

# MEN'S CLUB UPDATE

## The Golden Age of Radio and Television



BY HOWARD ARKIN

The North Shore Towers Men's Club, in order to keep our members engaged while we are under the influence of the COVID virus, is holding meetings, discussion groups, and guest speakers on Zoom. Some upcoming topics include The Untold Stories of the Boxers, The Golden Age of Baseball, The Magic Show and Exercises to Do from Home.

Recently, on Thursday, November 19, the North Shore Towers Men's Club presented to the 37 participants who were viewing on Zoom its first double header. Gary Darche's popular "open mike" session was followed later that day by a Toby Horowitz/Jerry Siegel presentation, The Golden Age of Radio and Television, hosted by noted lecturer Richard Knox. After a short delay due to a computer glitch which Toby and Richard quickly resolved, we were on our way.

The first familiar thing that appeared on our screens was something called a test pattern. This was commonplace in the early days of TV. The network's logo would appear on your television screen and remain constant from about 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. when the stations were off the air. Some of the radio shows that Mr. Knox discussed were the Jack Benny Show, Edgar



Bergen and Charley McCarthy, The Lone Ranger and Duffy's Tavern Suspense. The one that brought back the most memories to me, however, was The Shadow. I recall my parents taking me to the WOR studio in Manhattan one Sunday afternoon to see the show being taped. I don't remember exactly why, but I think they took me to prove that The Shadow did not exist. Their efforts, however, failed. The next Sunday afternoon I was glued to the TV, remaining loyal to The Shadow.

Another radio show that I was a big fan of was Captain Midnight. I remember sending away for a decoder ring and then foolishly giving it to a classmate, Ronald Contino, who let me replace him as the eraser monitor in exchange. In case you don't remember, it was the eraser monitor's job to clap the erasers together which thereby would keep the blackboard clean.

I'm not sure I got the better end of the bargain. Mr. Knox also showed us some memorable 1950s television commercials. Dinah Shore singing "See the USA in your Chevrolet" had me back behind the wheel of my 1958 Impala.

Many of the TV shows from the 50s would not be candidates for an Emmy Award today, but Playhouse 90, a television anthology drama series from that time might be the exception. Playhouse 90 showcased some very talented writers such as Paddy Chayefsky and William Faulkner as well as Rod Serling, the iconic creator of the Twilight Zone series. The first "King of TV Comedy" was Milton Berle, the star of The Texaco Star Theater, a show which kept most of America home on Tuesday evening. If you had a TV set in the late 1940s or 1950s, you might have had a few guests in your living room that night, some invited

and some uninvited. Other great comedy shows were to follow, such as I Love Lucy, the Jackie Gleason Show and Your Show of Shows, to name just a few of the most popular ones.

Two very popular genres of TV shows during the 1950s were cowboy/western and detective/crime. A few of the classic TV westerns Mr. Knox touched upon were Gunsmoke, The Rifleman, Bonanza and The Lone Ranger. Among the crime shows discussed were Dragnet, 77 Sunset Strip and The Untouchables. When was the last time you heard Jack Webb's immortal words "Just the facts ma'am, just the facts."

Television has come a long way from that 12-inch Admiral I remember as a boy to the 80-inch Samsung I have now. As great as the golden age of radio and TV was, I'll certainly take today's TV, even if it's no longer free.

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### Note to Members

For those of you who have not joined into the Men's Club open mike Zoom discussion group, you are missing an opportunity to partake in conversations on different topics each week.

Every Thursday there is a Zoom open mike session at 10:30 am for one hour. Gary Darche is the host and I send out an invite to all Men's Club Members to join in. Please make an effort to join us.

The Men's Club Board and members are working for you while we are under the influence of the COVID virus and locked down.

For information about the North Shore Towers Men's Club, contact me at (tmhgmt@yahoo.com). - Toby Horowitz, President, NST Men's Club

We hope to resume all of our Men's Club activities as soon as possible. Recently, Jerry Siegel has given us two presentations on Channel 995, "The Bronx USA" and "Abbott and Costello," and there are more in the works.

Gary Darche's Men's Club "Open Mike" on Zoom every Thursday

morning continues to attract more viewers each week and we're sure it won't be long before the club's monthly dinners can be resumed.



**WE WANT YOU!**  
THE MEN'S CLUB WANTS YOU TOO!

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The Men's Club Newsletter, a Toby Horowitz production, can be a great means of communication among our membership. Your thoughts and views are welcome. Email Toby Horowitz at: tmhgmt@yahoo.com

Don't miss out! For more information on