

Father Knows Best

Episode for class: Betty Goes Steady - Season 3
(with Robert Vaughn) Aired December 5, 1956

The television series debuted on CBS in October 3, 1954. It ran for one season and was canceled by CBS, but was picked up by NBC for three seasons. After cancellation by NBC in 1958, the series returned to CBS until May 23, 1960. The show ran for six seasons and 203 episodes.

Father Knows Best was a sitcom that starred Robert Young, Jane Wyatt, Elinor Donahue, Billy Gray and Lauren Chapin. The series began on radio in 1949. The show was created by Ed James. After cancellation by NBC in 1958, the series returned to CBS, where it aired until May 1960.

On radio, the series began on August 25, 1949 on NBC. It starred Robert Young as Jim Anderson. His wife Margaret was first portrayed by June Whitley and then by Jean Vander Pyl. The Anderson children were Betty played by Rhoda Williams, Bud played by Ted Donaldson and Kathy was played by Norma Jean Nilsson. The series was heard Thursday evenings on NBC until March 25, 1954.

The May 27, 1954 episode of *The Ford Television Theatre* show was called "Keep It in the Family." It was an episode that starred Robert Young as Jim Warren, head of the Warren family. This episode was developed by Young and his partner Eugene Rodney, and was intended as a pilot for a *Father Knows Best* television series. Of the radio cast, only Robert Young remained when the series moved to CBS television.

The series premiered on October 3, 1954 on CBS, where it aired Sundays at 10:00PM. Robert Young left the series in 1960 at the

height of the show's popularity to work on other projects. Reruns continued to air in primetime for another three years on CBS from 1960 to 1962 and then on ABC from 1962 to 1963. Following that, reruns were shown on ABC-TV in the early afternoon for several years.

The exterior of the Anderson house shown in the series' opening credits is the same one used as Mr. George Wilson's home in the television series *Dennis The Menace*. A few years later in remodeled form, it was Captain/Major Anthony Nelson's residence in *I Dream Of Jeannie*. The exterior of this house was originally built in 1941 during the production of a series of *Blondie* movies. The house can also be seen in both its familiar *Father Knows Best* style and later renovated variations in episodes of *Hazel*, *Bewitched*, *The Monkees* and *The Partridge Family*.

The television cast reunited for two of TV movies on NBC: *Father Knows Best Reunion* that aired on May 15, 1977 and *Father Knows Best: Home For Christmas* airing on December 18, 1977.

The Latin term "**ARS PRO MULTIS**" found on the Rodney/Young Crest at the end of each program translates into "Art for the Masses"!

Robert Young - was born Robert George Young in Chicago, Illinois. He studied and performed at the Pasadena Playhouse while working various odd jobs and appearing in bit parts in silent films. While touring with a stock company, Young was discovered by a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer talent scout who signed him to a contract. As an MGM contract player, Young was obligated to accept any film assigned to him or risk being placed on suspension. Young made his sound-film debut for Fox Film Corporation in the 1931 Charlie Chan film *Black Camel*, starring Warner Oland. Between 1928 and 1952, Robert Young appeared

in over 100 films. After his contract expired with MGM, Young starred in light comedies and dramas for studios such as 20th Century Fox, United Artists and RKO Radio Pictures.

Young is best remembered as the insurance salesman in the long-running popular sitcom *Father Knows Best* from 1949–1954 on radio and from 1954–1960 on television.

Next, Young created, produced and starred with Ford Rainey and Constance Moore in the CBS comedy series *Window On Main Street* from 1961 to 1962.

Young's final television series was *Marcus Welby, M.D.* from 1969 to 1976, co-starring James Brolin. This show earned an Emmy Award for Young as best leading actor in a drama series. Until 1982, Young made numerous television commercials for [Sanka](#) coffee.

Robert Young has three stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame; the stars are in the categories of film located at 6933 Hollywood Blvd., television at 6358 Hollywood Blvd. and radio at 1660 Vine Street.

Jane Wyatt - was born Jane Waddington Wyatt in Campgaw, a neighborhood in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey.

One of her first jobs on Broadway was as understudy to Rose Hobart in a production of *Trade Winds*. After receiving positive notices on Broadway and celebrated for her beauty, Wyatt made the transition from stage to screen and was placed under contract by Universal Pictures. She made her film debut in 1934 in *One More River*. In her most famous film role, she co-starred as Ronald Colman's character's love interest in Frank Capra's Columbia Pictures film *Lost Horizon* in 1937.

Wyatt is best remembered as Margaret Anderson on *Father Knows Best*, where she played opposite Robert Young as the devoted wife and mother of the Anderson family in the small town of Springfield. This role won consecutive Emmy Awards for her in 1958, 1959 and 1960 for best actress in a comedy series.

After *Father Knows Best*, Wyatt guest-starred in several other series. In 1962, she was cast on NBC's *Wagon Train*. In 1963, she was in the episode "Don't Forget to Say Goodbye" on the ABC drama *Going My Way*, with Gene Kelly and Leo G. Carroll. In 1964, Wyatt appeared on *The Virginian*. In 1965, Wyatt appeared on CBS's *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*.

She turned down the role of Old Rose in *Titanic* from 1997 because she wanted to remain in retirement. The role went to Gloria Stuart.

Along with Ricardo Montalban, Wyatt was among several established Hollywood actors who had a role on the original *Star Trek* 1966 television series. She stated that she received more fan mail for her role as Spock's mother than for any other role she played throughout her career.

Wyatt was awarded a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6350 Hollywood Blvd. on February 8, 1960.

Elinor Donahue - was born Mary Eleanor Donahue in Tacoma, Washington. She began appearing in dancing-chorus film roles from the age of five and was a ballet-school classmate of future Fred Astaire partner Barrie Chase.

Donahue had several bit parts in movies as a teenager, including *Love Is Better Than Ever* from 1952. She played one of the

daughters in *Three Daring Daughters* in 1948 and appeared as Mamie Van Doren's sister in *Girls Town* from 1959. She will always be best remembered for her role as the elder daughter, Betty, on *Father Knows Best*.

She was part of the main cast for the first season of *The Andy Griffith Show*, as Andy's pharmacist love interest Ellie Walker. After one season, Donahue asked for a release from her three-year contract. Among Donahue's other roles on television, she portrayed Miriam Welby in 17 episodes of *The Odd Couple*, the sister of Sister Bertrille (Sally Field) in three episodes of *The Flying Nun* and starred in the NBC sitcom *Please Stand By*.

In 1998, Donahue published a memoir entitled *In The Kitchen with Elinor Donahue*, in which she shared her memories of Hollywood along with providing more than 150 of her recipes. In 2015, Donahue played the role of Mrs. Chumley in Judson Theatre Company's production of the Pulitzer Prize play *Harvey* by Mary Chase. Donahue called the role her "swan song."

Billy Gray - was born William Thomas Gray in Los Angeles, California. He did not attend school and was educated by teachers hired by the film studios on studio lots. He portrayed a young Jim Thorpe in *Jim Thorpe - All-American* and starred in the science fiction film *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. He portrayed Tagg "Bull's Eye" Oakley, younger brother of Annie Oakley in the pilot episode of *Annie Oakley*.

Gray was cast as Plato in *Rebel Without A Cause*, but because a delay in shooting interfered with his commitment to *Father Knows Best*, he had to give up the role.

From 1970 to 1995. Gray was a Class A motorcycle speedway racer and race promoter. As of July 2020, Gray still lives in Topanga, California in the same house he bought in 1957 while working on *Father Knows Best*.

Lauren Chapin - She appeared in 196 episodes of the 203 in *Father Knows Best*. Chapin was awarded five Junior Emmys for Best Child Actress.

Lauren studied with such notable performers as Broadway's most successful dance and choreographer team, Marge and Gower Champion plus France's Marcel Marceau.

As an adult, she has been awarded "Honorable Mayor" of three cities in the states of Oklahoma, Texas and Florida for her numerous charity activities. In the early 1980s, Chapin taught natural childbirth and worked for a brokerage firm. She later owned two beauty pageant enterprises and helped manage and start the career of Jennifer Love Hewitt. In 1989, she wrote an autobiography, *Father Does Know Best: The Lauren Chapin Story*. Today, she is a licensed and ordained evangelist.

Robert Vaughn - Robert Francis Vaughn was born in New York City. He came to the public's attention first with his Oscar-nominated role, in *The Young Philadelphians* in 1959.

He appeared over 200 times in guest roles in the late 1950's to early 1960's. In 1963, he received his first major role in *The Lieutenant*. Vaughn accepted the role with the intention of making the transition from being a guest-star actor to being a co-star on television. As a result of his work in this series, producer Norman Felton offered him the role of Napoleon Solo in *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* He was one of the first actors to play the same character (Napoleon Solo) on three different series: *The Man*

From *U.N.C.L.E.* , *Please Don't Eat The Daisies* and *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* Soon after the series ended in 1968, Vaughn co-starred in *Bullitt* with Steve McQueen.

He was considered for the role of Thomas Hagen in *The Godfather* before Robert Duvall was cast. He received an Emmy Award in 1978 for *Washington: Behind Closed Doors* and a nomination the following year for *Backstairs At The White House* in 1979.

On June 27, 1998, Vaughn received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6633 Hollywood Blvd. For sentimental reasons, he requested his star to be located near the corner of Hollywood Blvd. and Cherokee Avenue, close to where he and his mother first lived when he moved to Hollywood.

(continued on next page)

Make Room For Daddy / The Danny Thomas Show

Episode for class:

The Rum Cake with Gale Gordon - Aired January 30, 1961

The Danny Thomas Show was called *Make Room For Daddy* for its first three seasons. It was a sitcom that ran from September 29, 1953 to April 25, 1957 on ABC and then from October 7, 1957 to April 27, 1964 on CBS. There were a total of 343 episodes in this series. The program starred Danny Thomas as a night club entertainer. In March of 1953, Thomas signed the contract for the show with ABC and chose Desilu Studios to film it using its three-camera method. Two proposed titles during pre-production were *The Children's Hour* and *Here Comes Daddy*. When the show began as *Make Room For Daddy*, Jean Hagen played Thomas' wife Margaret. Their daughter Terry was played by Sherry Jackson and their son Rusty by Rusty Hamer. Louise Beavers made several appearances as the Williams' maid, Louise Evans. She was usually at odds with Danny Williams and sided with Margaret in most of the couple's arguments. When Louise Beavers became ill in 1955, Amanda Randolph assumed the role of Louise.

Jean Hagen left the show due to unhappiness with her role. Thomas was upset with her for leaving, but decided to continue with the show. At the start of the fourth season, it was explained that Margaret had died suddenly off-screen. Up until this time, no character on a television situation comedy had died. In a four part story that began airing on April 4, 1957, Danny's son Rusty fell ill with the measles. He hired a young Irish nurse, Kathy O'Hara played by Marjorie Lord, to look after him. Kathy was a widow with a little girl. Danny quickly fell in love with her. The kids did too. In the season finale, the two became engaged.

ABC canceled the series in the spring of 1957. When CBS learned of this, they picked it up as part of its 1957-1958 schedule. The fifth season premiered with the episode, "Lose Me In Las Vegas" as Danny and Kathy had already married and were on their honeymoon. Kathy's daughter Linda, who was played by Angela Cartwright, was adopted by Danny. During the early part of the sixth season, Sherry Jackson left the show and her character of Terry had gone to a girls school in Paris. In Season 7, the character of Terry was brought back, but she was recast with Penney Parker. In the 11th and final season, Thomas decided to retire from the show. The program ended in the spring of 1964.

In 1965, Danny Thomas, Marjorie Lord, Angela Cartwright, Rusty Hamer, Sherry Jackson, Amanda Randolph and Hans Conried returned for a reunion special on NBC, *The Danny Thomas TV Family Reunion*. It was considered to be the first television reunion show. *Make More Room For Daddy* aired as an episode of *The Danny Thomas Hour* in November of 1967. A CBS reunion special, *Make Room For Granddaddy*, aired in 1969. The special did well and CBS picked it up as a series. However, Danny Thomas decided against doing the show. ABC did bring back *Make Room For Granddaddy* on a weekly basis in 1970. In the series premiere, Sherry Jackson reprised her role of oldest daughter, Terry. This series lasted only one year, producing 24 episodes.

The episode titled **Linda's Giant** aired on May 25, 1959. This storyline was reworked into an episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* titled *Mr. McBeevee* that aired on October 1, 1962.

The episode titled **The Report Card** aired on October 10, 1960. This storyline was reworked into an episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* titled *Opie's Ill Gotten Gain* airing on November 18, 1963.

Danny Thomas - was born Amos Muzyad Yaqoob Kairouz. His anglicized birth name was Amos Jacobs Kairouz. He took his stage name from his eldest brother Thomas and his youngest brother Danny. Many of his friends called him "Jake".

Thomas first reached audiences on network radio in the 1940's playing the brother-in-law Amos on *The Bickersons*.

In the early 1950's he made several appearances on the NBC variety program, *The Big Show*, hosted by Tallulah Bankhead. Thomas also had his own radio program, *The Danny Thomas Show*. The 30-minute weekly variety show was on ABC from 1942 to 1943 and on CBS from 1947 to 1948.

In motion pictures, Thomas appeared with Betty Grable in the musical *Call Me Mister*. He also portrayed songwriter Gus Kahn opposite Doris Day in the 1951 film *I'll See You in My Dreams*. He then starred in *The Jazz Singer* opposite vocalist Peggy Lee, in a 1952 remake of the 1927 original.

In television, Thomas enjoyed a very successful 11-year run on *Make Room For Daddy*, later known as *The Danny Thomas Show*. The show was produced at Desilu Studios, where Lucille Ball was appearing alongside Desi Arnaz in *I Love Lucy*.

It was Danny Thomas who was responsible for Mary Tyler Moore's first "big break" in acting. In 1961, Carl Reiner cast her in *The Dick Van Dyke Show* after Thomas personally recommended her.

Thomas became a successful television producer (with Sheldon Leonard and Aaron Spelling among his partners) of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *That Girl* and *The Mod Squad*. Thomas also produced three series for Walter Brennan: *The Real McCoys*, *The Tycoon*, and *The Guns of Will Sonnett* on ABC during the late 1950's and 1960's.

While beginning as a "starving actor", Thomas had made a vow: If he found success, he would open a shrine dedicated to St. Jude Thaddeus, the patron saint of hopeless causes. After becoming a successful actor in the early 1950's, Thomas and his wife began traveling the United States to help raise funds to build St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee.

Though he was a spokesman for Sanka decaffeinated coffee, he later confessed that he never drank it. He claimed he could drink cup after cup of Maxwell House coffee and still fall asleep minutes later.

Danny Williams, his character on *The Danny Thomas Show*, was ranked #5 in "TV Guide"'s list of the "50 Greatest TV Dads of All Time" in its 20 June 2004 issue.

Thomas was offered the lead role in *The Jolson Story* after James Cagney turned it down. Thomas also turned it down. Larry Parks would go on to star in that film.

In 1990, Danny Thomas was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame. He was also honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame located at 6901 Hollywood Boulevard.

His final television appearance was on *Empty Nest*, episode titled **The Mentor** which aired on February 2, 1991 four days before his death.

Marjorie Lord - as born in San Francisco, California. In 1935, at the age of 16, Lord made her Broadway debut in *The Old Maid* with Judith Anderson.

Lord was signed by RKO Radio Pictures in 1935. While appearing in *Springtime For Henry* with Edward Everett Horton, director Henry Koster approached her and signed her to a contract with Universal Studios. She appeared in six feature films and a film serial *The Adventures Of Smilin' Jack* for Universal. Her film work includes *Sherlock Holmes In Washington*, *Masked Raiders*, *Mexican Manhunt* and *Down Laredo Way*. In 1966, she played Mrs. Martha Meade, the wife of Bob Hope's character, in the screwball comedy *Boy, Did I Get A Wrong Number!*

In television, Lord appeared in a 1950 episode of *The Lone Ranger* and Bill Williams's western television series *The Adventures Of Kit Carson* and a 1954 episode of *Ford Theatre*.

In 1956, while she was appearing in *Anniversary Waltz*, Danny Thomas asked her to replace Jean Hagen as his television wife on *Make Room For Daddy*. Hagen had played Thomas' wife since the series' inception, but she was written out of the script in 1956. Lord accepted the role and joined the cast of the show, now called *The Danny Thomas Show*.

Lord remained active beyond her 90th birthday. On May 8, 2008, she participated in a "Salute to Television Moms" panel discussion organized by the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

Lord has a star in the television section of the Hollywood Walk of Fame, at 6317 Hollywood Boulevard. The star was dedicated on February 8, 1960. Marjorie Lord is also the mother of actress Anne Archer.

Rusty Hamer - entered films and television at the age of 5. Hamer's first on-camera role was a small part in the western *Fort Ti*. Next, he was given a role in an episode of the television anthology *Fireside Theatre*. Soon after, he became a celebrity the very next year, trading clever quips with Danny Thomas as his smart-alecky son, Rusty Williams, on *The Danny Thomas Show*. He would go on to appear in 343 episodes of this series from 1953 to 1964.

In 1964, with the end of *The Danny Thomas Show*, 17-year-old Rusty Hamer found himself out of work for the first time. He intended to continue his acting career and hoped to branch out into dramatic roles. Hamer said that he was under consideration for roles in several television series including *Mr. Novak*, *Arrest and Trial* and *Ben Casey*. Hamer also said that he planned to attend college on the advice of Danny Thomas. Unfortunately, he was unable to land any acting jobs. By the end of the 1960's, he had grown increasingly bitter and depressed over his fading career. To support himself, he began working for a messenger service in Los Angeles and later worked as a carpenter's apprentice.

The only work he was able to find in later years were reunion specials and a new, updated sitcom revolving around his old TV family. Nothing else came his way.

In the 1970's, Hamer moved to Louisiana where he worked on an off-shore oil rig for Exxon and delivered newspapers. In 1976, he relocated to DeRidder, Louisiana, to be closer to his ailing mother, Dorothy, who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. He lived with his older brother John who had moved to the area and opened a cafe. In his final years, Hamer occasionally worked as a short order cook.

Depressed, suffering from alcohol abuse and chronic back pain, he shot himself to death in his trailer on January 18, 1990. He was only 42 years old.

Hamer was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his work in television in 1960. His star is located at 6323 Hollywood Boulevard.

Angela Cartwright - was born in Altrincham, Cheshire, England. She made her first film appearance at the age of three as Paul Newman's character's daughter in *Somebody Up There Likes Me*.

Cartwright appeared for seven seasons as Linda Williams on *The Danny Thomas Show*. She would go on to play the role of Brigitta von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. Additionally, Cartwright played Penny Robinson in the series *Lost in Space* from 1965 to 1968. She also made appearances on several television shows, including *My Three Sons*, *Adam-12* and *The Love Boat*.

At 71 years of age, Angela Cartwright is still very active. Her website is <http://www.angela-cartwright.com/>

Amanda Randolph - At the age of 14, she began earning extra money playing the piano and organ in Cleveland, Ohio. Around 1919, she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she recorded several piano rolls of hot jazz and blues music for the Vocalstyle company of Cincinnati while working as a musician in Ohio's Lyric Theatre. She worked for the company under the name Mandy Randolph.

Randolph worked on the vaudeville and burlesque circuits as a comedian and as a singer but took a four-year hiatus from show business in 1932 when she married and helped her husband run their restaurant in New York called The Clam House.

Randolph's film career began in 1936. Around the same time, got into radio and began working on various radio shows such as *Young Dr. Malone*, *Romance of Helen Trent* and *Big Sister*. She went on to become a regular cast member on *Abie's Irish Rose*, *Kitty Foyle*, *Miss Hattie* with Ethel Barrymore and on Rudy Vallée's radio show.

During the 1948-1949 television season, Randolph starred in her own daytime musical television program for DuMont. *Amanda* aired Monday through Fridays from 12:00PM to 12:15PM. She was the first African-American woman with her own show on daytime television. She then became a regular on the early television series, *The Amos 'n' Andy Show* from 1951 to 1953 in addition to playing the same role for the show's radio version from 1951 to 1954.

Randolph began working with her sister, Lillian, who played Madame Queen on radio and television shows. She was the star in *The Beulah Show* from 1953 to 1954, assuming the role from Lillian.

In 1955, Randolph opened a restaurant in Los Angeles called "Mama's Place", where she did all of the cooking. Some of Randolph's other credits in television are guest roles in *The Thin Man*, *How To Marry A Millionaire*, *The Untouchables*, *Perry Mason*, *That Girl* and *The Barbara Stanwyck Show*.

Randolph had a memorable recurring role as Louise on *The Danny Thomas Show*. She appeared in the show's November 6, 1967 reunion program which aired a just few months after her passing earlier that year.

Gale Gordon - was born Charles Thomas Aldrich Jr. in New York City. Gordon's first big radio break came in the recurring roles of "Mayor La Trivia" and "Foggy Williams" on *Fibber McGee and Molly*. From 1937 to 1939, he starred as "The Octopus" in the *Speed Gibson* adventure series.

In 1950, Gordon played John Granby, a former city dweller ineptly pursuing his dream of life on a farm, in the radio series *Granby's Green Acres*, which became the basis for the 1960's television series *Green Acres*.

Gordon next went on to create the role of the principal Osgood Conklin on *Our Miss Brooks* in radio, then transitioning the role to television in 1952. At the same time, he was Rudolph Atterbury on *My Favorite Husband*, which starred Lucille Ball in a precursor to *I Love Lucy*. Gordon was the first pick to play Fred Mertz on *I Love Lucy*, but due to commitments to *Our Miss Brooks* as well as being a regular on several other radio shows, he had to decline the offer.

On *The Danny Thomas Show*, he guest starred in seven episodes, usually playing the landlord of the building where the Williams family lived.

In 1962, Lucille Ball created *The Lucy Show* and planned to hire Gordon to play Theodore J. Mooney, the banker who was first Lucy Carmichael's executor and later her employer. However, Gordon was under contract to play John Wilson, after the death of Joseph Kearns, who played George Wilson on *Dennis The Menace*.

When *Dennis The Menace* ended in the spring of 1963, Gordon joined *The Lucy Show* as Mr. Mooney for the 1963–1964 season. Besides Lucille Ball herself, Gordon was the only actor to appear in all four of her sitcoms: *I Love Lucy*, *The Lucy Show*, *Here's Lucy* and *Life With Lucy*. *I Love Lucy* was the only one in which he was never a regular cast member.

In 1999, Gale Gordon was inducted posthumously into the Radio Hall of Fame. For his contributions to radio, he has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6340 Hollywood Boulevard.

REFERENCES

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