

Laughter's timeless appeal

They say art imitates life. The older I get, the more I tend to agree with "they," whoever "they" are. Case in point: the universal truth of the television situation comedy, more popularly known as its abbreviation: sitcom.



From the Publisher's Desk
Tom Stangl

One of the few presents my wife, and I gave each other this Christmas was a year subscription to the streaming service Paramount+. Paramount+ is a video on demand service where you can watch movies and television to your heart's content. The services allow us to gorge ourselves in mindless entertainment.

We decided over a year ago to cut the cord and no longer receive our television entertainment from satellite TV providers. We had been satellite TV folks since the 1990s, using one of the six-foot-wide behemoths before Dish Network and DirecTV offered service with the smaller dishes.

To replicate our offerings from DirecTV, we bought two services: YouTube TV and Philo. We get pretty much everything we did before and a few things more. I wanted Paramount+ to watch the Yellowstone prequel shows and a program called "Evil" that aired one season on CBS before going to the streaming service.

I was pleasantly surprised the service has all six seasons of the original sitcom "I Love Lucy" and all nine seasons of "Everybody Loves Raymond," one of the best sitcoms about marriage and family life.

My wife and I like to watch an episode or two of a sitcoms before going to bed at night. I'm a firm believer in getting some endorphins from laughter before hitting the hay.

In my opinion, the best sitcoms feel like a visit from an old friend. "I Love Lucy" and "Everybody Loves Raymond" are old friends I am enjoying catching up with after years apart.

The writing on both programs is timeless. Even though the first episode of "I Love Lucy" aired 72 years ago, the themes of the struggles between the genders is timeless. There's very little content that needs explanation to someone who is under the age of 21. Lucille Ball and husband Desi Arnaz found a great team of actors and writers and mined some comedy gold. Many have imitated or tried to replicate the formula, but I feel Lucy did it first and best. A total of 180 half hour episodes were made in the six seasons.

Comedian Ray Romano did a genius pivot from the formula of "I Love Lucy" to add his parents and brother to the mix of characters. Again, great writers and excellent actors. A total of 210 half hour episodes were made in the nine seasons.

My wife and I watched an episode of "Everybody Loves Raymond" where his mother, Marie, played by Doris Roberts, came over to Ray's home and began criticizing her daughter-in-law.

My wife had an instant reaction. She could relate to what was going on because she felt the same way during family gatherings with my family. My mother has been dead for over 22 years and Marie Barone brought back strong feelings to my wife. When Ray gives tone deaf excuses to his wife for not helping around the house, I cringed. I was that guy when I was younger.

I'm sure about every person can find something to relate to in these sitcoms. That's the genius of the artform and what keeps me coming back.

As always, I welcome your comments. You can reach me by email at tstangl@theameryfree-press.com, telephone 715-268-8101 or write me at P.O. Box 424, Amery, WI, 54001.

Thanks for reading. I'll keep in touch. Feel free to do the same.



Unquestioned faith

There are a few certainties in my life and one of them involves my uncle Will.

I turn another year older next month and for as long as I can remember, he's been in a wheelchair due to being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. When I saw pictures of him standing up, I still couldn't believe it was him after being told it was him.

Yet, despite being given that life sentence as he said it, and not a death sentence, the man's faith in God couldn't be questioned.

The symptoms started when he was in his 20s and he was officially diagnosed sometime before I was born (my next birthday will be 44).

How could someone have that much faith in God as he spent the last 30-40 years of his life being in a wheelchair and having to depend on others for everything? I couldn't

understand it and I know for a fact I couldn't be like him.

It seemed like his faith only grew stronger over the years as the disease and what came with it made him more and more dependent on assistance. He even converted a room in their basement at their house into a testament of his faith.

The number of religious artifacts I received from him over the last few years grew as he was my godfather.

During the summer, it reached the point in which more 24-hour care assistance was needed and he was moved into a nursing facility.

I was visiting my parents this past weekend and I was told by my mother; he had written a book about his life and his faith in God. Flipping through those pages, he talked about how he met my mom's older sister, their two children and 50-plus years of marriage.

His love of Minnesota sports was also mentioned. For example, when he was able to, you could pencil my aunt and uncle at three to five

Minnesota Twins games a year. I sometimes would be along for some of those.

Being told he was going to be my godfather was a highlight he mentioned as well.

There were samples of his life I had no clue about, knowing he had a younger brother dying at age 2 due to a fire or months after giving birth to his youngest sibling, his mother died of polio. His father then became a single parent of five children as a result.

I hadn't talked to him in months but as I was flipping through the pages, could I imagine him saying those words? 100 percent.

Less than 24 hours later after reading through his life, I received word he passed away at the age of 77.

There's no doubt he's in a better place because of what happened to him physically.

There's also absolutely no doubt he will be missed by his family, including his godson.



Editor
Jason Schulte

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