that made them particularly lovable.”<sup>126</sup> NBC picked up the show in 1949 and broadcast it on weekday evenings. Within a year it had six million viewers per show. Historian James Von Schilling called it “a charming fantasy world that was childlike yet adult, gentle yet satirical.”<sup>127</sup> The series ended in 1957.<sup>128</sup> Though very similar in content and approach to *Kukla*, Philadelphia’s *Bertie the Bunyip* was geared toward enhancing children’s awareness of their world and broadening their horizons.

Lee Dexter, a master puppeteer who worked with Pete Boyle, created *Bertie the Bunyip* for WPTZ Channel 3 in the mid 1950s. It starred a host of animal characters. A bunyip was a fictional creature inspired by aboriginal folklore from Dexter’s native Australia. According to Dexter, Bertie had the ears of a kangaroo, the bill of a platypus, and the nose of a koala. He also resembled a rabbit to some, a puppy to others. More characters included Sir Guy DeGuy, a conniving fox, Humphrey the White Rabbit, Nixie the Pixie, the twins Fussy and Gussy, and the Hawaiian Kit-Kats. The show aired on Channel 3 until 1965, when it moved to Philadelphia’s new (UHF) station WPHL Channel 17. It was cancelled a year after that because it became too expensive to produce.<sup>129</sup>

Dexter may have been a children’s show host, but he had quite a temper. One of the show’s writers, Marge Greene, remembered that “Lee was a wild man. He worked with his wife...she would miss cues and he’d beat the hell out of her backstage. He would scream at her, and she would throw the puppet at him. He would yell at her again, and she would hit him over the head. Once a shoe came...toward the camera.”<sup>130</sup> Though his personal life was less than tranquil, he managed to provide Philadelphia children with entertaining and wholesome television. The puppet action was interspersed with cartoons to create half hour programs during the week, with hour-long episodes on weekend mornings. The live-action revolved around the puppets, but occasionally the show presented behind-the-scenes segments that showed how puppets were created.<sup>131</sup> While the show did not have any documented educational purposes, its behind-the-scenes secrets taught children about show business. It broadened their horizons and fostered creativity.

*Breakfast Time* was a morning show hosted by six-foot-six Bill “Wee Willie” Webber. The series began in 1957 after WFIL decided they needed a child-friendly host for their daily news program. *Time* featured Webber and his sidekick Elmo Wiffleweather announcing the news, weather, and sports, as well as introducing cartoons. The show appealed to every family member as each was getting ready for work or school. *Time* was one of the first local programs recorded on videotape. Due to this shift away from live production, Webber could no longer announce the weather; he had Elmo read him community bulletins

instead.<sup>132</sup> Webber also hosted a show on WPHL Channel 17. *Wee Willie Webber's Colorful Cartoon Club* aired weekday afternoons. Webber played “a friendly neighbor who’s always the life of the party.”<sup>133</sup> The shows were not necessarily geared toward educating children, especially because *Breakfast Time* was really a family news program. Children could learn a little about their world if they listened to the news segments, however. Whatever children gained from *Time*, both shows were indicative of Philadelphia’s pioneering spirit. Webber was at the forefront of new technology that enhanced television viewing and helped to socialize child viewers.

The first non-local network show to air every weekday was Walt Disney’s *Mickey Mouse Club* on ABC. It aired from 1955 to 1959 and became immensely popular, especially among children who were becoming too old for *Howdy Doody*. Since the *Club* aired weekday afternoons, NBC moved *Howdy* to Saturday mornings to prevent competition. *Mickey Mouse Club* had a variety show format, including cartoons, comedy, musical performances, and even adventure serials. The child stars were called Mouseketeers, and this group participated in daily themes, like “Fun with Music,” “Anything-Can-Happen Day,” and “Talent Round-Up.” The show was not necessarily educational, but it did advocate polite behavior and fostered a love of music.<sup>134</sup> Though the show made only a small contribution to social education, it was beneficial to children, just like the Philadelphia programs in this section. There were also local shows whose value was only in their ability to entertain, but these, too, were important because they displayed Philadelphia’s sense of innovation and creativity.

#### SHOWS FOR ENTERTAINMENT

*The Children's Hour* was not only WCAU’s first children’s program, it was also the first documented children’s program on a Philadelphia station. It started on WCAU radio in 1927, and host Stan Lee Broza stayed with the program when it transferred to television in March 1948 on the station’s first day of broadcasting. It was then simulcast on both television and radio. Broza introduced musical acts like Rosemary Clooney, Eddie Fisher, Ann Sheridan, and Frankie Avalon. There were themed shows depending on the holiday; patriotic songs were sung on Armistice Day, dance-related songs were performed at the “Thanksgiving Prom.” There was also a core group of participant children who performed plays, commemorated historical events like Benjamin Franklin’s birthday, and went on field trips. Broza’s show was the inspiration for an NBC show called *The Horn & Hardart Children's Hour*, which became popular in New York. Philadelphia was ahead of the pack in other ways as well. Harold Barber reminisced on the

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia website that his group The Crescents appeared on the show in 1955. Barber and his four singing partners were black. "I mention this color issue," Barber wrote, "because in 1955 not too many African-American young men appeared on television." The show was canceled in July 1958 when it went on summer hiatus and CBS, the network that owned WCAU at the time, decided not to bring it back on the air.<sup>135</sup> The program's activities surely had a positive influence on child viewers, but there is not enough evidence to determine whether the show contributed to social education besides being entertaining.

Philadelphia's ability to broadcast shows for the networks using their facilities was never more useful than with *The Big Top*, a circus show that began in Camden, New Jersey, and soon moved across the river to the Armory in Philadelphia when the production needed more space. The show aired from 1950 to 1957 on CBS (WCAU Channel 10). Every Saturday, New York disc jockey Jack Sterling traveled to Philadelphia to play the ringmaster during the live broadcast. Ed McMahon and WCAU employee Bill Hart played clowns. McMahon opened every broadcast because he had the title written on his bald clown head, and the strongman, Dan Lurie, closed each episode with the credits written on his muscles. The show was pure fun; there was an actual circus in production every week. The fact that it was on television allowed viewers to see a circus like they never had before, thanks to close-up shots from the camera. There were animal acts, acrobats, jugglers, daredevils, and sideshow acts. The band was called The Brass Kings, and the Sealtest Smoothies, named for the sponsor, was the singing group. McMahon and his partner Chris Keegan did mime and comedy bits. "Whatever I did wrong, he suffered," McMahon remembered. "If I picked up a ladder, he was going to get hit. If the bit involved water, he was going to get wet. If I picked up a heavy weight, he was going to get hit on the head. It was all very satisfying for me."<sup>136</sup> This type of mild violence did not draw attention from critics, although *Big Top* attracted children of all ages, especially six- to eight-year-olds. It seems that the nature of the show meant that nothing was to be taken too seriously.<sup>137</sup>

Clowns popped up on other Philadelphia entertainment shows as well. Shorty was an ironic name for the character played by six-foot-four Bill Hart. *Shorty the Clown* aired in 1958 on WCAU and was set in a house in the woods. Shorty would constantly bump his head in doorways and against lights because of his height. He introduced *Crusader Rabbit* cartoons.<sup>138</sup> Lorenzo was another clown character that children watched on Philadelphia television. Gerald Wheeler played the title character, and his show, *Lorenzo the Tramp*, was famous for "The Lorenzo Stomp," a dance Wheeler created. At the beginning of every episode,

Wheeler introduced himself, explained the plan for that day's show, and then applied his clown makeup in front of the camera. He also dressed as a cowboy. He liked to narrate the process of transforming into various characters, which gave children an insight into show business. He also introduced *Our Gang* episodes and Marvel superhero cartoons. *Lorenzo* originally aired in Baltimore before moving to the Philadelphia market.<sup>139</sup>

Rex Trailer was a western performer who began his career in 1948 on the DuMont station's *The Oky Doky Ranch*. He came to Philadelphia in 1950 and appeared on several WPTZ programs, including *Rex Trailer's Ranch House*, *Ridin' the Trail*, and *The Rex Trailer Show*. These Saturday morning and weekday afternoon shows featured western movies and an audience of children with whom Trailer sang songs, danced, and played games. In 1955, Trailer moved to Boston to appear on one of that city's local westerns, *Boomtown*.<sup>140</sup>

*Captain Video* was a live DuMont show from 1949. It was television's first science fiction show and a hit among young boys. It was basically a western set in space, and the Captain even beamed old western movies up to his spaceship. The production values were low, and the props were borrowed from Wanamaker's department store, since *Video* was filmed in the studio directly above it. If the scene needed a specific object, a crew member could go downstairs and get it while the show was still on the air. Ed McMahon maintained that it was one of the first children's shows to be criticized for its violent content, but, he teased, "If you can't use excessive violence to save the earth, when could you use it?"<sup>141</sup>

*Frontier Playhouse*, a western that aired on WPTZ, was the highest-rated local television program in the country in 1949. The series was actually made up of Hollywood westerns from the 1930s that WPTZ acquired. The movies appealed to adults just as much as they did to children, and they created stars on the national level. William Boyd had been working in Hollywood films as Hopalong Cassidy, which became a successful series on the East Coast and the Midwest in 1949. *The Long Ranger* began in radio, but also moved to television in 1949. According to historian James Von Schilling, "the typical western was a simple morality tale with a violent but positive ending. The Western's 'good guy' rose up...to defend the weak and powerless neighbors from the threat of domination by outlaws...in the end the 'bad guys' were vanquished, and the 'good guy' was the hero who restored peace to the land."<sup>142</sup> Though westerns were criticized for their extreme violence, their optimistic messages, and the fact that most children watched with their parents, shows that even shoot 'em ups had positive qualities.

*Action in the Afternoon* was one of the most popular westerns. The show premiered in February 1953 on WCAU Channel 10, but was soon picked up by CBS when station vice president Charles Vanda sold the idea to the network. Vanda named the show's fictional town of Huberle, Montana, after CBS's vice president Hubbell Robinson, Jr. and program director Harry Ommerle. The show, which was set in 1890, was shot every weekday afternoon outside at WCAU's studio back lot in Philadelphia. It had the distinction of being television's only live western. In a *Newsweek* article discussing *Action*'s premiere, the magazine described the set as "smack[ing] as much of the Old West as any permanent movie set. Some 170 feet long, Huberle contains all the necessary establishments" such as a bar, a jail, a general store, and a bank. It was aimed at adults, but according to Ed Cunningham, children "were around to see it."<sup>143</sup>

Shooting a live western presented the producers with challenges that have become legendary in the television business. Ed McMahon remembered hearing about the issues with traffic: cars on the highway were sometimes visible, and were honking their horns, in the background of shots, and planes would occasionally fly overhead. Microphones had to be hidden in tree stumps and rocks. The horses were rented from a riding academy, so they were not professional stunt horses. McMahon recalled one day that this was a problem during the live broadcast. "There was this terrible crunching sound that drowned out all the actors. The technicians couldn't figure out what was causing it—until they saw a horse eating one of the mikes. The horses just wouldn't take direction."<sup>144</sup>

John Zacherle, who played the town mortician, and would later gain fame as Roland on local show *Shock Theater*, recalled that "sometimes a mike would go out and you would have to run and die in another place. They would tell you, 'Don't die here! Die over there!'" One particularly dangerous mishap occurred while filming a hanging scene. The horse that was holding up the criminal ran off, leaving the actor hanging by the noose, almost strangling him. The cameraman cut away to another shot and the crew was able to save him. The show only lasted for a year; it was canceled in 1954. But its spirit of risk-taking for the sake of good television inspired Philadelphia television programmers to continue their pattern of excellence.<sup>145</sup>

*Action* was hailed as "the most interesting program experiment" on television by Rudy Bretz, a manager at CBS.<sup>146</sup> He may have been biased given his place of work, but it is clear that Philadelphia's programs were known as experimental in a positive way. WCAU and the other main stations took risks, and they paid off in the form of national exposure. *Action* did not have any educational value, and violence was

deemed by the show's crew to be the "prime ingredient...It was an aptly titled show."<sup>147</sup> In fact, it did not seem to have any redeeming qualities in terms of what children should watch on television. But it only lasted for one year, and there were many other shows for children being produced by Philadelphia television that were both entertaining and meaningful. *Action's* main legacy was its place as the first live western shot completely outdoors. It showed that Philadelphia programming was at the forefront of television innovation in the early years of the medium.

Gene Crane was a staple of WCAU's lineup. He hosted a western-themed show called *Grand Chance Roundup* in 1949, and a variety of talk shows throughout the 1950s. His most popular show was *Candy Carnival*, a children's variety show featuring clowns that began in 1952. The show was named for its sponsor, M&M's.<sup>148</sup> It aired for a half hour on Sunday afternoons. *Variety*, in its review of the show's first episode, called it a "moppet amateur contest against a carnival background." There were sideshows, a center ring, and a studio audience of local children. Contestants under the age of eighteen displayed their talents, competing for savings bonds. Each week's winners returned to the show for a tri-monthly competition where they competed for the grand prize of a week's admission to Steel Pier in Atlantic City. *Variety* predicted that the show would "attract and hold a sizable small-fry audience," due to its carnival themed games for the on-air children. Some favorites were the dunk tank and the high striker, in which children tested their strength by striking a weight that traveled up a tower and rang a bell if it reached the top. M&M's were handed out as prizes. *Variety* noted that "shots of the studio audience contentedly munching the sponsor's product didn't hurt the cause any."<sup>149</sup> After a year, M&M's dropped its sponsorship, so the show was renamed *Contest Carnival*. This version aired until 1955.<sup>150</sup>

Joe Earley played a friendly character named Mr. Rivets on WPTZ from 1952 to 1956. He appeared on several different shows, most notably *Let Skinner Do It*, a morning show hosted by George Skinner that ran from 1951 to 1954, when Skinner moved to New York. Alan Scott took over for Skinner in the spring of 1954 and the show was renamed *Let Scott Do It*. Skinner had also hosted *Skinner's Spotlight*, which became *Scott's Spotlight*. Skinner had wanted to bring Joe Earley with him to New York, but WPTZ wanted to keep the popular character, since the station held the rights to him. So Earley became Scott's sidekick. Incidentally, Skinner found a loophole in the paperwork and created a similar character, Mr. Watts, for his New York show.

Mr. Rivets was described by the Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia website as having “the personality of a five-year-old.” Though none of the Skinner or Scott shows were aimed specifically at children, the variety show format appealed to all ages. The producers knew that since housewives were watching, young children not yet in school were probably watching as well. So Mr. Rivets was created to keep younger viewers entertained. Earley performed skits and introduced cartoons during the second half of the hour-long *Let Skinner/Scott Do It*. Earley also did five-minute local news bulletins throughout the morning lineup called *Today with Mr. Rivets*. In 1955 Mr. Rivets finally got his own children’s program, *Scott and the Mechanical Man*. It aired on Saturday mornings.<sup>151</sup>

In 1957, WCAU decided to air a series of horror films several days a week. John Zacherle, the undertaker from *Action in the Afternoon*, was tapped to host. He was even able to wear the same long coat he had worn in the western. The character on the new show, called *Shock Theater*, was part vampire, part mad scientist. His name was Roland, pronounced “Roh (pause) land,” not “Rollland.” Zacherle recalled that when he and the producers pitched the show to the station manager, the manager pronounced Roland incorrectly, and no one wanted to correct him. Thus, a truly unique character on Philadelphia television was born. Roland not only introduced the films he showed, he also became a part of them. Zacherle was inserted into the action of movies like *Dracula*. For example, during a concert scene, he appeared as the conductor. The camera cut back and forth between the real movie and the shots featuring Roland, and it appeared as if he were part of the story.

He had a wife named My Dear who was never seen on-screen; she lived in a coffin. He sometimes drove a stake through the coffin and into her heart, just because she liked it. They had a son, Gasport, who hung on the wall in a sack and moaned. Roland signed off of every episode with a creepy laugh and the catchphrase, “Good night, whatever you are!” Though the show was aimed at adults, children began to tune in with their parents, and the show was moved to weekends so children could stay awake to watch. Roland became known as “The Cool Ghoul.” He even got a contract with Cameo Records, producing a record with a song called “Dinner with Drac.” This caused quite a stir among conservative Philadelphians like Dick Clark, due to its gory themes. Though the show only lasted one year, its wild popularity showed that children enjoyed the horror genre. When the show switched from weekday nights to weekend nights, WCAU held an open house for publicity. The station expected around a thousand viewers; over 15,000 attended. This proved Zacherle’s enormous drawing power.

There is no evidence of any backlash against the content of the show itself. Since the program featured gory horror movies, it seemed only natural that the host should present gruesome elements as well. *Shock Theater* did not have any educational value, but it was a program that parents could share with their children. And, like so many Philadelphia personalities, Zacherle moved to New York and continued to portray Roland there on ABC. It was a bigger market with better pay, and there were rumors that Zacherle's greed was the reason for his move. Other sources claim that ABC had been impressed with his Philadelphia performance and wanted him for their own version of *Shock Theater* to boost its ratings. Either way, his split with WCAU was less than amicable. Though Philadelphia children only got to enjoy Roland for a year, he lived on with his ABC show. Producers changed his name to Zacherley to make it easier to pronounce, and *Newsweek* profiled him in 1959. According to the article, "sepulchrally cynical Zacherley makes laughable hash of the old chillers" by appearing in the films. Zacherle claimed to have seen each of the horror movies at least eight times each. "They all have the same plot whether it's apes, mummies, werewolves, or monsters. Most of them even use the same chase scene—budget too low to reshoot, I guess," Zacherle told the magazine.<sup>152</sup>

Philadelphia's television stations produced shows that made children laugh, shows that scared them, shows that taught them right from wrong, and shows that taught them to count and read. The variety of entertainment children had in Philadelphia rivaled the national options in quality and dedication. Each host put hard work and love into his or her characters, creating a safe environment for child viewers. Since Philadelphia had the opportunity and the facilities to produce these types of shows, the local stations could experiment with many different types of programming. Some of these shows, like *The Big Top*, were produced for national audiences. Other shows began as local fare but won over the networks, like *In the Park* and *Bandstand*. Each show proved that the criticisms of children's television were not relevant to Philadelphia programming. The show guidelines put forth by scholarly journals were followed to the best of the producers' abilities, whether or not they made that effort consciously. From the first children's show in 1948 to the 1967 introduction of Captain Noah, children could look forward to creative characters, teachable moments, and positive role models on their television screens. Philadelphia television was not Minow's "vast wasteland" in any way.



Ed Cunningham chose to end his *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts* documentary with *Captain Noah*. After the premiere of that show, the documentary explained, the heyday of local stations was over. More and more programs were airing on the major networks, and that left less time in the broadcast day for local fare. Children's programming also became readily available on these stations, especially PBS, which launched *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* to national fame. And in 1969, a show came along that revolutionized children's television. *Sesame Street* was set in the inner city, and featured a multicultural cast. Though created to improve inner-city preschoolers' cognitive development, viewers from all backgrounds learned from the show. It was considered the perfect children's series. Previous attempts by the networks to create informative programming were criticized because the shows were too straightforward for children to enjoy. *Sesame Street* set out explicit educational goals, but presented the material in a lively and engaging manner. It even encouraged the National Association of Broadcasters to implement new regulations for television content. The vast amount of research on the program shows that children who watched *Sesame Street* benefited from it and were positively affected in the long term. The show's history has been documented elsewhere, but it is important to realize that Philadelphia's local programs were actually using many of the same approaches for which *Sesame Street* was praised long before 1969. *Sesame Street*'s use of skits, songs, puppets, and animation prepared children for school while entertaining them, just as Philadelphia shows did. *Sesame Street* had many wholesome characters; local programming taught viewers through the use of positive role models as hosts. Philadelphia shows that did not have explicit educational goals used similar techniques for learning on children of *all* ages, not just preschoolers. Though *Sesame Street* stressed mental over social development, Philadelphia shows had a mixture of both types of educational experiences. Philadelphia could not boast the inclusion of minorities in a fully integrated cast like on *Sesame Street*, however, but hosts like Chief Halftown and Matt Robinson added diversity to the broadcasting.<sup>153</sup>

Children in the early days of television depended on the medium for entertainment, and parents were not sure how to react. In-school television and educational broadcasting provided instruction, and many felt that commercial television should do the same. Though children's shows were the target of much criticism, it is clear that the positive program options outweighed the negative, especially in Philadelphia. The city's commitment to education and local talent made it stand out as a leader in the television field. Children who grew up watching local programming, like Ed Cunningham, have fond memories of the

broadcasts. It is for this reason that he chose to make a documentary featuring his childhood companions. Cunningham felt that Philadelphia children's television “was special for all of us in the early post-WWII baby boom. We were the first generation to welcome TV heroes to our homes all day.” He also singled out Philadelphia as significant “because it provided a bevy of talented broadcast performers, many of whom were seen around the country before the networks got their acts together with programming of their own.”<sup>154</sup> Those talented performers were broadcast daily in living rooms throughout Philadelphia, so they were bound to make an impact. Adults from every generation feel nostalgia for their favorite children’s shows. But for the children who grew up in the Philadelphia area in the 1950s and 1960s, they were completely justified in thinking their programming was special, because it was.

## Endnotes

1. Michael E. Eidenmuller, "Newton N. Minow: Television and the Public Interest," <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm> (accessed November 8, 2009), 3-4.
2. Ibid., 5.
3. Ibid., 7.
4. Ibid., 10.
5. Richard Corliss, "Philly Fifties: TV," <http://www.time.com/time/sampler/article/0,8599,166670,00.html> (accessed August 14, 2009). Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television* (Columbia University Press, 2009), xviii. Tim Hollis, *Hi There, Boys and Girls: America's Local Children's TV Programs* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 1-2, 238. Ed McMahon, *When Television was Young* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007), 43.
6. Ed Cunningham, interviewed by author through email, August 14, 2009 and November 9, 2009.
7. James L. Baughman, *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television, 1948-1961* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 47, 48. Jeffery Davis, *Children's Television, 1947-1990* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1995), 1. Edgerton, 179. Wilbur Schramm, *Children and Television: Some Advice to Parents* (Pamphlet 3118, June 24, 1959), 5. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
8. Cunningham interview.
9. Ray Brown, ed., *Children and Television* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976), 59, 184. Davis, 2, 249-262. Edgerton, 180. McMahon, 249. May V. Seagoe, "Children's Television Habits and Preferences," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1951): 150. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland. Cy Schneider, *Children's Television: The Art, the Business, and How It Works* (Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1987), 13. Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 57.
10. Baughman, 43, 47. Ralph Garry, *For the Young Viewer* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 1. Hollis, 5, 6. McMahon, 156. Schneider, 13.
11. Baughman 43, 48. McMahon, 43, 221.
12. Ibid., 222.
13. Hollis, 305.
14. Television Association of Philadelphia and TV Digest, *A Survey of Philadelphia TV Families* (Pamphlet 4669, April 1, 1950). Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
15. McMahon, 8, 38.
16. Hollis, 238, 240. "Market Data Book," WRCV-TV, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland. Virginia G. Rumsey, "Children's Story Programs on Radio and Television Broadcasts in the Philadelphia Area" (M.A. thesis, Drexel Institute of Technology School of Library Science, 1952), 37. "WCAU-TV: Eye on Philadelphia," *Madison Avenue*, October 1961. Courtesy of the National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland. WPTZ, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, *First in Television in Philadelphia* (Pamphlet 2931, August 1, 1947). Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.

17. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*, produced by Ed Cunningham (WHYY-TV, 2007).
18. Philadelphia Home and School Council, *Television Evaluation Report* (Pamphlet 3817, July 1, 1955), 1, 2, 7. Courtesy of the National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
19. Corliss. James Von Schilling, *The Magic Window: American Television, 1939-1953* (New York: The Haworth Press, 2003), 135.
20. Henry R. Cassirer, "Educational Television: World-Wide," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1954): 262, 264-5, 367, 371. Rumsey, 27. John J. Scanlon, "The Expanding Role of Television in American Education," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 32, no. 9 (May 1959): 415-6. Robert Lewis Shayon, *Television and Our Children* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1951), 87.
21. Edith Kern, "Language Learning and Television," *The Modern Language Journal* 43, no. 6 (October 1959): 264.
22. Ibid., 265. Scanlon, 417-8. Shayon, 87.
23. Scanlon, 419-20.
24. Cassirer, 265.
25. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "University of the Air," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/wfiluofair.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).
26. Baughman, 66-7.
27. Luella J. Martin, "A Case Study of Philadelphia's Use of In-School Television," (M.A. thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, The Graduate School Department of Speech, 1954), 2.
28. Ibid., 3-4, 20, 24-5.
29. Ibid., 26-8.
30. Philadelphia Public Schools, *Television Schedule, October 1955* (Pamphlet 3616, October 1, 1955), 3. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
31. Ibid., 4.
32. Philadelphia Public Schools, "The Report of the National Experiment in TV Teaching of Large Classes 1959-1960," (Sponsored by the Fund for the Advancement of Education of the Ford Foundation), I.
33. Martin, 29. "The Report of the National Experiment," 2, 3, 7, 8, 11.
34. Jean Barth Toll and Mildred S. Gillam, eds., *Invisible Philadelphia: Community Through Voluntary Organizations* (Philadelphia: Atwater Kent Museum, 1995), 1097-8.. WHYY, "Celebrating 50 Years of Television Worth Your Time," <http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/index.html> (accessed September 4, 2009). WHYY-TV, "Birth Announcement," [http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/media/birth\\_announce.pdf](http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/media/birth_announce.pdf) (accessed September 4, 2009). WHYY, "WHYY History," <http://www.whyy.org/about/history.html> (accessed August 14, 2009).
35. "Celebrating 50 Years." Davis, 151, 249-262. Harry Harris, "3 Governors to Join Big Show as WHYY Makes Its Debut Tonight," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 12, 1963, p. 18.

36. Ibid. "Philadelphia Area Gets a New TV Channel," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 8, 1963, TV Programs and Personalities Section, p. 1.

37. Dorothy Barclay, "The TV Generation's Growing Pains," *New York Times*, May 23, 1954, p. 54. Heather Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before the V-Chip* (Duke University Press, 1998), 3, 5. Donald F. Roberts, Adolescents and the Mass Media: From 'Leave it to Beaver' to 'Beverly Hills 90210'," *Teachers College Record* 94, no. 3 (1993).

38. Ruth Inglis, *The Window in the Corner: A Half-Century of Children's Television* (Peter Owen Ltd., 2003), 2.

39. Robert Saudek, "Must It Be 'Kookie' and 'Ka-Pow'?" *New York Times*, March 25, 1962, p. 245.

40. Ibid.

41. Val Adams, "Children's Fare Studied By N.B.C." *New York Times*, August 10, 1955, p. 51. Baughman, 284. TV Acres, "Mr. Wizard," [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_mrwizard.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_mrwizard.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).

42. Foundation for Character Education, *Television for Children* (Boston: Pamphlet 709/710), 23. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.

43. Ibid., 22.

44. Ibid., 21-3, Appendix.

45. Shayon, 7.

46. Ibid., 22.

47. Ibid., 18-21.

48. Ibid., 29.

49. Ibid., 29-30.

50. Ibid., 46.

51. Ibid., 26, 29, 37, 43, 45, 48.

52. Hans Van Weeren-Griek, "Art Education Through Television," *College Art Journal* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1949): 297.

53. Frank Orme, "The Television Code," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1952): 412.

54. Melvin L. and Lois B. DeFleur, "The Relative Contribution of Television as a Learning Source for Children's Occupational Knowledge," *American Sociological Review* 32, no. 5 (October 1967): 778, 787, 789. Orme, 408. Van Weeren-Griek, 297-8.

55. Norma Pecora, John P. Murray, and Ellen Ann Wartella, eds., *Children and Television: Fifty Years of Research* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 60.

56. Ibid., 65.

57. Hendershot, 22, 27.

58. Mary Cassata and Thomas Skill, *Television: A Guide to the Literature* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1985), 63.
59. Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television 1929-1961* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), 464.
60. Ibid.
61. Spigel, 55.
62. Burr Tillstrom, "Children's Shows; They Are Best on TV When Not Bugged Down by 'Age-Level' Considerations," *New York Times*, April 24, 1949, p. XX6.
63. May V. Seagoe, "A Score Sheet for Children's Television," *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1952): 336.
64. May V. Seagoe, "Issues and Criteria for Children's Television," *Educational Theatre Journal* 4, no. 3 (October 1952): 232-6.
65. Garry, 2, 4, 7, 31, 53, 71, 93.
66. Ibid., 161-5.
67. Davis, 188, 191. Alex McNeil, Rev. ed., *Total Television* (New York: The Penguin Group, 1996), 395-6. Rumsey, 19-20. Von Schilling, 96.
68. Kisseloff, 452.
69. Baughman, 48.
70. Davis, 193. Hollis, 242.
71. Davis 193.
72. "Filbert the Flea," *Variety*, March 11, 1953.
73. Ibid. Hollis, 240.
74. "Lit's Have Fun at the Zoo," *Variety*, December 5, 1951.
75. Hollis, 240. "Lit's Have Fun at the Zoo."
76. "Meet Me at the Zoo," *Variety*, January 14, 1953.
77. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Claire Coleman," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/romperroom.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Hollis, 13-5, 240-1. Inglis, 46. McNeil, 705. "The World's Largest Kindergarten," *Time* 82, September 13, 1963
78. "Training Tots' TV Teachers," *Life* 41, September 24, 1956.
79. McMahon, 222. "The World's Largest Kindergarten," 71.
80. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Howard Jones," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/howardjones.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Garry, 130. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
81. "WCAU-TV: Eye on Philadelphia."

82. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia Television Kid's Hosts," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/kidshosts.html> (accessed September 6, 2009). Hollis, 242-3. TVparty, "A Letter from Gene London," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostlondon.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

83. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.

84. Garry, 88.

85. "A Letter from Gene London."

86. Rumsey, 31-2.

87. Hollis, 244.

88. Ibid.

89. Garry, 78.

90. Ibid. TVparty, "Tottle," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostphilly-tottles.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

91. Garry, 130.

92. Hollis, 243-244. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. Pixanne Enterprises, "Jane Norman," <http://www.pixanne.com/> (accessed August 20, 2009). TV Acres, "Pixanne," [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_pixanne.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_pixanne.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).

93. Garry, 130. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.

94. Pixanne Enterprises.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.

98. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TVparty, "Lost Kid Shows," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostphilly.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

99. Hollis, 242.

100. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TVparty, "Captain Noah," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostnoah.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

101. Davis, 136.

102. Ibid., 135, 137, 249-262. McMahon, 230. Schneider, 12.

103. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Gene Crane," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/carnivalhistory.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Broadcast

Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Willie the Worm," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/willietheworm1.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. Rumsey, 31.

104. Halftown himself used the term "Indian."

105. TVparty, "Legendary Chief Halftown," <http://www.tvparty.com/losthaltown.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

106. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Chief Halftown," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/chief.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Hollis, 240. TV Acres, "Chief Halftown," [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_chief\\_haltown.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_chief_haltown.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).

107. "Chief Halftown's Star Performers," *Variety*, May 28, 1952.

108. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Chief Halftown." *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TV Acres, "Chief Halftown."

109. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Chief Halftown."

110. McNeil, 39.

111. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Parade of Stars," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/paradeofstars.html> (accessed September 8, 2009). McMahon, 246.

112. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Paul Whiteman," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/teenclub.html> (accessed December 14, 2009).

113. McMahon, 247.

114. Davis, 123. McNeil, 38.

115. McMahon, 248.

116. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "John Zacherle," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/johnzacherle.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

117. Harry Harris, "'Bandstand' Bows Today on Network," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 5, 1957.

118. Corliss. Garry, 130. Hollis, 238-9. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.

119. "Lunch with Uncle Pete," *Variety*, January 14, 1953.

120. "C'mon to Uncle Pete's," *Variety*, June 30, 1952.

121. Philadelphia Home and School Council, *Television Evaluation Report* (Pamphlet 3817, July 1, 1955), 7. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.

122. Harry Harris, "After Olive Oyl, Sally Starr Was Popeye's Best Girl," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 3, 1979. Hollis, 241. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TV Acres, "Sally Starr," [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_sallystarr.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_sallystarr.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009). TVparty, "Our Gal Sal!," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostsal.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).



123. McNeil, 668.
124. Harris, "After Olive Oyl."
125. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Sally Starr," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/sallystarr.html> (accessed September 4, 2009). Hollis, 8-10, 241. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
126. McMahon, 219.
127. Von Schilling, 118.
128. McMahon, 220-1. Von Schilling, 117.
129. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Bertie the Bunyip & Lee Dexter," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bertiethebunyip.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Hollis, 239. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TVparty, "Bertie the Bunyip and Other Philadelphia Local Kid Shows," <http://www.tvparty.com/lostbertie.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).
130. Kisseloff, 152.
131. Garry, 67.
132. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Bill Webber." <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/breakfasttime.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
133. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
134. Davis, 1-2. McMahon, 236, 238. Schneider, 12.
135. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "The Children's Hour," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/> (accessed September 6, 2009).
136. McMahon, 224.
137. Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, Inc., *What Do Children Watch?: A Study of 25 Selected TV Programs* (Pamphlet 127, May 1, 1956), 27. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland. The Courier-Post, January 25, 1952, television section. Davis, 94. McMahon, 224-5. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
138. Hollis, 242.
139. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Philadelphia Television's Kid's Hosts." Hollis, 240. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. TVparty, "Bertie the Bunyip and Other Philadelphia Local Kid Shows."
140. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Rex Trailer," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/rextrailer.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Hollis, 240.
141. McMahon, 249-50.
142. Von Schilling, 135-6.
143. Cunningham interview. "Gun-Totin' Main Liners," *Newsweek* 41, February 16, 1953.

144. McMahon 55-6.
145. Corliss. Kisseloff, 159.
146. Ibid., 158.
147. McNeil, 13.
148. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Gene Crane." *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
149. "M&M Candy Carnival," *Variety*, January 16, 1952.
150. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Gene Crane."
151. Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Joe Earley," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/rivets.html> (accessed September 7, 2009). Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia, "Mr. Rivets," <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/rivets-golf.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).
152. Corliss. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. "Spoofing the Spooks," *Newsweek* 53, April 6, 1959.
153. Davis, 155. Hendershot, 138, 140. Hollis, 21. McNeil, 743-4. Pecora, 66. *Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*.
154. Cunningham interview.

## Bibliography

## Books

- Baughman, James L. *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television, 1948-1961*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Boddy, William. *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.
- Brown, Ray, ed. *Children and Television*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976.
- Cassata, Mary and Thomas Skill. *Television: A Guide to the Literature*. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1985.
- Davis, Jeffery. *Children's Television, 1947-1990*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1995.
- Edgerton, Gary R. *The Columbia History of American Television*. Columbia University Press, 2009.
- Hendershot, Heather. *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before the V-Chip*. Duke University Press, 1998.
- Hollis, Tim. *Hi There, Boys and Girls: America's Local Children's TV Programs*. University Press of Mississippi, 2001.
- Inglis, Ruth. *The Window in the Corner: A Half-Century of Children's Television*. Peter Owen Ltd., 2003.
- Kisseloff, Jeff. *The Box: An Oral History of Television 1929-1961*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1995.
- McMahon, Ed. *When Television was Young*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2007.
- McNeil, Alex. *Total Television*. Rev. ed. New York: The Penguin Group, 1996.
- Pecora, Norma, John P. Murray, and Ellen Ann Wartella, eds. *Children and Television: Fifty Years of Research*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
- Schneider, Cy. *Children's Television: The Art, the Business, and How It Works*. Chicago: NTC Business Books, 1987.
- Sheridan, Simon. *The A-Z of Classic Children's Television: From Alberto Frog to Zebedee*. Reynolds & Hearn, 2004.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Taylor, Ella. *Prime-Time Families: Television Culture in Postwar America*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989.
- Toll, Jean Barth, and Mildred S. Gillam, eds. *Invisible Philadelphia: Community Through Voluntary Organizations*. Philadelphia: Atwater Kent Museum, 1995.
- Von Schilling, James. *The Magic Window: American Television, 1939-1953*. New York: The Haworth Press, 2003.

## Articles

- Harris, Harry. "After Olive Oyl, Sally Starr Was Popeye's Best Girl." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 3, 1979.
- Levin, Robert A. and Laurie Moses Hines. "Educational Television, Fred Rogers, and the History of Education." *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 262-275.
- Roberts, Donald F. "Adolescents and the Mass Media: From 'Leave it to Beaver' to 'Beverly Hills 90210'." *Teachers College Record* 94, no. 3 (1993): 629-644.
- Robinson, Deanna Campbell. "Children's Television Programming and Censorship." *Policy Studies Journal* 4, no. 2 (1975): 108-112.
- Stole, Inger L. "The 'Kate Smith Hour' and the Struggle for Control of Television Programming in the Early 1950s." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 20, no. 4 (2000): 549-564.

## Websites

- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Action in the Afternoon."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/actionhistory.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Bandstand."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bandstand58.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Bertie the Bunyip & Lee Dexter."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bertiethibunyip.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "The Big Top."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bigtop.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Bill Webber."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/breakfasttime.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Chief Halftown."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/chief.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "The Children's Hour." <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/> (accessed September 6, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Claire Coleman."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/romperroom.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Ernie Kovacs."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/kovacsinphilly.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Gene Crane."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/carnivalhistory.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Howard Jones."  
<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/howardjones.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).
- Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Joe Earley."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/rivets.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "John Zacherle."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/johnzacherle.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "John Zacherle in character as Roland."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/roland.html> (accessed September 8, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Mr. Rivets."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/rivets-golf.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Nancy Lewis & Paul Whiteman."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/teenclub.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Parade of Stars."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/paradeofstars.html> (accessed September 8, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Paul Whiteman."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/bp/teenclub.html> (accessed December 14, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Pete Boyle."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/boyle2.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Philadelphia Television Kid's Hosts."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/kidshosts.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Rex Trailer."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/rextrailer.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Roland." <http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/roland58.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Sally Starr."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/sallystarr.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "University of the Air."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/wfiluofair.html> (accessed September 6, 2009).

Broadcast Pioneers of Philadelphia. "Willie the Worm."

<http://www.broadcastpioneers.com/willietheworm1.html> (accessed September 7, 2009).

Clutch Cargo. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFnLirXjjto> (accessed December 15, 2009).

Corliss, Richard. "Philly Fifties: TV." *Time*, July 7, 2001.

<http://www.time.com/time/sampler/article/0,8599,166670,00.html> (accessed August 14, 2009).

Eidenmuller, Michael E. "Newton N. Minow: Television and the Public Interest."

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm> (accessed November 8, 2009).

Lorenzo the Tramp. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ87TXPjliw> (accessed December 15, 2009).

- Pixanne. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdxUulN97cg> (accessed December 15, 2009).
- Pixanne Enterprises. "Jane Norman." <http://www.pixanne.com/> (accessed August 20, 2009).
- Romper Room. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX04pgP6cWc> (accessed December 15, 2009).
- Shock Theater. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT4dCjP9dW4> (accessed December 15, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Captain Kangaroo." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_captainkangaroo.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_captainkangaroo.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Chief Halftown." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_chief\\_halftown.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_chief_halftown.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Gene London." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_genelondon.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_genelondon.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Happy the Clown." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_happythec clown.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_happythec clown.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Mouseketeers." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_mouseketeers.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_mouseketeers.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Mr. Wizard." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_mr wizard.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_mr wizard.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Pixanne." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_pixanne.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_pixanne.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TV Acres. "Sally Starr." [http://www.tvacres.com/child\\_sallystarr.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/child_sallystarr.htm) (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TVparty. "Bertie the Bunyip and Other Philadelphia Local Kid Shows." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostbertie.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TVparty. "Captain Noah." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostnoah.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).
- TVparty. "Dickory Doc." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostdickory.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).
- TVparty. "The Gene London Show." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostlondon2.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).
- TVparty. "Happy the Clown." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostphappy.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).
- TVparty. "Legendary Chief Halftown." <http://www.tvparty.com/losthalftown.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).
- TVparty. "A Letter from Gene London." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostlondon.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

TVparty. "Lost Kid Shows." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostphilly.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

TVparty. "Our Gal Sal!" <http://www.tvparty.com/lostsal.html> (accessed September 5, 2009).

TVparty. "The Pete Boyle Show." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostpboyle.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

TVparty. "Tottle." <http://www.tvparty.com/lostphilly-tottles.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

WHYY. "Celebrating 50 Years of Television Worth Your Time." <http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/index.html> (accessed September 4, 2009).

WHYY. "WHYY History." <http://www.whyy.org/about/history.html> (accessed August 14, 2009).

#### Other Sources

Cunningham, Ed. Interviewed by author through email. August 14, 2009 and November 9, 2009.

*Philly's Favorite Kids Show Hosts*. Produced by Ed Cunningham. Aired on WHYY-TV. 2007.

#### Primary Sources

Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn, Inc. (BBDO). *What Do Children Watch?: A Study of 25 Selected TV Programs*. May 1, 1956. Pamphlet 127. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.

Cassirer, Henry R. "Educational Television: World-Wide." *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1954): 367-374.

"Chief Halftown's Star Performers." *Variety* (May 28, 1952): 35.

"C'mon to Uncle Pete's." *Variety* (June 30, 1952): 31.

"Complete Television Programs for Today." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (January 16, 1952): 34.

"Complete Television Programs for Today." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 3, 1954): 12.

"Complete Television Programs for Today." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 9, 1958): 64.

*The Courier-Post*. 1952. Television Section.

DeFleur, Melvin L. and Lois B. "The Relative Contribution of Television as a Learning Source for Children's Occupational Knowledge." *American Sociological Review* 32, no. 5 (October 1967): 777-789.

"Filbert the Flea." *Variety* (March 11, 1953): 29.

Foundation for Character Education, Boston. *Television for Children*. February 1, 1962. Pamphlets 709/710. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.

Garry, Ralph. *For the Young Viewer*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962.

"Gun-Totin' Main Liners." *Newsweek* 41 (February 16, 1953): 60.

Harris, Harry. "'Bandstand' Bows Today on Network." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (August 5,

- 1957): 16.
- . "3 Governors to Join Big Show as WHYY Makes Its Debut Tonight." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 12, 1963): 18.
- Kern, Edith. "Language Learning and Television." *The Modern Language Journal* 43, no. 6 (October 1959): 264-265.
- "Krazy Kovacs." *Look* 20 (December 11, 1956): 20.
- "Lit's Have Fun at the Zoo." *Variety* (December 5, 1951): 34.
- "Lunch with Uncle Pete." *Variety* (January 14, 1953): 27.
- "M&M Candy Carnival." *Variety* (January 16, 1952): 28.
- "Market Data Book." WRCV-TV, Philadelphia. Courtesy of the National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- Martin, Luella J. "A Case Study of Philadelphia's Use of In-School Television." M.A. thesis, The Pennsylvania State University, The Graduate School Department of Speech, August 1954.
- "Meet Me at the Zoo." *Variety* (January 14, 1953): 27.
- New York Times*, 1949-1962.
- Orme, Frank. "The Television Code." *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1952): 404-413.
- "Philadelphia Area Gets a New TV Channel." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 8, 1963): TV Programs and Personalities Section.
- Philadelphia Home and School Council. *Television Evaluation Report*. July 1, 1955. Pamphlet 3817. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- Philadelphia Public Schools. "The Report of the National Experiment in TV Teaching of Large Classes 1959-1960." Sponsored by The Fund for the Advancement of Education of the Ford Foundation, 1960.
- . *Television Schedule, October 1955*. October 1, 1955. Pamphlet 3616. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- . *Television Schedule, January 1959*. December 16, 1958. Pamphlet 3617. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- Rumsey, Virginia G. "Children's Story Programs on Radio and Television Broadcasts in the Philadelphia Area." M.S. thesis, Drexel Institute of Technology School of Library Science, January-June, 1952.
- Scanlon, John J. "The Expanding Role of Television in American Education." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 32, no. 9 (May 1959): 413-420.
- Seagoe, May V. "Children's Television Habits and Preferences." *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1951): 143-54. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- . "Issues and Criteria for Children's Television." *Educational Theatre Journal* 4, no. 3 (October 1952): 231-237.



- . "A Score Sheet for Children's Television." *The Quarterly of Film, Radio, and Television* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1952): 327-337.
- Shayon, Robert Lewis. *Television and Our Children*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1951.
- Schramm, Wilbur. *Children and Television: Some Advice to Parents*. June 24, 1959. Pamphlet 3118. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- "Spoofing the Spooks." *Newsweek* 53 (April 6, 1959): 98.
- Television Association of Philadelphia and TV Digest. *A Survey of Philadelphia TV Families*. April 1, 1950. Pamphlet 4669. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- "3 to Get Ready." *Variety* (December 5, 1951): 34.
- "Training Tots' TV Teachers." *Life* 41 (September 24, 1956): 115-116.
- "TV Programs and Personalities." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (September 8, 1963): 8.
- "Uncle Ernie' Kovacs." *Newsweek* 41 (January 12, 1953): 70.
- Van Weeren-Griek, Hans. "Art Education Through Television." *College Art Journal* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1949): 297-298.
- "WCAU-TV: Eye on Philadelphia." *Madison Avenue*. October 1961. Courtesy of the National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.
- WHYY-TV. "Birth Announcement." [http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/media/birth\\_\\_announce.pdf](http://www.whyy.org/tv12/50/media/birth__announce.pdf) (accessed September 4, 2009).
- "The World's Largest Kindergarten." *Time* 82 (September 13, 1963): 71-2.
- WPTZ, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. *First in Television in Philadelphia*. August 1, 1947. Pamphlet 2931. Courtesy of National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland.