

When TV Was New

We All Loved Lucy

IN THE EARLY 1950s, when our family would go to town to do our shopping, we always stopped at my brother-in-law's house to watch programs for a while on their Admiral television set.

Our favorite shows were Sid Caesar's Your Show of Shows and I Love Lucy. One night, my wife, Christine, was sitting in a platform rocker while we watched.

Lucy's show was extra funny that night; Christine laughed so hard that she turned the rocker over backward and dumped herself onto the floor.

When she lay there on the floor laughing, we knew she wasn't hurt, but we've never let her forget the night she really loved Lucy!

—Donald C., Flat Rock, Illinois

Meteorological Marvel

MANY YEARS AGO, when we got our first TV set, I was watching a movie about a rain forest, and it was really raining cats and dogs on the program.

When my wife asked me to go to the store for bread, I said, "Oh, sure," and went to retrieve my umbrella and put on my raincoat.

I was about to go out the front door when my wife said, "Tom, are you going south or something?"

“No,” I said, “but it’s raining cats and dogs out there.”

She laughed and said, “Take off your raincoat. Put the umbrella away. It’s raining on the TV movie, but the sun is shining outside here.”

Boy, was I embarrassed! I wonder if a lot of folks did the same thing as I did till they got used to the TV.

—Thomas Q., East Hartford, Connecticut

The Power of Television

MEMORIES of our first TV came flooding back when I came across an agreement that was penned by my father and signed by us three boys in 1954.

The first part of it read:

“State of Illinois, County of Cook, City of Chicago.

“We, John R. O’Connor Jr. (age 15), James Lee O’Connor (12) and Jerome O’Connor (5) do hereby swear and affirm that we, as a group and individually, will adhere to the following rules in regards to the television set when it is installed.

“1. We will eat all our meals at the table and at the time we are called, and further, we will not gulp our food down in order to hurry back to the aforementioned television set...

“2. We will be cooperative in the selection of programs.”

Tacked onto the end were rules about curfews, bedtimes, homework and music practice.

I don't know how long the rules lasted, but I clearly remember that several years later, homework didn't get done first. I'd settle down to watch The Mickey Mouse Club at 3 in the afternoon until my brothers came home and switched the TV to American Bandstand.

—Jerry O., Lansing, Illinois

Fashion by Hopalong

A TV SET was not something my parents were eager to buy, since they didn't think that television would outlast radio.

We did, however, visit a great deal with my Aunt Florence, who owned the first TV set in the family—a Muntz with a 6-inch screen encased in 4 feet of bulky cabinet. Uncle Steve could hardly wait for the evening news and wrestling matches, and Aunt Florence always accommodated my love of Westerns.

The TV serial Westerns were all the rage, and my all-time favorite was Hopalong Cassidy. I was the happiest little girl in the world when, for my birthday in 1950, I received my cowgirl outfit (left) with accompanying six-shooter.

—Jan M., China Grove, North Carolina