

Saturday morning and all is well

By Sam Bari

Last weekend, some friends dropped by on Saturday morning with their kids in tow. While the adults chatted over coffee, their children turned on the TV and in less than a minute, we heard giggling and laughing coming from the living room. Curiosity got the best of me, and I went in to see what was so amusing. Much to my delight, they were laughing at the Three Stooges. I was surprised when they told me that they watched the old black-and-white classics all the time.

Then I asked them to name their favorite cartoons. They immediately said the "Roadrunner" and "Tweety Bird." I flipped the channel to the classic cartoon network, and as luck would have it, Wile E Coyote was self-destructing before our eyes. We laughed until our sides ached.

I must admit I was puzzled. I thought the Three Stooges, the Marx Brothers, and the so-called violent cartoons had long been removed from the Saturday morning airwaves because a few adults with nothing better to do had decided that violence on television was corrupting our youth. Apparently, I was errant in my thinking.

It seems that the FCC bent to the pressure of the overzealous do-gooders way back in 1975 and declared the first hour of prime time, 8-9 p.m. EST, to be the "Family Viewing Hour." This meant that any program aired on network television during that sacred 60 minutes could not contain violence, sex, or crime. Even "All in the Family," of Archie Bunker and Meathead fame, didn't make the grade for the approved viewing list and was moved to a 9 p.m. time slot.

The comedy was perfectly acceptable as one of the top-ranked programs for five years, and in the stroke of an executive signature, it was suddenly deemed immoral, racist, and a poor example of good family val-



You can't beat a system you can't understand

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ues. Nevertheless, an intelligent circuit judge by the name of Warren Ferguson declared that the FCC overstepped the boundaries of its authority by denying First Amendment rights and overturned the family-viewing rule in 1977.

Despite the attempts to quash TV violence, Saturday morning went unscathed. Why? Because the producers had just dodged a bullet attacking the heart of their industry — the sponsors.

Before accosting prime time, the do-gooders tried to control television content by attacking television commercials aimed at children. Without sponsors, television production was doomed. The advertising industry saw their intent and formed the Children's Advertising Review Unit or CARU, an advertising industry watchdog that is one of the few avenues for protesting ads considered misleading or potentially harmful to children. This apparently appeased the hardliner anti-fun programming zealots, and they moved on to bigger prey, leaving Saturday morning programming more or less intact.

Although the CARU exists to this day, it doesn't appear to have been effective because nothing has changed. The commercials I witnessed with my friends' children still allowed Kellogg's to try to convince kids that Apple Jacks taste more like cinnamon than apples, implying that apples taste bad. And the Kool-Aid pitcher was still luring kids to drink artificially flavored water loaded with sugar, although they never mentioned the percentage of

sugar involved. To my old-school way of thinking, a lie of omission is still a lie. Just because the ugly truth wasn't revealed does not mean it is non-existent.

The point is, kids know the difference between violence and comedy. They view the Three Stooges as the adult buffoons they were intended to be. It's the kids' opportunity to laugh at silly adults. A Vaudeville pratfall is still as funny today as it was 50 years ago. I do not remember feeling compelled to hit one of my friends in the head with a 2-by-4 just because I watched the Three Stooges do it to each other in a movie.

The "Roadrunner" and "Tweety Bird" cartoons are not violent. Neither the Roadrunner nor Tweety ever did anything violent or vindictive to Wile E Coyote or Sylvester the cat. And Wile E and Sylvester never succeeded in hurting the Roadrunner or Tweety. They didn't hate those birds. They were hungry. All they wanted was a meal. However, they self-destructed in every attempt at capturing their prey. Anyone who doesn't find their ridiculously extreme attempts that never worked funny needs some couch time. They must be suffering from severe depression.

Little kids and pre-adolescents have a sense of humor. Generally, they don't find violent adult programs entertaining. When they watch them, they certainly don't laugh. I question the adults that find those programs so compelling. That's why sensationalism in the news sells. And guess what — the target audience of the violent six o'clock world news is adults. It must be a part of that system we just can't understand.



At a ceremony held Thursday night, members of the Quononoquott Garden Club and the Jamestown Fire Department cut the ribbon to formally open the new garden in front of the Memorial Museum. Cutting the ribbon are past-president Donna Drago and Fire Chief Jim Bryer, at rear are deputy chiefs Howie Tighe and Ken Gladding and club president Gloria Westlake. Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

Sutton honored by state grange

The Rhode Island State Grange Agricultural Department has chosen Robert Sutton of Jamestown as the R.I. State Grange Agriculturist of 2006.

Sutton was nominated by the members of Conanicut Grange #21.

On Oct 6 at 2:30 p.m., the Rhode Island State Grange will honor Sutton at the annual Rhode Island State Grange Session, which will be at the Newport Inn and Spa on West Main Road in Middletown. The public is invited to this ceremony.

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Flying Home by Marine Artist John Mecray

Nathanael Herreshoff's yacht *Columbia* is pictured here during the summer of 1899 in her trials against *Defender*. J.P. Morgan's steam yacht *Corsair* shadows the action, carrying observers from the New York Yacht Club. *Columbia* will successfully defend the Cup off Long Island against Sir Thomas Lipton's first *Shamrock*.

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