

Lassie Notes

Episode for class:

Inheritance - Aired September 12, 1954

First-run *Lassie* was televised September 12, 1954 to March 24, 1973 producing a total of 591 episodes.

Between 1943 and 1951, fictional collie Lassie was the inspiration for seven feature films produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. For television, two pilots were filmed in Calgary, Alberta, Canada with the first episode titled Inheritance, told the story of the bond between a boy and his dog.

The show's first studio was Stage One of KTTV in Los Angeles, California with the production moving to Desilu in 1957. Franklin Canyon Reservoir and Vasquez Rocks were used for location filming.

Lassie made its début Sunday, September 12, 1954, at 7:00PM, a time slot the show would call home on CBS for the next 17 years.

Lassie was a two-time Emmy Award winner for Best Children's Program in 1955 and 1956.

Broadway star and quiz show panelist Jan Clayton was cast as farm widow Ellen Miller with 69 year old George Cleveland playing her father-in-law, George "Gramps" Miller. Tommy Rettig was hired to play Ellen's eleven-year-old son Jeff Miller and Donald Keeler was cast as Jeff's friend, Sylvester "Porky" Brockway. Porky's basset hound Pokey became a recurring animal character through the first several seasons.

Lassie's family history:

1954 to 1957

Jeff Miller, Ellen Miller and Gramps Miller

Cast: Tommy Rettig, Jan Clayton and George Cleveland

1957 to 1964

Timmy Martin, Ruth Martin, Paul Martin and Uncle Petrie J. Martin

Cast: John Provost

Cloris Leachman, Jon Sheppard (1957-1958)

June Lockhart and Hugh Riley (1958-1964)

George Chandler (1957-1959)

1964 to 1968

Forest Ranger Corey Stuart Cast: Robert Bray (1964-1968)

1968 to 1970 -

Forest Ranger Bob Erickson and Forest Ranger Scott Turner

Cast: Jack De Mave and Jed Allan

1970 to 1971

Lassie was on her own

1971 to 1973

Garth Holden, director of the Holden Ranch

Cast: Larry Wilcox, Ron Hayes, Pamelyn Ferdin and Joan Freeman

1988 to 1992

The New Lassie with Dee Wallace, Christopher Stone, Jon Provost, Will Estes and Wendy Cox

Tommy Rettig (Jeff Miller) - started his career at the age of six as Little Jake on tour with Mary Martin in *Annie Get Your Gun*. It was his work with a dog in *The 5000 Fingers Of Dr. T.* that led animal trainer Rudd Weatherwax to urge him to audition for the role of Jeff Miller in *Lassie*.

Rettig later told interviewers that he longed for a life as a normal teenager. After four seasons, he was able to get out of his contract. After *Lassie*, he could be seen on episodes of *Wagon Train*, *Sugarfoot*, *Peter Gunn*, *Death Valley Days* and *Mr. Novak*.

From 1965 to 1966, Rettig co-starred with former child actor, Tony Dow, in the ABC television soap opera for teens, *Never Too Young*. Rettig's former television mother, Jan Clayton, was also in this series. After one year, this series was cancelled and replaced by *Dark Shadows*.

As an adult, Rettig was also a well-known database programmer and author. He was an early employee of Ashton-Tate and specialized in dBASE, Clipper, FoxBASE and finally, FoxPro. Rettig moved to Marina del Rey, California, in the late 1980's.

Jan Clayton (Ellen Miller) - created the lead role of "Julie Jordan" in the original Broadway production of *Carousel*, opposite John Raitt's "Billy Bigelow" in 1945.

After *Lassie*, Clayton in 1959 starred in a television pilot called *The Jan Clayton Show*, a sitcom in which she played a college English teacher. In 1960, she produced and starred in *The Brown Horse*, another proposed series.

In 1961, she once again starred in a comedy pilot *Cheers For Miss Bishop*. None of those three pilots were picked up or purchased by a sponsor for production as a weekly series. She did make other television appearances on *Wagon Train*, *Death Valley Days*, *My Three Sons*, *Daktari* and *The Streets Of San Francisco*.

In the 1970's Jan Clayton began receiving treatment for her alcoholism. She joined Alcoholics Anonymous in 1970 and helped counsel other alcoholics on how to reclaim their lives. Every Thursday she worked as a volunteer answering the phone for the Alcoholism Council of Greater Los Angeles. She became a board member in the organization.

George Cleveland (George "Gramps" Miller) - was performing in Vaudeville before moving to Hollywood in 1936 where he worked in films as an actor, producer and director.

While he played in more than 150 films during his 58 year career in show business, he said that he was most well-known for his role as George "Gramps" Miller in *Lassie*. Sadly, Cleveland died during the fourth season of *Lassie*. The storyline of the show was changed and the Miller family left the show.

Myron Healy (Matt Willis) - made his debut in the 1943 film *Young Ideas* with Herbert Marshall and Mary Astor. Over the years, Healey appeared in numerous westerns such as *Death Valley Days*, *The Adventures Of Kit Carson*, *Tombstone Territory*, *Colt .45* and *The Lone Ranger*. Healey appeared in over 140 films that included 81 westerns and three serials.

In 2000, Myron Healey received a Golden Boot Award for his contributions to Western films and television programs.

Lee Erickson (Caleb Brown) - In his brief 10 year career, this young man was seen in television programs such as *How To Marry A Millionaire*, *The People's Choice*, *Fury*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Buffalo Bill, Jr.*

Jim Hayward (Mr. Peeves) - For 20 years, Hayward appeared in films and television programs (in credited and uncredited roles) such as *Father Of The Bride*, *Francis*, *Racket Squad*, *I Married Joan*, *The Roy Rogers Show*, *My Little Margie* and *Maverick*.

John Harmon (Emmett Kerry) - had close to 300 film and television credits in a career that lasted almost 40 years. His most notable television roles were in *Bonanza*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Perry Mason*, *Star Trek*, *The Rifleman* and *Gunsmoke*. In his later years, he became a used book dealer and collected first editions of Mark Twain.

REFERENCES

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Mister Ed Notes

Mister Ed - Aired from January 4, 1961 to February 6, 1966
144 episodes

Eddie Albert turned down the role of Wilbur Post to pursue a career in films. He also turned down the starring role in *My Three Sons*. Albert would eventually become the star of *Green Acres*.

Episode For Class:

Leo Durocher Meets Mister Ed - Aired September 29, 1963

The character first appeared in the short story "The Talking Horse" by children's author **Walter R. Brooks** in the September 18, 1937, issue of Liberty magazine.

UCLA graduate Sonia Chernus began working at Warner Brothers as a secretary in the 1940's, eventually moving up to be a reader and story editor under director Arthur Lubin. She was a fan of Walter Brooks' short stories about the talking horse and pushed the idea for a series. She introduced Arthur Lubin to Walter Brooks. Development of the concept for this show began. For this, she earned the atypical screen credit of "Format Developed by Sonia Chernus."

Francis The Talking Mule was a series of seven films (1950 to 1956) with Donald O'Connor starring in six of them. Arthur Lubin directed six of them as well. Francis was a mule named Molly. Chill Wills provided the voice for Francis.

The Colgate Comedy Hour - Eddie Cantor and Horse (aired November 29, 1953) In this segment, the horse did not speak to Cantor, the audience only heard his thoughts.

Arthur Lubin wanted to bring the talking horse concept to television with producer George Burns.

A pilot, *Wilbur Pope and Mr. Ed* was filmed in 1958, but did not air until October 6, 2009. In this episode, Scott McKay played Wilbur Pope and Sandra White played his wife, Carlotta Pope. This pilot used a script that was nearly identical to what was used on the series premiere a few years later.

Alan Young (Wilbur Post) - was born Angus Young in Northern England. His family moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, when Young was very young and then to West Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He had his first name legally changed from Angus to Alan when he was age 20. According to his autobiography, "Mister Ed and Me and More!", he was proud of his birth name but Americans always made unflattering comments about it, such as mispronouncing it "Agnes," which prompted him to change it legally.

By the time he was 13 years old, Young had become a radio performer. By the time he was 17 years old, he was writing and performing in his own radio show for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He became popular on American radio from 1944 to 1949 with his *Alan Young Radio Show*.

In 1950, he wrote a television pilot for CBS, which became *The Alan Young Show*, which was a summer replacement for *The Eddie Cantor Show*. The show was a well-received and earned a couple of Emmy Awards for Young.

During this period, he had established himself in films in *Margie*, *Chicken Every Sunday*, *Mr. Belvedere Goes To College*, *Aaron Slick From Punkin Crick*, *Androcles and The Lion*, *Gentlemen Marry Brunettes*, *Tom Thumb* and *The Time Machine*.

In the 1970's, Young became active in voice-overs. He voiced Scrooge McDuck in numerous Disney films and in the popular series *DuckTales* along with many other voice-over roles through the years. He also made many appearances on stage .

He was awarded a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for Radio at 6927 Hollywood Boulevard in Hollywood, California.

Connie Hines (Carol Post) - was one of four children born in Dedham in Norfolk County, Massachusetts. As a child, she appeared in many of her father's stock-company plays. At Dedham High School, she was voted the most popular girl in her class of 1948.

Hines moved to New York City to study with the Helen Hayes Equity Group. When she arrived in Hollywood, she learned that a major studio was interested in her when she was the reigning champion as a contestant on *Dotto* in 1958. Host Jack Narz gave her a telegram with the news while on the air.

One of her first roles was on an episode of *Whirlybirds*. Her first film appearance was in *Thunder in Carolina*. On television, she appeared in 1960 episodes of *Sea Hunt* and *M Squad*. Hines made a guest appearance on *Johnny Ringo*, *Bachelor Father* and two guest appearances on *Perry Mason*.

Hines auditioned for and won the role of Wilbur Post's wife Carol on *Mister Ed*. This was her most memorable role. She continued with *Mister Ed* until the series ended in 1966. She made a few more guest parts on *Bonanza* and *The Mod Squad* before retiring from show business in 1971.

She retired to Dana Point, California where she hosted a local cable-access show about animals, interviewing veterinarians, animal behaviorists and offering animals for adoption.

Alan Young and Connie Hines performed together in 1996 in the two-person play *Love Letters*.

Larry Keating (Roger Addison) - On April 6, 1937, Keating created *Professor Puzzlewit*, a quiz program on KMJ radio in Fresno, California. He was also the program's quizmaster.

Keating was an announcer for NBC in the 1940's. He was also an announcer for ABC radio's *This is Your FBI* from 1945 to 1953. He had the longest run of many actors to play neighbor Harry Morton on *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Keating took over the role of Harry Morton from Fred Clark in 1953 and continued in this role on *The George Burns Show*.

Keating played Roger Addison, the next door neighbor of Wilbur Post on *Mister Ed* from 1961 until his death in 1963.

According to Alan Young, "Larry Keating did something in comedy that Charlie Chaplin advised everybody. If you're being funny, don't be funny doing it."

Edna Skinner (Kay Addison) - Her big break came when she was hired by Rodgers & Hammerstein to replace Celeste Holm as Ado Annie in their original Broadway production of Oklahoma! She made her feature film debut in 1948 in the Frank Sinatra and Kathryn Grayson film *The Kissing Bandit*.

In 1953, she landed the role of Maggie the cook on the television version of *Topper*. In 1963, when Larry Keating died, the *Mister Ed* producers considered keeping her character on the show as a widow living with her brother Paul Fenton, played by Jack Albertson. Instead, the producers decided to cancel her character after the ninth episode during Season 4. **Leon Ames** and **Florence MacMichael** were added as the new next door neighbors, Gordon and Winnie Kirkwood.

Mister Ed - The first horse that played Mister Ed for the first, unaired pilot episode was a chestnut gelding. The horse proved to be unruly and difficult to work with and was replaced with the horse named Bamboo Harvester a crossbred gelding of American Saddlebred, Arabian and grade ancestry. Les Hilton, who trained Francis The Talking Mule, was hired to train Bamboo Harvester. A second pilot episode was filmed and Bamboo Harvester (1949 - 1968) remained with the series until its cancellation. There was also a stunt double named Pumpkin who looked identical, save for a gold spot on the horse's white patch. The crew would cover up the patch with makeup when shooting scenes.

Allan "Rocky" Lane - was the voice of Mister Ed for the first unaired pilot episode and for the entire series that followed. According to Alan Young and Connie Hines, the producers tried to replace Rocky Lane because he irritated so many people. Several people were auditioned as a replacement, but none of them were good enough. Lane stayed on and received a raise.

Leo Durocher (Himself) - was a professional baseball player, manager and coach. Upon his retirement, he ranked fifth all-time among managers with 2,008 career victories. A controversial and outspoken character, Durocher's 95 career ejections as a manager ranks fourth on the all-time list.

On television, Durocher could be seen on episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Donna Reed Show* and *The George Gobel Show*. Leo Durocher was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, 1994.

Sandy Koufax (Himself) - played his entire career for the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers from 1955 to 1966. He never pitched a game in the minor leagues. In his day, Koufax became the most dominant pitcher in the major leagues before arthritis in his left elbow ended his playing days prematurely at the age of 30. Koufax was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility in 1972, becoming the youngest player ever elected at the age of 36.

On television, Koufax could be seen on episodes of *77 Sunset Strip*, *Bourbon Street Beat* and *Dennis The Menace*.

John Roseboro (Himself) - was a catcher in Major League Baseball from 1957 until 1970, mainly as a member of the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1957 to 1967. In a 14 year major league career, Roseboro played in 1,585 games with 1,206 hits. Baseball historian Bill James ranked Roseboro 27th all-time among major league catchers.

On television, Roseboro could be seen on episodes *Burke's Law*, *Marcus Welby, M.D.* and *Kraft Suspense Theatre*.

Willie Davis (Himself) - played in Major League Baseball as a center fielder from 1960 through 1979 as a mainstay of the Los Angeles Dodgers teams that won three National League pennants and two World Series titles between 1963 and 1966. Davis remained with the Los Angeles Dodgers until 1973.

At the time of his retirement in 1979, Davis had 2,561 hits over his 18-year playing career. His 31-game hitting streak in 1969 remains as the Dodgers team record more than 40 years after his retirement.

On television, Willie Davis could be seen on an episode of *The Flying Nun* and the film *Which Way To the Front?*

Bill "Moose" Skowron (Himself) - played 14 seasons in Major League Baseball from 1954 to 1967. He signed with the New York Yankees in September 1950 and played his first game with them on April 13, 1954. From 1958 on he became the Yankees' full-time first baseman. He played one year for the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1963. Skowron was an 8 time All-Star and a 5 time World Series champion. He is one of just six players in baseball history to have won back-to-back World Series championships on different teams.

On television, Skowron could be seen on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Joey Bishop Show*.

Behind The Scenes.....

The lyrics to the famous theme song ("A horse is a horse, of course, of course ...") played over the opening and closing credits

were introduced in season one, episode eight, "Pageant Show". The first seven episodes used only an instrumental version of the song.

Jay Livingston sang the theme tune as a demo, intending to get a professional singer to re-do it, but the producers liked his vocals, and kept Livingston's version in the show.

CBS refused to put the production on its network in its initial premiere in 1960, so the Studebaker Corporation purchased this show and put it into syndication. It was an instant hit and CBS bought it in 1961.

During the first season, animating the horse's mouth was a procedure created by Les Hilton. The horse always wore a halter with a fishing line running through it to his teeth moving the line back and forth. This did not cause the horse any pain.

In 2004, a *Mister Ed* remake was planned for the Fox network with Sherman Hemsley as the voice of Mister Ed, David Alan Basche as Wilbur and Sherilyn Fenn as Carlotta. A teenage daughter named Amanda played by Sara Paxton was added to the cast in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience. Executive Producer Drake Sather committed suicide before the show's release. The pilot was never sold.

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