

When TV Was New

Say “Howdy” to Howdy

BACK IN June 1955, my husband, John, our children and I had driven to New York from our home in Shreveport, Louisiana for a family vacation.

The Howdy Doody Show originated for national television in a New York City studio and we got to attend a broadcast while we were visiting.

The two families traveling the greatest distance for that particular episode were chosen to have the children photographed with Howdy Doody.

Our kids: Julia, age 7; Karen, 4; and Michael, 6—sat in the famous Peanut Gallery and were seen on TV by their friends back home.

Julia, a faithful viewer of the program, was shocked to hear Clarabell the clown actually speak, since Clarabell always honked “yes” or “no” answers on TV using a box strapped around his waist.

—Winnie Dimiterchik, Ville Platte, Louisiana

Talk of the Town

THE 7-INCH black-and-white TV I chipped in with my parents to buy in 1948 was the talk of our New Jersey neighborhood.

That was even before we got fancy and purchased magnifying glass with blue tint at the top and green tint at the bottom. We had sky and grass, even for indoor scenes.

Friends old and new jammed our living room every Tuesday night, gathering to hear the Texaco chorus start Milton Berle’s popular show. Ed Sullivan’s Sunday-night show would bring equal response, especially after his introduction of Elvis.

I was able to convince my seventh-grade teacher, Mr. Albertson, that the World Series was a “current event” and invited the whole class over to watch one of the games during school hours. Our living room ended up adorned with wall-to-wall kids.

The New York Yankees dominated TV sports in the 1950s, but pro wrestling was Grandma’s favorite—a variety different from today’s violent version. Remember Gorgeous George, boxer Marcel Cedan, Antonio Rocca and “pretty boy” Gene Stanley?

Mom liked Western heroes, especially Buffalo Bill, the Cisco Kid, Wyatt Earp and, later, Gene Autry.

Dad had to wait a bit for his mystery men to hit the scene but was pleased to have Maverick and Perry Mason.

I’d tune in to Captain Kangaroo, The Howdy Doody Show and The Mickey Mouse Club and, later, Kukla, Fran, and Ollie.

The whole family gathered for The Lawrence Welk Show, I Love Lucy and Gunsmoke, and we all enjoyed Leave It to Beaver and Dick Clark’s American Bandstand.

Television truly changed the way we lived.

—Robert Layton, Mechanicsville, Virginia