

DIMENSIONS OF IMAGINATION

The Official Newsletter of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation



AUTUMN 2022

FOUNDATION NOTES FROM NICK

An Update from RSMF President Nick Parisi

Hello and welcome to our fall 2022 issue of Dimensions of Imagination, the official newsletter of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation. Coming on the heels of SerlingFest 2022, this issue will recap the festivities and celebrate what was a very successful event.

This year's SerlingFest kicked off with "Cocktails from the Zone," a fundraiser hosted by the foundation and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, who announced that she has secured a \$50,000 state grant for the foundation to use toward installing a statue of Rod Serling in Binghamton's Recreation Park. This grant has allowed us to officially begin work on this long-awaited project, with a projected unveiling sometime in late 2023!

Our proposal is for a six-foot, bronze statue of Rod standing

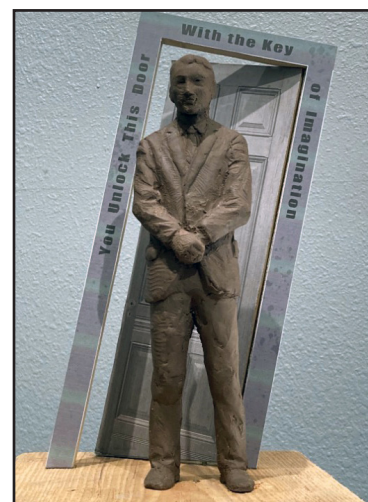
in front of a doorway, the door slightly ajar, with the words "You unlock this door with the key of imagination" etched into the doorframe. The statue and doorway would stand on a substantial base, on which we plan to engrave information concerning key aspects of Rod's life and career. The ground around the statue's base will be comprised primarily of bricks, most of which will be personally inscribed by anyone who donates a given amount to our next Kickstarter campaign – which will be launched very soon after you receive this newsletter!

The funds from our New York State grant will cover most of the cost of creating and installing Rod's statue. Our next (and hopefully final) Kickstarter will raise the balance of the cost for the statue, the base, the groundwork

around the statue, and additional miscellaneous costs. Stay tuned to rodserling.com for details about the Kickstarter and launch date.

Installing a statue of Rod Serling in Recreation Park will be the realization of a goal that the foundation has had for many years. Rod loved his home town and he had a special connection to Recreation Park. The city of Binghamton has honored Rod in several ways – with an historic marker outside Binghamton High School, with a plaque inside Recreation Park's bandstand, and with a star on Binghamton's Walk of Fame. This statue will be the most significant and lasting monument to Rod's monumental impact on the world and his deep affection for his hometown.

After our Cocktail Hour kickoff, SerlingFest 2022 featured presentations by Anne Serling, Marc Zicree, Mark Dawidziak, Mark Olshaker, Tony Albarella, and me; screenings of rare Serling interviews, appearances, and shows including "Knife in the Dark" (Danger, 1954) and "The Challenge" a pilot co-written by Rod and Reginald Rose in 1955, which has never been shown on television. On Sunday, we closed out our event with a gathering in



"Clay Maquette - Rough Representation of the Statue's Proposed Concept/Design."

Recreation Park, enjoying some beautiful weather, scouting out potential spots for Rod's statue, and even fielding questions from the media.

The unveiling of Rod's statue is going to be a major event – so put Binghamton, New York in your travel plans for late 2023!

Nicholas Parisi,
President,
Rod Serling Memorial Foundation



OUR PLEDGE

Rod Serling's achievements in playwriting, speech making and broadcasting are considerable and important. As members of The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, we dedicate ourselves to promote and preserve this great man's contributions to the Arts and Humanities.

We pledge to educate the public about Rod Serling's genius and his passion, hoping that they will understand and appreciate his mastery of the creative arts, his unique understanding of human relationships, his esteem as a writer, his generosity as a speaker in and around Binghamton, and his uncompromising commitment to quality.

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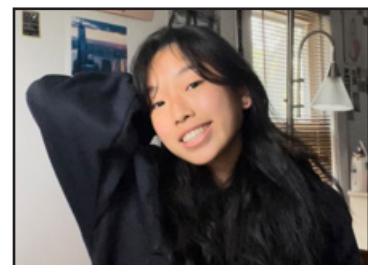
Gail Flug

JENNIFER ZHANG WINS 2022 SERLING SCHOLARSHIP

by Steve Schlich

Jennifer Zhang, a 2022 Binghamton High School graduate and winner of the annual Rod Serling Memorial Foundation Scholarship shares Rod's faith in the goodness of people and their ability to triumph over their own failings:

"The sheer volume of information that humans have access to has grown exponentially since Rod Serling's time, but while there are negative sides, the internet is simultaneously the best tool for combatting the darkness." This place of connection offers "common ground for millions of people as they meet like- or unlike-minded people from all over the world" and "will become



humanity's next movement for positive change."

Jenn possesses the talent and tools to participate in that change, and she has cultivated them. She's a debater. She's a member of multiple honor societies. She sang in choir and mixed chorus. She speaks Chinese.

Continued on following page

Rod Serling Memorial Foundation

Box 2101, Binghamton, New York USA 13902-2101

www.RodSerling.com

NON-PROFIT PLEDGE The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation is operated exclusively for the above and other non-profit purposes, and is registered with the IRS as a non-profit entity. No part of any net earnings shall inure to the benefit of any private member.

ON THE COVER: Thank you to Bill Kobylak for providing the main photo and others in this issue. INSERT: Binghamton Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, and Anne Serling; ON THE BACK COVER: Christopher Tuppa sent us this great cartoon, the first example of what will be a regular feature in our newsletter. Feel free to contact him: christophertuppa@hotmail.com or visit: www.ctupa.com; Instagram: artofctupa

FOUNDATION

RSMF PROFILE

Mark Olshaker - Board Of Directors, Member

Ever since Mark Olshaker decided he wanted to be a writer, he'd been inspired by Rod Serling. The bond was solidified when Mark first met him as a fourteen-year-old, and the two developed a special friendship that lasted the ten years until the end of Rod's life, during which time they met whenever possible, and he gave Mark frequent encouragement, advice and perspectives on life.

Mark grew up in Washington, D.C., and during college, he worked summers and weekends as a country-western disk jockey at a radio station in Frederick County, Maryland. After college he briefly joined an advertising agency before deciding to go free-lance and see where that took him. During this period, he also contributed articles for the counter-culture bi-weekly magazine, *New Times*, including a Final Tribute to Rod Serling in 1975.

He got his start in television documentary writing and production when Ray Hubbard, the vice president for national production for Post-Newsweek -- the broadcast network owned by *The Washington Post* -- took Mark

under his wing and commissioned him to write and produce three documentaries on American history and culture for Post-Newsweek's *American Documents* series. A college friend who was already a published author introduced Mark to his agent, who got Mark his first book contract, a nonfiction account entitled, *The Instant Image: Edwin Land and the Polaroid Experience*.

Mark "returned" to his Serling roots with his first published novel, *Einstein's Brain*, which garnered gratifying reviews and allowed him to pursue novel-writing in addition to the documentary films he was now producing for various PBS entities with Ray Hubbard. Mark's next two novels continued in the science thriller genre, *Unnatural Causes*, involving the CDC and set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War; and *Blood Race*, which takes place during the 1936 Berlin Olympics and suggests alternate (and more intriguing) explanations for what actually happened there.

Following the success of the film "Silence of the Lambs" -- and the increasing interest in profiling and

serial killers -- Mark collaborated with FBI criminal profiler John Douglas on a book detailing his pioneering work hunting the worst serial killers and predators. The success of *Mindhunter* led to a series of ten books on criminal justice with Douglas, including *Journey Into Darkness*, *The Cases That Haunt Us*, *The Killer Across the Table*, and the recently published *When a Killer Calls*. *Mindhunter* became the basis for the Netflix series, helmed by director David Fincher and starring Jonathan Groff and Holt McCallany.

Mark won a national Primetime Emmy as the writer of the PBS special "Roman City," and wrote the opening program of the Peabody Award-winning PBS series "Building Big."

"To this day, Rod remains an essential part of who I am as a



person and a writer," Mark says. "For a long time, I think I tried to write like him, just as he said many of the writers of his generation started out trying to write like Hemingway."

Mark still lives in Washington, D.C. and has been married for most of his life to Carolyn C. Olshaker, an attorney.

RSMF MERCHANDISE



The RSMF has teamed up with Muckles Ink - a retail & commercial screen-printed apparel company owned and operated by Binghamton University Alumni - to print and distribute our official shirt! Proceeds will benefit the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation. It's a great conversation starter to meet fellow fans and a rewarding way to show your support for Rod's legacy!

Details:

- 52/48 Airlume combed and ringspun cotton/polyester
- Unisex sizing
- Coverstitched collar and sleeves
- Shoulder-to-shoulder taping
- Retail fit, side seams
- Tear-away label

Available in black with white print or grey with black print; sizes S to 4X - \$22.00 plus shipping.

Muckles also offers a wide range of Binghamton and Binghamton University shirts and tote bags.

Follow this link on the Muckles website for information.

Books by Mark Olshaker and John Douglas

- 1995 *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit.*
- 1997 *Journey into Darkness*
- 1998 *Obsession: The FBI's Legendary Profiler Probes the Psyches of Killers, Rapists and Stalkers and Tells How to Fight Back*
- 1999 *The Anatomy of Motive: The FBI's Legendary Mindhunter Explores the Key to Understanding and Catching Violent Criminals*
- 1999 *Broken Wings (Mindhunters)*
- 2000 *The Cases That Haunt Us.*
- 2013 *Law & Disorder.*
- 2020 *The Killer Across the Table: Unlocking the Secrets of Serial Killers and Predators with the FBI's Original Mindhunter*
- 2020 *The Killer's Shadow: The FBI's Hunt for a White Supremacist Serial Killer*
- 2022 *When a Killer Calls: A Haunting Story of Murder, Criminal Profiling, and Justice in a Small Town*

Continued from previous page

English, and French.

She also communicates in far more than words. She played in the BHS String Orchestra and Steel Drum Band. She draws and paints in watercolors, acrylic paint, graphite, gouache, colored pencils and charcoal -- not to mention creating collage and embroidery.

Jenn cultivated skills in leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, project management, conflict resolution, time management, creativity and customer service. She pursued her interests in film and photography in her spare time because her class and activity schedules had no space for them.

Are you tired yet? Jenn wasn't. She competed for her alma mater in both indoor and outdoor track & field, played tennis and

won Scholar Athlete awards in 2018 and 2019. She volunteered in theater and worked in a community garden program -- helping youth to grow fresh and organic produce using sustainable methods.

Jenn has found so many ways to touch the world, and to be touched by it. This fall, she begins a new chapter in that interaction. The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation Scholarship will help Jenn pursue her love of Fine Arts at SUNY in New Paltz, New York.

We wish her every success!

The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation Scholarship provides \$1,000 to a graduating senior of the Rod Serling School of Fine Arts at Binghamton High School. The winner is selected based on courses taken, extracurricular activities, a sample of their work and a brief artist statement.

ROD SERLING

ROD SERLING “DIMENSIONS OF IMAGINATION” MEDIA CENTER PROPOSED

The Agency (Broome County IDA/LDC), in partnership with the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, the Serling Family, the Conrad & Virginia Klee Foundation, Broome County, the City of Binghamton and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo's office, recently announced the beginning of a feasibility study for the potential development of a Rod Serling “Dimensions of Imagination” Center for Media and the Arts in Binghamton, NY – Serling's hometown.

Venue Strategies, the firm that is conducting the feasibility study, boasts a strong history of successful collaboration with private corporations, government entities, and educational institutions creating unique places and experiences that drive economic growth. The feasibility study marks phase 1 of the proposed development and will serve to clearly define the overall concept, site and comparable facility analysis, design and construction cost and identify prospective avenues for financial support.

The proposed “Dimension of Imagination” Center for Media and the Arts will join several other major tourist destinations in the Southern Tier of New York such as the Lucy-Desi Museum, the National Comedy Center, the Mark Twain Center, and the Baseball Hall of Fame.

“The proposed development of the Rod Serling ‘Dimensions of Imagination’ Center for Media and the Arts serves to not only



preserve his legacy, but to honor his work by supporting future generations of artists and writers. This center will provide a sense of community for Broome County's growing vibrant arts sector and prove to be a major tourist destination and economic driver for Greater Binghamton,” said CEO of the Leadership Alliance, Stacey Duncan.

“For as long as I can remember, I have been a fan of Rod Serling,” said Binghamton Mayor Jared M. Graham. “Many people don't know that Rod Serling grew up near Recreation Park in Binghamton. I am proud to be here to support the development of a Serling Center for Media and the Arts to honor his legacy as one of the great American creatives of the 20th Century.”

Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo said, “I have long thought our community could do more to

honor the life and legacy of Rod Serling. As a lifelong fan of *The Twilight Zone* I always believed other fans of the show would come to the region if we had a dedicated tourist destination. I am thrilled that we are finally undertaking a feasibility study for the Rod Serling Multi-Media Center for the Arts. The possibilities for what this could mean for our area are endless.”

Broome County Executive Jason Garnar said, “It is long overdue that Rod Serling's hometown have a place dedicated to celebrating his legacy and sharing his vision. Virtually every modern day creative writer and filmmaker was impacted by Serling's work and this center will inspire future generations of writers and artists. Broome County is excited to join this effort to ‘travel through another dimension, a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind.’”

At a recent press conference in Binghamton, Anne Serling, Rod Serling's daughter, shared, “Every summer when we would come east to our cottage on Cayuga Lake, my dad would drive back to Binghamton and visit all the places from his youth: the carousel, his old house, his school, all the old haunts. This trip was an annual pilgrimage. I would see him pull out of the gravel drive and watch him go. There is something poignant about this Serling Center to be erected in his honor, in a place he loved so much and would return to even in his writing. On behalf of my family, thank you for your respect of my father, for your belief in his goals and for bringing him home.”

The feasibility study is expected to begin in December and preliminary results and recommended actions will be provided in late spring of next year.

SERLING ARCHIVE AT ITHACA COLLEGE TO REOPEN

by Gordon C. Webb

Ithaca College in upstate New York is home to The Rod Serling Archive – one of the largest resources on the famous writer and creator of the T.V. series *The Twilight Zone*. Serling's work is proudly housed at the College's main library as a special collection within its Archives.

However, this material has been unavailable for the last year, following a series of staffing cutbacks that eliminated the Ithaca College Archivist position in May 2021. Beginning in spring 2022, the Archives was reopened for limited service to faculty and staff. Michelle Millet, who was hired as College Librarian in

July 2022, recently announced future plans to reopen the collection to outside researchers. Cathy Michael, Communications Librarian, who works with Television & Digital Media faculty and students at the Park School of Communication, agreed to serve as a liaison to the Serling Archives. This would open the door for journalists and others interested in researching Serling's work to gain access to the collection by special arrangement -- beginning with the spring 2023 semester.

Serling taught Screenwriting at Ithaca College in the late 60s and early 70s, and his wife Carol was a long-time member of the Ithaca College Board of

Trustees. Shortly after Serling's death in 1975, Mrs. Serling began donating examples of the writer's work to Ithaca, and the archive has grown to include a complete set of Serling's original *Twilight Zone* scripts, his movie screenplays, awards, books and other memorabilia. Carol Serling worked tirelessly to preserve and commemorate her husband's work until her death in January, 2020.

Other Serling collections can be found in archives at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and UCLA.

Right - Examples of Serling's scripts, awards & memorabilia on display at the Ithaca College library



ROD SERLING

ROD SERLING'S BOOKSHELF

By Gordon C. Webb

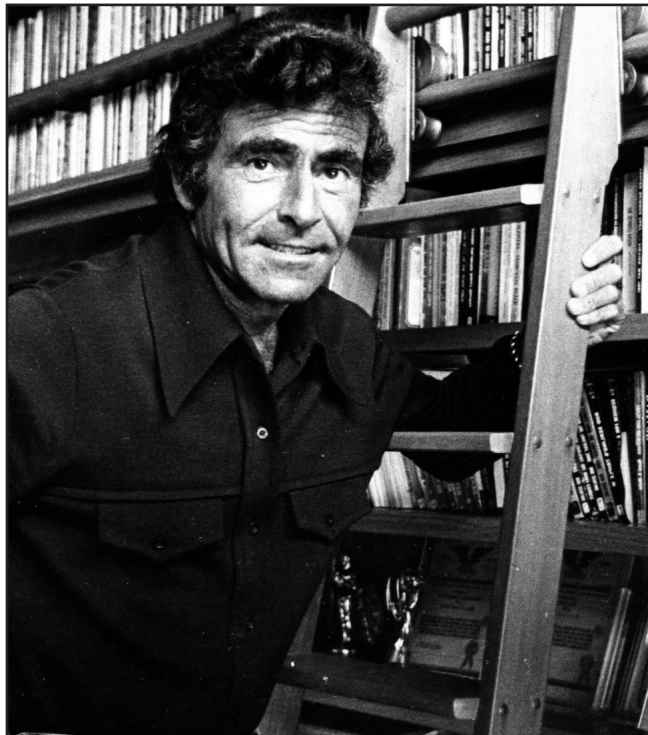
"A man's bookcase will tell you everything you'll ever need to know about him."

- crime-fiction writer
Walter Mosley

If you could go back in time and survey the bookshelf in Rod Serling's study it would undoubtedly be bulging with volumes -- on history, religion, politics, social science and a fair amount of fiction -- including mystery, crime, fantasy and his favorite genre -- science fiction. His library also included some communication textbooks, which are now part of "The Rod Serling Archive" at Ithaca College in upstate New York.

One of these volumes in particular -- *Radio Drama in Action: Twenty-five Plays of a Changing World* by Erik Barnouw -- fits perfectly on Rod Serling's bookshelf. Published in 1945, this textbook may have been required reading for one of his courses at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio where he studied in the late 1940s. Serling discovered the medium as a creative outlet, became manager of the college's radio workshop and worked at several commercial stations in nearby Springfield, Ohio before graduating in 1950. The first dramatic scripts he sold were for radio... including three that were broadcast nationally on CBS network's *Grand Central Station*.

Another of Serling's books in the collection at Ithaca is titled *Radio Drama Acting & Production* -- published in 1950 -- a "how-to" textbook covering script formatting and even "hand-and-arm signals" used in directing radio dramas. But this was the tail-end of radio drama's hey-day and a brand new medium -- television



Serling in his study; book photos courtesy of the Rod Serling Archive at Ithaca College.

-- would bring the demise of radio drama. This was the dawn of what would become known as "the golden age of television." Soon, T-V networks were demanding new dramatic scripts, and Serling became one of a handful of writers who would provide them.

Serling's personal library also included *The Effects of Mass Communication* by Joseph T. Klapper which was published in 1960, by which time Serling was already one of television's best-known writers with four of his six Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades under his belt. He had fought hard to achieve this success by dealing with tough

issues head-on and refusing to cater to demands by networks and sponsors to "water down" his scripts. I wonder what he thought as he read about Klapper's research, which analyzed how mass media influences the opinions, values and behavior of their audiences. The author's "reinforcement theory" suggests that mass media *does not* have a direct and powerful influence over audiences.

The last example of Serling's books in the Ithaca College Archive collection is *Audiovisual Scriptwriting* by Norton S. Parker. This volume wasn't published until 1968, and is promoted as a "classic textbook on scriptwriting. Covers the single column

(screenplay) and 2-column (industrials) formats... key craft elements... dialogue... training films... documentary. (An) excellent reference book for the filmmaker's or writer's library." Really? This nuts-and-bolts "how-to" book was on Rod Serling's bookshelf?!?

Maybe there is one explanation: in the late '60s and early '70s Serling taught advanced screenwriting at Ithaca College. Always the last to recognize his own immense talent and unmatched success, perhaps this writer -- whose work is still broadcast around the world -- simply felt he had to own this book to justify being called "Professor Serling."

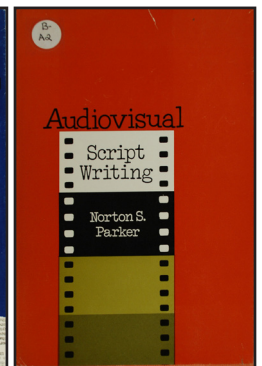
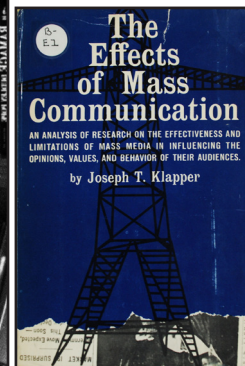
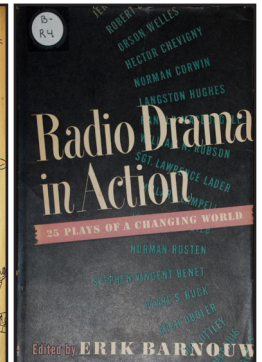
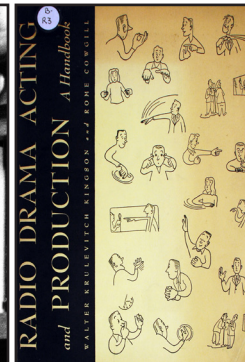


PHOTO GALLERY - MR. SERLING GOES TO COLLEGE

During his time at Ithaca, Serling screened his own work and mentored students by providing feedback on their scripts and projects. He even occasionally appeared in their films and hosted students at his family home on nearby Cayuga Lake.

Shown here: an informal seminar with the writer in the College's T-V studio and (far right) appearing in a taped program with other guests



ROD SERLING

RSMF ARCHIVE

Rod Serling Letter to Joan Crawford

by Andrew Polak

We have a few original Rod Serling letters in our collection. Here's one from him to Joan Crawford, who starred in "Eyes" for the pilot episode of *Night Gallery*. You may notice, though, that this letter was sent in 1966 and the *Night Gallery* episode wasn't filmed until 1969. What would this letter be in reference to? I'd love to know what "approbation" she had written to Rod that made him so grateful.

In a quick search on the internet, I found a telegram that Joan had

sent to Rod after seeing *Planet of the Apes* – released in early 1968. Obviously, she was a fan of Rod -- which may have been her reason for agreeing to do *Eyes*.

To give you a grasp of the era, here's a link to a Joan Crawford interview in 1966:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlW5W2vtad0>

And here is a link to a Steven Spielberg interview talking about directing her in that pilot episode:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FeRJCJe88g>



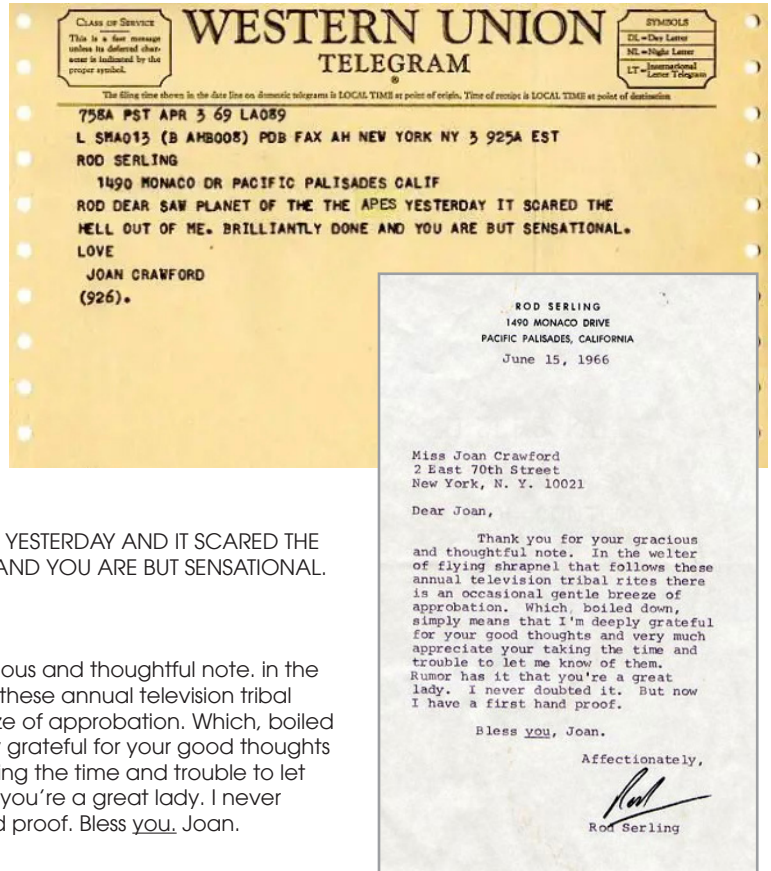
Joan Crawford in "Eyes."

APRIL 3, 1969

ROD DEAR SAW PLANET OF THE APES YESTERDAY AND IT SCARED THE HELL OUT OF ME. BRILLIANTLY DONE AND YOU ARE BUT SENSATIONAL. LOVE JOAN CRAWFORD

June 15, 1966

Dear Joan, Thank you for your gracious and thoughtful note. in the welter of flying shrapnel that follows these annual television tribal rites there is occasional gentle breeze of approbation. Which, boiled down, simply means that I'm deeply grateful for your good thoughts and very much appreciate your taking the time and trouble to let me know of them. Rumor has it that you're a great lady. I never doubted it. But now I have first hand proof. Bless you, Joan. Affectionately, Rod Serling



WORDS AND MUSIC FROM CLASSIC TWILIGHT ZONE EPISODE

by Gordon C. Webb

Concert-goers in Rod Serling's hometown were treated to a live performance of music from *The Twilight Zone*.

On October 22, the Binghamton Philharmonic presented a one-of-a-kind performance of "Walking Distance" complete with a reading of Serling's dialog from the show. Paul Cienniwa, executive director of the Binghamton Philharmonic described the event as "a perfect marriage of spoken word and music in the perfect setting: the Helen Foley Theatre at Binghamton High School -- named for Serling's drama teacher." Serling, who graduated from BHS in 1943, grew up on Bennett Avenue on Binghamton's West Side, within easy walking distance of Recreation Park, the inspiration for his nostalgic script which is considered one of the best examples of his writing for the series.

The haunting music for "Walking Distance" was composed by Bernard Hermann, whose scores are featured in the soundtrack of dozens of films, including Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* and *North by Northwest*, *Citizen Kane*, *Fahrenheit 451* and the sci-fi classic *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. And, for this special performance, the Binghamton Philharmonic was conducted by Michael McGehee, Los Angeles-based conductor of the Hollywood Studio Orchestra. To bring the performance to life, the Endicott Rotary Foundation provided a mechanical carousel organ -- to recreate the sound of the carousel which is a centerpiece of Serling's story.

And making the performance even more special for the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation, the cast of "Southern Tier Actors Read" -- which performed the script included Joe Bardales, a member of the Foundation's board as Martin Sloan's father, Robert.



Top: part of the *Walking Distance* cast with Joe Bardales on the far right; Left: the carousel organ; Right: conductor Michael McGehee
Photo credit: Kathrynne Fletcher of Bizlife.

Why Rod Serling?

By Nicholas Parisi

Following is a very slightly edited/condensed version of opening remarks delivered at SerlingFest, August 13, 2022

Over the past few weeks, I have been asked (even more often than usual) "Why Rod Serling?" "Why is there a Foundation dedicated to Rod Serling?" "What's so important about Rod Serling?" So, I figured that an answer might be in order.

Last night, during our video marathon across the street, one of the shows that we screened is a rare one called "The Challenge." It was co-written by Rod and Reginald Rose – one of the few times that Rod actively collaborated on a script with another writer. I mention this show because of one line of dialogue that comes right at the end. The protagonist has been through a bit of an ordeal and he has an epiphany – he says, "You know, I learned something today. I learned that no man's got a right to feel strongly about something until he's taken the trouble to figure out why" he feels that way.

I can't say with certainty whether Rod wrote that line or Reginald Rose did, but it certainly sounds like Rod. I say that partly because Rod would often make a similar point during speeches and lectures. Whatever the topic was that he was talking about, he would often say something to the effect of, "I know I may be emotional about this, but I'm not speaking solely from emotion – this is something that I've applied some logic to, given some thought to, and as a result, I think I'm justified in speaking out about it."

So, what I'm getting at is that I've had to do a little more thinking about this question, "Why Rod Serling?" Why do I – and we – feel so strongly about this man's place in history?

Our friend and fellow board member, Mark Dawidziak, has likened Rod Serling to Mark Twain, saying that both Serling and Twain are "moralists in disguise." I have a feeling that Mark would agree that, at least in Serling's case, the disguise was pretty thin. I know of no other writer who wore his heart on his literary sleeve more obviously than Rod Serling did.

There's a very common piece of writing advice that I'm sure you've heard, and which I do not completely ascribe to, that says

"write what you know." A more valuable piece of writing advice, I think, is "write what you're passionate about." That was Rod Serling's approach. Passion is something that we can all recognize in the arts and it's what we respond to most strongly. We know when a writer or a filmmaker or a musician is just going through the motions. That was never Rod Serling.

In Serling's now-famous 1959 interview by Mike Wallace, Serling said: "In my twelve years of writing, Mike, I can at least lay claim to this: I have never written beneath myself. I have never written anything that I didn't want my name attached to..."

Integrity and passion – two qualities that Rod Serling displayed in abundance. So, what was Serling most passionate about? Likely everyone here could rattle off that list of topics. Racial prejudice. Antisemitism. Intellectual freedom. The dehumanizing effects of violence and war. Societal or governmental oppression. So that I don't overstay my welcome up here, I'm going to highlight just one of the many themes that recurs in Serling's work. That is Serling's belief in the basic goodness of individual human beings.

Thanks to *Twilight Zone* episodes like "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" and "The Shelter," it would be easy to conclude – incorrectly – that Rod Serling was a misanthrope; that he thought of human beings as barely removed from animals, just one small step away from behaving like savages. So I want to first deal briefly with this misconception. I say it's a misconception, but "here's what Rod Serling said about that in relation to "Maple Street" during a 1971 appearance at UCLA: "I don't suggest that I am so hopelessly and totally resigned to the ultimate destruction of the human race, that this is what motivates my writing. I submit that, philosophically, if anything could be drawn from that piece, is that there are forms of violence which are simply prejudice and bias, naked hatred, which find ultimately its projection in violence, which can be self-destructive. I don't suggest that, yes, this is what's going to happen to every Maple Street, I simply submit that this conceivably could be the end result of our mutual hatred, and I think we're seeing a lot of that today."

That's Rod Serling making

the point explicitly, rhetorically. Dramatically, a good explanation for this distinction can be found in an episode of *The Loner* called "Widow on the Evening Stage." In this episode, Bill Colton, our hero played by Lloyd Bridges, is protecting a native American woman from a lynch mob, and he tells her, "I know this much: If you take good men and you stick them into a mob, take away their names, faces, identity, take away their responsibility, they're no longer good men."

"Maple Street" and "The Shelter" are not statements of belief – they are warnings. They are warnings about what can happen if we subjugate our individual morality – our good, sound, individual morality – to the unthinking emotionalism of a mob.

Serling's belief in the inherent goodness of individual human beings is obvious all over his body of work. One somewhat odd example that I particularly admire is from a television movie that Rod wrote called "The Doomsday Flight."

This script deals with a terrorist plot to blow up an airplane. Late in the film, the villain, who has already planted the bomb on a plane, is having a drink in a bar, and from the way he is behaving, it's clear that this guy has a few squirrels running loose in his attic. The bartender – who doesn't yet know anything about the bomb plot – is becoming annoyed with this guy's strange behavior, and he gets even more annoyed when this very odd person is the only one left in the bar – it's late, and the bartender just wants to close up and go home.

But here's what happens: the villain – who is never named, by the way – suddenly clutches at his chest and seems to have trouble breathing, exhibiting the signs of a heart attack. The bartender's tone immediately changes from annoyance to concern. He says "Hey buddy, you all right? Let me get you a glass of water." He tells him that his mother-in-law has a heart condition and that she takes medications for it – he asks if the guy has any medications on him that he needs to take. If a writer other than Rod Serling had written that scene, some very different dialogue suggests itself. In another writer's hands, couldn't you easily



imagine this character saying something more like "Hey Buddy, don't you die in here! If you drop dead in here, I'm never getting out of this place!"? Of course, I'm not saying that every writer, or even most other writers would have handled it that way, but the point is that Rod Serling would never have handled it that way. Way back in 1951, one of his earliest scripts, "Finchley versus the Bomb," contains this line of dialogue: "I believe that every human being would sacrifice anything at a given moment to save somebody else." Schmaltzy? Pollyanna? Yeah, probably. But Rod Serling believed it.

Why Rod Serling?

I don't think that I need to name names, reference specific dates, or run the enormous risk of mentioning political parties to support the position that it is important for all of us to take the trouble to figure out why we feel strongly about the things we feel strongly about, to listen to our better angels, to tune out the demagogues who encourage mob mentality, and to have faith in the idea that every one of us is basically good. Rod Serling used his genius to deliver these messages not in tracts, not in newspaper editorials that might be read at the breakfast table and forgotten by dinner – he delivered these messages in stories that mesmerized us and expanded our imaginations. He delivered them in a form that was so good, so – to use one of Rod's favorite words – so qualitative – that we are still absorbing these messages and watching these shows sixty years after they were first broadcast. These messages are important – and so is the messenger.

This is why Rod Serling. This is why Rod Serling deserves to be acknowledged, honored, and remembered.

Thank you.

SERLINGFEST

Growing Up Serling

By Jeff Serling

Imagine growing up where every grocery store, bank, lawyer and public entity sees your name on a document and pauses for a moment to make the connection. That was growing up for me. Multiple times a week I'm asked the question "Are you related to Rod Serling?" and then the inevitable, "Do you remember the episode with _____?" (Insert Doll, Cookbook, Mask, Cornfield etc.).

That was me. I'm Jeff Serling; nephew to Rod, proud son of Robert, husband and father of two adult boys. My path was a little different than my uncle or father as my writing mostly consists of some online blogs, an occasional wordy social media post and having my arm twisted to write something for this amazing newsletter. I work in the software industry in Seattle... coached football for 20+ years and took a bit of a different path from my father, as a lot of people do.

In August of 2022, I attended my first SerlingFest. Being a Sci-Fi and comic book fan, I have attended my share of conventions but this is the first one that I actively was participating in. Before I go into the actual convention let me set the scene for a moment:

Binghamton, Ithaca, Syracuse and most of upstate New York have been kind of a second home for me. There is so much Serling history that every time I visit, I become overwhelmed with emotion wherever I go. This year I visited my grandparents' grave in Syracuse for the first time, visited the graves of my parents and Rod and Carol -- who are all buried side by side, and spent time at the lake which I have done for probably 30-35 summers of my life.

That sense of history is palatable when I'm there. I watched as my son was streaming Instagram live from the Carousel in Binghamton, and wondered if I might be standing in the exact same spot as my grandfather Sam when he watched his two boys play in Recreation Park. I sit on a bench or I visit a restaurant and wonder if my dad or uncle ever ate a sandwich there. I drive down Bennett Ave and I see two kids riding bikes and immediately wonder if those kids are truly there, or am I seeing ghosts of the Serling boys from the early 1900's playing cowboys and pretending their bikes are horses. That feeling of nostalgia, of pride and that



Left: Jeff, age 9, with his dad, Robert, Summer 1981; Right: Jeff, age 2, with Uncle Rod, Summer 1974

feeling of being home wasn't just how Rod felt, it's felt by all of the Serling family and it's almost indescribable.

But after my few days of reminiscing and being in my own time warp, SerlingFest starts and I find myself meeting Rod's fans and admirers from all over the country. I think the thing that amazes me most is how this man (who, for me, was simply "Uncle Rod") continues to bring people together nearly 50 years after his passing. To see the excitement of meeting all the amazing authors who have been inspired by his work, to meet the incredible board members of the foundation who spend a lot of their personal time honoring the Serling legacy, and then, to meet the fans and hear their incredible stories of what Rod Serling means to them, how their lives have been impacted, and to listen to their warm and heartfelt admiration is

truly moving.

So, when I was asked to write about what it was like to attend SerlingFest I was trying to summarize it... and one word came to mind. Humbling. SerlingFest became for me a truly humbling experience. People asked to take pictures and get autographs from someone who is a software director and a pretty good football coach. But listening to people come and tell me stories of meeting my grandmother, visiting the deli/butcher shop run by my grandfather, telling me never-before-heard tales of interactions with my father, and ultimately the impact my uncle made on them is humbling - and comforting. So, while I have no plans to write my own TV pilot or to complete the trilogy of the *President's Plane is Missing*, I'm simply honored and proud to be a Serling. I'm proud of my heritage and all that the

men and women of the Serling Family have accomplished.... proud that my amazing cousin Anne has the writing gene passed on to her... and I'm proud when the Flight Attendant looks at the name on my credit card when I purchase a meal in-flight and asks me 2 questions:

Are you related to the guy from the Twilight Zone?

Do you remember the one with the Gremlin on the plane?

I always say, "Yes ma'am, I'm very proud. And as a Serling I feel it's my duty to sit and keep watch over the wing. You never know what might happen."

If you are reading this newsletter, you are obviously a big fan of Rod Serling and the *Twilight Zone*. Thank you for being part of the Serling Legacy. I hope to see you all at SerlingFest for years to come.

AS TIMELESS AS INFINITY
HONORING THE LIFE, WORDS AND
IMAGINATION OF ROD SERLING



DESTINATION: BINGHAMTON
RECREATION PARK

A special thank you to
our sponsors, all the
attendees and the
local Binghamton
press who helped us
kick off SerlingFest 2022
to raise money for our
statue fund!

We are \$3,000
closer to our goal!

Cocktails FROM THE Zone
SERLINGFEST WEEKEND KICK-OFF
Presented by Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo
and The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation

Help raise funds for "As Timeless as Infinity,"
a campaign to erect a statue of
Rod Serling in Recreation Park.

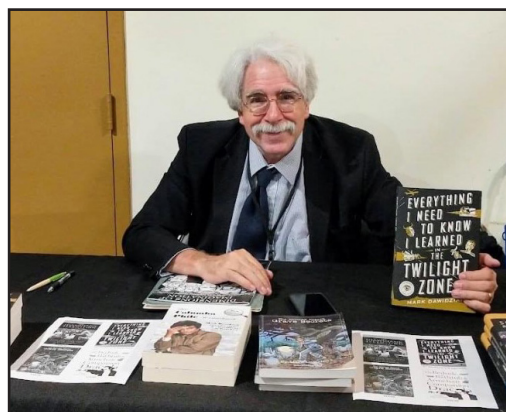
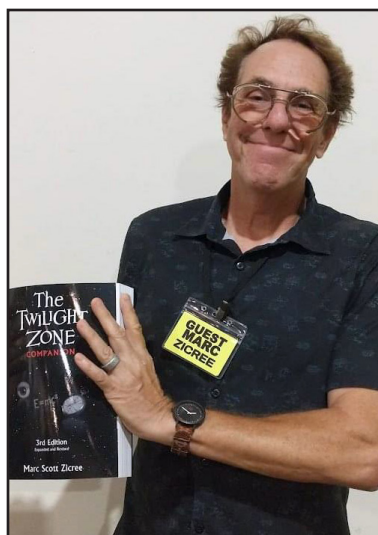
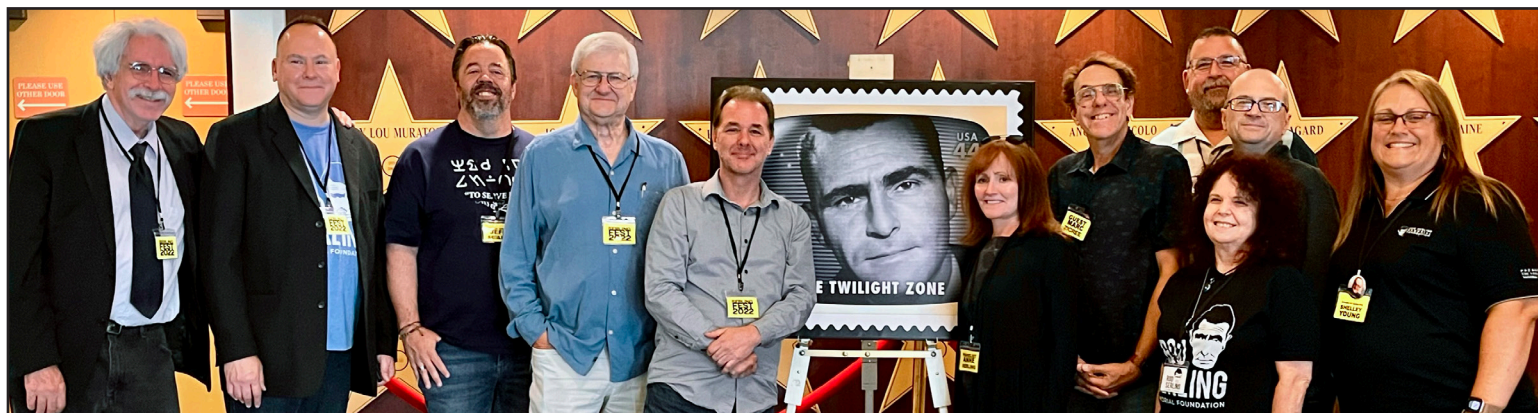
Featuring: A presentation by the Rod
Serling Memorial Foundation and a
preview of "Walking Distance" by
Paul Clemm of the
Binghamton Philharmonic
and actors from the Southern
Tier Actors Read (S.T.A.R.).

Friday, August 12th,
5:00-6:30 pm
DoubleTree by Hilton
225 Water Street,
Binghamton

Ticket price: \$60/person
includes one drink plus
hors d'oeuvres
Available at www.SerlingFest2022.com.
Sponsorships Available.



SERLINGFEST



Top row: The RSMF Board of Directors family: Mark Dawidziak, Andrew Polak, Jeff Serling, Mark Olshaker, Nicholas Parisi, Anne Serling, Marc Zicree, Tony Albarella, Gail Flug, Joe Bardals, Shelley McKay Young

Second row: Nick & Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo; presentation; Tony and Cindy Albarella

Third row: Marc Z. & the TZ bible; Jeff & Shelley; Joe Bardales & Andy Horowitz perform Walking Distance; Gail keeps things tidy at Recreation Park

Bottom row: Nick's birthday surprise; Mark D. book signing; Nick & Donna interviewed by Binghamton's Fox 40

BEYOND THE ZONE

Nod to a Gentle Giant

By Tony Albarella

Back near the turn of this century, I placed a call to interview a Golden Age of Television veteran, a past president of the Writer's Guild of America and one of the creative forces who helped guide the production of *The Twilight Zone*. The voice on the end of the line was gentle, soft-spoken; our conversation started as most professional calls between strangers do: polite, reserved, and a little bit trepidatious. An hour-and-a-half later, having swapped stories and personal details, the call ended with chuckles, thank-yous and a promise by my interviewee to keep in touch.

That interview subject was writer/producer Del Reisman, and he honored his promise to me many, many times over in successive years. Del remained not only a valued and trusted resource for all projects relating to Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone* and the evolution of television, but one that was always a joy to tap. Like Serling himself, Del was a World War II combat veteran who was small in physical stature but went on to become an influential giant in the industry.

"In *Twilight Zone*," Del noted of Serling, "his sense of storytelling was very sophisticated, very knowing. But his skill was language. Dialogue, and his intros, the choice of language... actors of considerable experience and prominence wanted to play in a Rod Serling script. They knew that the part would have a certain richness and a certain dimension, no matter what it was."



Del Reisman served as producer, writer or story editor on shows as varied as *Rawhide*, *Charlie's Angels*, *Cagney & Lacey*, *Lou Grant*, *Magnum P.I.*, *Airwolf*, *The Untouchables*, *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *Banacek*, *Kung Fu* and *Peyton Place*. He served the Writers Guild of America, West with terms as both president and vice-president, membership in the board of directors and the chairing of over twenty WGAW committees. As story editor for the prestigious CBS series *Playhouse 90*, Reisman worked with many of the Golden Age's most acclaimed writers, directors and actors in the frantic environment of live television. He then became an associate producer of Rod Serling's enduring classic, *The Twilight Zone*.

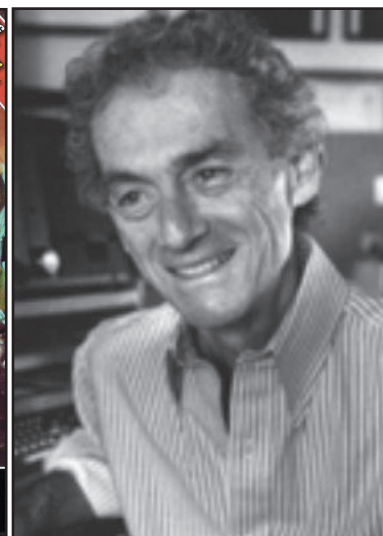
"*Playhouse 90* was a major effort every week," Reisman explained. "Nothing before it had been done



at more than an hour on a weekly basis. It was an anthology, a new show each week, so it sounded slightly impossible...it was tough to do and we stumbled a few times, but we also had some wonderful stuff. It had a level of prestige and we attracted a lot of fine actors.

"That whole *Twilight Zone* experience was very exciting and very fulfilling for me. I'm thrilled that I had it. It was just a delight, all the way. To have the live television experience, particularly on *Playhouse 90*, then working with Rod again on *Twilight Zone*, I feel I had the greatest opportunity to be exposed to many major talents."

Del's recollections were invaluable to me personally, as was his easy-going and friendly manner. He highlighted the production panel I hosted at the 2004 Stars of the Zone Convention, and since he was always just a friendly phone



call away, I frequently turned to him as a resource for numerous projects. The largest of these was the twelve-year-long odyssey of researching the *As Timeless As Infinity: The Complete Twilight Zone Scripts Of Rod Serling* book series. As our conversations accumulated, I realized that Del had shared so much that his material deserved attention outside of the isolated quotes I could publish, and he deserved some measure of modern recognition for his role in television's development. I pitched and produced an interview article that ran in an issue of *FilmFaxPlus* and, while it highlighted his *Twilight Zone* work, it also encompassed his entire career.

That piece became the cover article of the August, 2008, issue of *FilmFaxPlus*, and can be found in its entirety on our website: <https://rodserling.com/del-reisman-article-in-filmfax/>. In the dozen or so articles I wrote for the magazine, this was the only one that commanded the cover, which featured some beautiful *Twilight Zone* artwork. I was grateful Del and I were able to, in some small way, get his name and legacy out to a new generation of television fans.

It's a legacy that still deserves to be recognized. Del passed away in early 2011; I had the pleasure of knowing him for less than a decade, and now he's been gone for more than another decade. But he's not forgotten, hence this nod to a talented writer and story editor, a founding father of *The Twilight Zone*, and most significantly, a generous, creative, and caring soul.



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ROD SERLING WEB SOURCES

Official RSMF Facebook page
www.facebook.com/RSMemorialFoundation

The Original Twilight Zone Facebook group
www.facebook.com/groups/TheTwilightZoneGroup

Dimensions of Imagination
Official page for the book *Rod Serling: His Life, Work, And Imagination* by RSMF President Nick Parisi
www.rodserlingdimensions.com

Twilight Zone on MeTV
Includes schedule, episode guide and trivia
metv.com/shows/the-twilight-zone

Shadows and Substance

A great Rod Serling blog written by RSMF member Paul Gallagher
thenightgallery.wordpress.com

Night Gallery - Art of Darkness

Official page for the book *Art Of Darkness*
www.facebook.com/NightGalleryArtOfDarkness/

Anne Serling Books

www.facebook.com/AnneSerlingBooks

The Twilight Zone Podcast

Hosted by Tom Elliot
www.thetwilightzonepodcast.com

TWILIGHT ZONE

The Simpsons In The Twilight Zone

By Gail Flug

"I know for a fact, obviously, because my kids grew up watching the show, that there are some things they are introduced to from The Simpsons, and then later in life, they see the thing we're parodying. My kids had not seen *Casablanca*, and we'd done parodies of *Casablanca*."

Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*

Throughout its 30-plus year run, *The Simpsons* has been renowned for clever writing, strong characters, dark humor and references – both definitive and obscure – to classic movies, music and television. A parody can come across as pure genius to those in on the joke, but best if the gag is still funny to the average viewer.

When *The Simpsons* introduced their annual Halloween show, "Treehouse of Horror," it opened the door for episodes inspired by pure fantasy, giving its writers creative license to let their imaginations run wild. Having the episode broken up into three separate, standalone story segments allowed the stories to be quick, incredibly witty and memorable without breaking the continuity of the series.

Let's explore the many times the Simpsons – parents Homer and Marge, with kids Bart, Lisa and Maggie – took a turn into the bizarre and hilarious world into *The Twilight Zone*. Spoiler alerts!

"Hungry are the Damned" (Season 2 - Episode 3) ref: "To Serve Man" The Simpson family is abducted by aliens who plan to take them to their home planet. On board the ship, they are offered an endless bounty of food and are encouraged to eat all they want. Lisa finds a book in the kitchen which reads *How To Cook Humans* and the family confronts the aliens that the feasting is meant to fatten them up. A series of hilarious removal of "space dust" reveals the book is actually titled "How to Cook for Forty Humans," and the Simpsons are sent back to Earth in shame.

"Bart's Nightmare" (Season 3 - Episode 7) ref: "It's A Good Life" Unquestionably, this segment was more of a remake. It begins with a Serling-esque narration explaining Springfield is under control by a boy (Bart) who demands everyone must think happy thoughts. He can read minds, and change people and objects into other forms. And like the classic TZ



Rod in Simpsons yellow, Bart enters the Night Gallery, Springfield mailman

episode, he changes Homer into a jack-in-the-box.

"Clown Without Pity" (Season 4 - Episode 5) ref: "Living Doll" Bart is gifted a Krusty The Clown doll for his birthday, which like Talky Tina, speaks of love with the pull of a string. All is well until Homer plays with it, and the doll threatens and tries to kill him. It is later he finds out the doll has a 'good or evil' switch.

"Terror at 5 1/2 ft. (Season 5 - Episode 5) ref: "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet." Bart is the only one to notice that a gremlin has attached itself to the school bus and is slowly tearing it to pieces. The bus falls apart when they arrive at school, and Bart is taken on a stretcher to the hospital. The opening of the episode is also a parody of *Night Gallery*, as Bart introduces each segment through a gallery of paintings.

"Homer's" (Season 7 - Episode 6) ref: "Little Girl Lost" This segment marked a breakthrough as it featured one of the earliest examples of 3D animation. It could also be considered a remake. Homer enters a portal behind a bookcase and gets lost inside the third dimension. He even says "It's like something from that Twilighty show about that Zone". Professor Fink is asked to help bring Homer back and draws the exact diagram on the wall from the referenced episode.

"The Genesis Tub" (Season 8 - Episode 1) ref: "The Little People" Lisa plans a science project to see how long one of her baby teeth could be dissolved by soda. After the tooth is accidentally charged by a static electric shock, a minuscule yet advanced civilization is created in the petri dish. Bart is a continuous threat as he can cause mass destruction with a fingertip; Lisa is beamed down to their size to save them but is unable to do anything because of her size. As they didn't figure out how to change her back, she stays on as their 'god,'

and Bart hands in the science project as his own.

"Stop the World I Want to Goof Off" (Season 15 - Episode 1) ref: "A Kind Of Stopwatch" Bart and his BBF Milhouse obtain a stopwatch that can stop time. After pulling pranks over family, school and the town the watch breaks, freezing all in place. The boys fix the watch over 15 years and restart the world. But they have aged, and nothing else has.

"The Ned Zone" (Season 16 - Episode 1) ref: "The Purple Testament" After a head injury, Ned Flanders can visualize how somebody is going to die.

"I've Grown A Costume on Your Face" (Season 17 - Episode 4) ref: "The Masks" A witch curses the town on Halloween so that they turn into the costumes and masks they are wearing.

There have also been full-length episodes that included a *Twilight Zone* reference which only a well-versed Zoner would pick up. Perhaps a coincidence? Most likely not.

"Bart's Comet" (Season 6 - Episode 14) ref: "The Shelter" When a comet is heading toward Springfield, everyone forces their way into Ned Flanders's bomb shelter.

"El Viaje Misterioso de Nuestro Jomer" (Season 8 - Episode 9) ref: "Old Man In The Cave" Homer is given a message to find his soul mate during a hallucination from eating extremely hot chili peppers. While wandering around town, he comes across a lighthouse with a sign noting it is operated by Earl. With the belief Earl could be the person he's looking for, Homer walks in only to find the lighthouse is automated by a computer, and E.A.R.L means Electronic Automatic Robotic Lighthouse.

"The Strong Arms of the Ma"

(Season 14 - Episode 9) ref: "Time Enough At Last"

In a rush to get home, Marge runs over the mailman. He is not hurt but pinned under the car. While waiting for help to arrive, he pulls a copy of *Twilight Zone Magazine* with Henry Bemis on the cover from his mailbag but is disappointed as he finds his eyeglasses are broken.

"Them: Robot" (Season 23 - Episode 17) ref: "The Brain Center at Whipple's" and "I Sing the Body Electric" To save money, all the workers at the nuclear power plant are replaced by robots leading to mass unemployment throughout Springfield. Homer is the only employee kept to supervise and treats the robots like co-workers to build a relationship with them. When he is in danger of being hit by a truck, one of the robots pushes him out of the way, and takes the hit, saving Homer's life.

This list is by no means complete, but additional these bits need a mention: Rod is seen smoking a cigarette in the opener of *Treehouse of Terror XXIV* (Season 25 - Episode 2) directed by Guillermo del Toro. The scene from "Wild Barts Can't Be Broken" (Season 10 - Episode 11) with the residents of the retirement home playing in the street is a nod to "Kick The Can". Marge insults Homer's laziness by saying, "Oh, please. You get exhausted watching *The Twilight Zone Marathon!*" in "New Kids on the Blecch" (Season 12 - Episode 14). And in one episode, Comic Book guy says, "I can't wait for the World Series to end. To me, baseball is only good when they show *Twilight Zone* reruns during rain delays." Note: the Halloween episodes were always in jeopardy of airing late due to sporting events on Fox TV.

Although Halloween has just passed, the Simpsons' "Treehouse of Horror" episodes, and the rest, are fun to watch any time of year. The entire series can be streamed on Disney Plus, with various clips available on YouTube.

TWILIGHT ZONE

SERLING'S RE-ZONING EFFORTS: "THIRD FROM THE SUN"

By Paul Gallagher

No wonder *The Twilight Zone* is such a classic. Most of the time, directors were getting scripts written by the master himself, Rod Serling. And when it wasn't him, it was often someone just as masterful, like Richard Matheson.

So I hardly think it's a coincidence that "Third From the Sun" is such a highly rated episode. After all, you have the talents of both men at work here. That's not to say they collaborated in the conventional sense. I mean that, as he did with "And When the Sky Was Opened," Serling adapted one of Matheson's short stories.

He took the title and the basic idea — and added all the usual Serling touches to turn it into a Zone classic. As Stephen King later wrote, this episode, the 14th of the first season, "marks the point at which many occasional tuners-into became addicts."

Matheson's story, which had first appeared in the October 1950 issue of *Galaxy*, is a marvel of economy. Virtually no extraneous details decorate this taut tale of a man and wife (and neighbors) determined to make their getaway from a world on the brink of all-out war. Heck, they don't even have names. They wake up early one day, get ready, pick up the neighbors, make their way to the launch site, board the ship, and go.

Oh, Matheson drops in enough hints and background info along the way to clue you in about what's going on (for the most part) and keep you reading. It's a great little snapper, a perfect short story. But it needed something more to make it work as a TV episode.

Serling fleshed out the characters, not only giving them names, but also adding those wonderfully poetic lines he's famous for. Consider his opening narration:

NARRATOR

Quitting time at the plant. Time for supper now. Time for families. Time for a cool drink on a porch. Time for the quiet rustle of leaf-laden trees that screen out the moon, and underneath it all, behind the eyes of the men, hanging invisible over the summer night, is



Top: Fritz Weaver, Edward Andrews, Joe Maross
Bottom: Denise Alexander, Fritz Weaver, Lori March

a horror without words.
For this is the stillness
before storm; this is the
eve of the end!

What a perfect scene-setter, spoken quietly over the otherwise unremarkable sights of people leaving work and heading to their charming little homes. Things look normal, yet they're anything but. What could be more Zone-like?

Leave it to Serling to give us lines like this:

JODY

Everyone I've talked to lately, they've been noticing it.

EVE

Noticing what, Jo?

JODY

That something's wrong. That something's in... something's in the air. That something's going to happen. And

everybody's afraid.
(then turns to her father) Everyone, Dad. Why?

WILL

People are afraid because they make themselves afraid. They're afraid because they subvert every great thing ever discovered, every fine idea ever thought, every marvelous invention ever conceived. They subvert it, Jody. They make it crooked and devious and too late, far too late, they ask themselves the question "Why?"

Another crucial element added by Serling is the character of Carling, played to sly, devious perfection by Edward Andrews. His thinly veiled suspicions make it clear that he'll eventually jeopardize the escape plan, contributing a great deal of tension to the story. Even a simple card game becomes

nerve-wracking.

There is one interesting bit that Serling didn't carry over from the short story. Here, as the couple dresses for their journey, the wife raises a question:

"Won't the guards think it's funny that . . . that our neighbors are coming down to see you off, too?"

He sank down on the bed and fumbled for the clasps on his shoes.

"We'll have to take that chance," he said. "We need them with us."

She sighed. "It seems so cold. So calculating."

He straightened up and saw her silhouette in the doorway.

"What else can we do?" he asked intently. "We can't interbreed our own children."

In the Zone episode, of course, the neighbors are brought along because the two families are friends, and both men share not only jobs at the munitions plant, but anxieties about what will happen when the bombs they manufacture there are used.

But in the short story, the main couple are obviously preparing for the possibility that they'll be landing on a world uninhabited by their fellow humans. Of course, we know they'll soon learn that they have plenty of human company — and live bombs. As Serling puts it after we learn that they're actually Earth-bound:

NARRATOR'S VOICE

Behind a tiny ship heading into space is a doomed planet on the verge of suicide. (a pause) Ahead lies a place called Earth, the third planet from the sun. And for William Sturka and the men and women with him, it's the eve of the beginning in the Twilight Zone.

This article was first published on "Shadow & Substance," Paul Gallagher's blog dedicated to the works of Rod Serling (thenightgallery.org). Paul also runs the "Night Gallery" Twitter page (twitter.com/thenightgallery), which boasts more than 34,000 followers.

An Original Short Story: "Death's Head, Revised"

by Steve Schlich

Writing a piece of fiction where I put words into Rod Serling's mouth is incredibly presumptuous. My initial idea was to use only sentences that he had written for other characters. I tried—there are a lot of those in the story that follows. I hope that you can find most of those "Easter Eggs."

I also wanted to illustrate Serling's public battles with censorship. Jim "Smiling Cobra" Aubrey, chieft of CBS Programming during The Twilight Zone's initial run, may have been his greatest real-life foil. A perfect villain!

But Rod Serling was never all angry bluster. His final interview in March 1975 touched me deeply, and it gave me the opening and closing of this story.

"Because I'm a Western-cultured man who subscribes to the ancient saw that men do not cry...I don't allow myself. I think before I die, just for the hell of it, one night I'll spend an entire night weeping, and I'll draw up a list of things that will motivate it. I'm now weeping for the following reasons: chronologically, for all the shit that's out there that I should have wept at and didn't."

—Rod Serling, less than four months before he died at age 50

INTERIOR: HOTEL ROOM

The camera pans a room that once aspired to be the Presidential Suite. Our gaze, enhanced by loving soft focus, glides over faux gold doorknobs and fixtures, fine wood paneling, and heavy velvet drapes which frame an expansive view of Central Park.

But the aura of elegance can't last. Look closer. Take a different angle on the window and you can watch a pale neon sign blink spasmodically against a crumbling brick wall.

Investigate, and the rest of the illusion crumbles just as easily. The room's fixtures haven't been polished in years. Termites have hollowed out cathedrals in the wood. And some misguided soul pissed on the drapes.

But it's a rentable room nonetheless, and soon it has a resident. The door admits James T. Aubrey, Jr., an older man in an

expensive suit that—*surprise!*—mirrors the room's once-glorious-now-worn condition.

Does the red-clad bellhop, wrestling Aubrey's bulky leather bags through the door, reinforce or derail the surrealism? Hmmm. The man is small and swarthy. The red uniform is clean and new, yet anachronistic in design. What year is this, anyway?

Not to worry, it's late 1994, and Aubrey's dilapidated bags return us to the initial theme of faded glory, which has become sledgehammer-obvious.

It's a scene so *noir* that it can scarcely exist in color.

The bellhop strides to a polished wooden cabinet and opens it to reveal an enormous new television. The TV clicks on of its own accord, warms up sloooooowly like some spooky antique, and finally broadcasts muffled voices.

MEDIUM CLOSE-UP ON AUBREY

Aubrey glares at the TV, then at the bellhop. "What the hell are you doing? I don't want that on."

ANOTHER ANGLE

The bellhop nods. "Sorry, sir." But he doesn't turn it off. Instead he stands at attention. We try to see his face, but shadows hide the features. Unmoving, he asks: "Will that be all, sir?"

His resonant voice is familiar yet distant—like the face we can't quite see—a maddening memory that won't pop into focus. But the question is clear: it's a figurative hand extended for the tip.

Aubrey evil-eyes the TV, which shows a low-quality black-and-white kinescope from the 1950s, then stares down at the bellhop. *No tip for you, boy!*

"That will be *quite* all. Now get out."

But the bellhop takes his time leaving. He watches Aubrey grab the TV remote and zap viciously with his thumb. *Click.* The channel changes. Another black-and-white show appears. *Click.* Another. *Click.* For God's sake, *another!*

Aubrey throws down the remote. "Is every damned show from the Fifties? How disgustingly retro."

The bellhop now heads for the door but Aubrey freezes him with a booming command: "STOP! Come back here, boy. You come back here and fix this thing!" He looks around with a sudden uncertainty. "What in hell is this place?"

The bellhop turns toward Aubrey, and now we see his face as if there's a spotlight on it: the guy is *Rod Serling!* Instantly and unbidden, the darkest recesses of your memory pluck out the eerie *Twilight Zone* musical theme: *dee-dee dee-doo, dee-dee dee-doo...*

WHIP PAN TO A FULL FRAME OF THE TV SCREEN

The screen displays a black-and-white image of Rod Serling in his classic *Twilight Zone* suit, poised with his typical cigarette and grimace, delivering his introduction:

SERLING

Submitted for your disapproval: James T. Aubrey, Jr., chief

James Thomas Aubrey

Jr. (December 14, 1918 – September 3, 1994) was an American television and film executive. As president of the CBS television network from 1959 to 1965, with his "smell for the blue-collar," he produced some of television's most enduring series on the air, including *Gilligan's Island* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

Under Aubrey's leadership, CBS dominated American television, leading the other networks NBC and ABC, by nine points and seeing its profits rise from \$25 million in 1959 to \$49 million in 1964. The *New York Times Magazine* in 1964 called Aubrey "a master of programming whose divinations led to successes that are breathtaking". Aubrey had replaced CBS Television president Louis G. Cowan, who was dismissed after the quiz-show scandals. Aubrey's tough decision-making earned him the nickname "Smiling Cobra" during his tenure.

Despite his success in television, Aubrey's abrasive personality and ego led to his firing from CBS, amid charges of misconduct. Aubrey offered no explanation following his dismissal, nor did CBS President

programmer for the CBS Television Network from 1959 through 1965. Jim "smiling cobra" Aubrey, the cultural travel agent who guided the American people from the Golden Age of Live TV to the modern era of laugh tracks and sitcoms.

Mr. James Aubrey, a media lord accustomed to the servile scurrying of underlings from the moment that he crosses any threshold.

But control is a transient thing, and tonight this Master of All He Surveys will be nothing more than a nervy man in a \$400 room. For the threshold that Mr. Aubrey has crossed to enter *this* room will lead him straight into the heart...of the *Twilight Zone*.

Continued on following page



or Board Chairman William Paley. "The circumstances rivaled the best of CBS adventure or mystery shows," declared *The New York Times* in its front-page story on his firing, which came on "the sunniest Sunday in February" 1965.

After four years as an independent producer, Aubrey was hired by financier Kirk Kerkorian in 1969 to preside over Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's (MGM) near-total shutdown, during which he cut the budget and alienated producers and directors, but brought profits to a company that had suffered huge losses. In 1973, Aubrey resigned from MGM, declaring his job was done, and then kept a low profile for the last two decades of his life.

From Wikipedia

CUE BONGO DRUM RIFF AND FADE OUT TO COMMERCIAL

We FADE IN again on Aubrey and Serling as we left them—in a standoff. “Change the channel,” Aubrey spits out. “Change it now. I’m tired of that ghostly crap.”

That “ghostly crap” is a flickering kinescope of a classic early 1950s Rod Serling drama: taut dialog on a minimal stage, accompanied by a sparse soap-opera soundtrack.

The huge modern television inside the monstrous cabinet has morphed into a quaint antique with slotted black metal housing, oversized Bakelite channel dial, and fuzzy speaker cloth.

Serling’s bellhop uniform is gone, replaced by his more sedate—and familiar—*Twilight Zone* suit and tie.

“Do you know what date it is inside that little black-and-white box, Mr. Aubrey? It’s January 12, 1952. Not *quite* the Dawn of Live Television, but certainly its morning light. The beginning of ‘The Golden Age.’ ”

Aubrey’s eyes narrow. “A mercifully brief age, as I recall. After which the dinosaurs died.”

The comment is designed to cut Serling to the bone, as if a TV camera has zeroed in and pinned him in a close-up like some monster truck’s headlights.

Serling doesn’t react. But the room does—the walls and windows subtly fade into darkness as the room transforms into a vintage space...

INTERIOR: LIVE TV SOUNDSTAGE

From Stage Right yet seemingly out of nowhere, a 1950s TV camera DOLLIES toward the two men, a behemoth moving in so close that it grazes Aubrey’s hip. With the monstrosity comes a director BARKING orders to a crew that mimics Serling’s description:

“Live TV was organized chaos... all frenetic rushing and improvisation. But when it worked—lightning in a bottle.” Serling rubs his hands together. “Exhilarating!”

The activity around them keeps Aubrey off-balance. He hesitates. Serling circles him like a prize fighter anxious for the opening bell.

The fancy wooden cabinet?

Faded away with the walls. The antique TV? Now a functional gray studio monitor. Serling nods at it.

“That’s one of my early screenplays. ‘No Gods To Serve.’ But you served gods, didn’t you? You worshipped the almighty advertising dollar.”

Aubrey is disoriented and vulnerable. He stares at the director and crew, and finally at Serling. “You sound familiar to me,” he says. “Do I know you?”

Serling tells him, “I’ve got that kind of voice.”

Aubrey studies the TV camera, trying to puzzle it out. “It’s more than that,” he tells Serling absently. “We had words. I fought you.”

This “idle memory” flips a switch inside Serling.

“Oh yes, we fought! Over telling the truth on television. Over injustice and prejudice. Over giving viewers something to think about. And you won, damn you! You filled the 1960s with film and color and situation comedies. Live television died. No more relevant themes. No more smart dramas. No more thinking.”

A pregnant pause. The TV cameras MOVE IN on them. Serling is just warming up: “But this isn’t today or even those wonderfully turbulent Sixties. Right now, it’s the 1950s. The world is still black-and-white. And I’m your curator in this little old museum which we call, the ‘The Golden of Television.’ ”

“...Serling. You’re Rod Serling. I remember you now!”

Serling shows his teeth in what might, or might not, be a grin.

WHIP PAN TO TV MONITOR

Rod Serling is on the monitor again, in black-and-white again, with everything in its place, again: suit, cigarette and penetrating visage.

SERLING

I give you James T. Aubrey, Jr. A heartless television programmer, soon to fall victim to an old-fashioned Justice that is seldom extant in the real world; but which always awaits, never farther away than a simple click of the remote, in the black-and-white world of the *Twilight*...

“Stop it, stop it, STOP IT!”

Aubrey throws up his hands. “What in hell is going on? Why am I in the middle of a TV show?”

INTERIOR: SOUNDSTAGE

The cameras bear down on them, the grips and director and assistants swirling around... all in surreal—and silent—slow motion.

“Isn’t it clear?” asks Serling. “This isn’t just any TV show. This is *The Twilight Zone*.”

“Wait a minute. *The Twilight Zone*. Rod Serling. You’re dead! I remember. You died LONG ago.”

Serling checks his watch. “Not so long ago in the grand scheme of things. Time passes quickly here.”

Instead of generating fear, the realization gives Aubrey strength. “Go away! I’m not going to let you haunt me!”

“I don’t do hauntings,” Serling tells him. “I may have written about such things, but I never believed in them.”

“Fine. So get lost.”

“You need to understand,” Serling tells him gently. “You’re the new arrival. Not me.”

The ironic twist sinks in despite Aubrey’s resistance. “What are you saying? This can’t be. I’m either crazy, or I’m dead.”

“Why not both?”

“No! I can live with crazy. But not...”

“Dead?” Serling shrugs. “Sorry, but you’re every bit as dead as ‘The Golden Age of Television.’ Do you remember this industry in the fifties and beyond? Experimenting, trying to figure out what it would be when it grew up? Surely you remember the shows? *Kraft Television Theater*. *Playhouse 90*. *The Twilight Zone*.”

As Serling names each show, a spotlight illuminates a separate studio monitor which displays that show. Serling offers up this evidence like a prosecutor grandstanding for the jury.

“Do you remember the mindless garbage you put in its place?” Gesturing back at the monitors: “This was the future of television, until you destroyed it!”

Aubrey is adrift in confusion, but he’s a fighter. He battles and adjusts to this surreal new world. His *Smiling Cobra* persona returns, and he focuses it on his tormentor.

“Rod Serling, you combative little shit. Three Emmy awards and you thought you owned TV.”

“Six Emmys. And I should’ve owned TV. Look what you did with it: *Gilligan’s Island*. *Lost in Space*. *The Beverly damn Hillbillies*! Yes, I did try to breathe life into TV. We all did. Paddy Chayevsky, Reginald Rose...”

“Writers! Who in hell did you think you were, writers with all those dreary little dramas, people shouting dialog at each other for ninety minutes. That was your *foolish* ‘Golden Age!’ Inmates who think they run the asylum. Desperate little men with great, big axes to grind.”

Serling flashes his trademark grin. “Shall we visit that asylum, Mr. Aubrey?” He waves his hand and the camera WHIP PANS to...

INTERIOR: BOARDROOM

A vast meeting table dominates the set. A small sheaf of papers sits neatly on the table at each seat. But the room echoes with eerie emptiness except for Serling and Aubrey.

You can almost see the ghosts of business enemies attacked and slaughtered in this arena. You can almost hear their overmatched cries, and almost smell their vanquished blood as it pools at their places around the table.

“You be the bad guy,” Serling tells Aubrey. “You know where we are: in the boardroom of my Emmy-winning screenplay, *Patterns*. Kraft Television Theater, January 1956. And you’re the cutthroat boss telling me to just *try* and take you down. Because that’s supposed to be good business.”

Aubrey feels powerful, like the boss in the show. “It *is* good business. We both know it. The audience won’t cut you any slack. The sponsors want to eat you alive. And the network will slam the door on your ass before you even know you’re out of the building.”

Serling rolls with it: “Then you agree: this is the real world, vicious and visceral. Dog-eat-dog. And even though we’re on a sound stage, we’re in a million living rooms telling people what life is really like.”

Serling bears down on him, a prosecutor summing the crimes of a tyrant for a jury in Hell. “So tell me, Aubrey, what’s the equation that gave you the right to strangle live TV? Where was your justification for cancelling the truth?”

Continued on following page

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But Aubrey will not be squashed like some fragile bug. He produces a stack of perforated computer print-outs, and waves them at Serling like a weapon.

“Ratings, my caustic friend. The Overnight Nielsons. The Voice...of the Public.”

It’s Aubrey’s sucker punch, and on the soundtrack, a slide whistle drops an octave into the *slap!* of a gut punch.

“I’ll give you realism! Shrinking audiences. Dwindling revenues. You and your realism would have put the network out of business. But what did you care? Get this, Mr. Hotshot dramatist playwright. You can’t eat critical acclaim. I was only following a trend. I simply gave the audiences what they wanted... escape!”

Aubrey tosses the Nielson papers into the air. They flutter and fall and land on beach sand. Look around: we’re no longer in an office building boardroom. We’re on a deserted island, a jungle paradise in the middle of the Pacific Ocean...

EXTERIOR: GILLIGAN’S ISLAND

The two stand at the edge of the Lagoon set, with Aubrey dressed as The Skipper and Serling as Gilligan.

Aubrey nudges Serling playfully. “How do you like being on the most popular show of all time, little buddy? Bigger than *Patterns*. Bigger than *The Twilight Zone*. LOTS bigger. It’s still in reruns!”

Serling examines his Gilligan duds with distaste. “So is *Twilight Zone*. But your reruns are scarier than mine. We’re broadcasting Gilligan and his flaky friends into space every day, as though it were some important message. What if the aliens who receive it run away without ever making contact?”

Aubrey shakes his head. “Aliens! What if the only reason they came in the first place was to fatten us up?” He pauses for effect, then blurts: “It’s...it’s a cookbook!”

WHIP PAN TO BLACK-AND-WHITE JUNGLE

Serling, back in his *Twilight Zone* suit and tie, folds his arms angrily.

SERLING

I give you James T. Aubrey, Television Programmer and hypocrite. Apologist for Capitalism and banality. A leading character in

his own little drama of money and power.

(pause)

And what are we to make of the Brave New World that he created?

Serling looks to his right, the camera WHIP PANS to follow, and suddenly we are back on...

INTERIOR: SOUNDSTAGE

But the monitor that was showing *Patterns* in black and white now shows *Gilligan’s Island* in color.

Serling cannot bear to look at it. “The triumph of banality,” he mutters painfully, and turns away. He moves to the next studio monitor, which shows (in reassuring black-and-white) a prize fighter nursing his wounds after losing a brutal mismatch.

Serling drags Aubrey to it by the collar.

“You’d like my epitaph to be ‘Requiem for a Bantamweight,’ wouldn’t you? You thought people were afraid of real drama. But they loved it!”

He drags Aubrey straight at the monitor but instead of crashing into it, they disappear, then reappear on the black-and-white screen. Serling is the fighter’s trainer and Aubrey is the slick manager, in an early scene from the Emmy winner *Requiem for a Heavyweight*.

INTERIOR: TRAINING ROOM

Serling helps the battered fighter to sit up on his training table.

“Oh Lordy, I caught it tonight,” the fighter moans. “What did I do wrong?”

Aubrey looks at the fighter without sympathy. “You aged, kid. That’s the trouble, you aged.”

He hands the fighter a stack of clothing—a hillbilly outfit. The fighter looks at him incredulously. “Put ‘em on,” Aubrey tells him. “You need a new act.”

Serling rips Aubrey away from the fighter.

“You can’t treat the audience this way!” he screams. “They’re just slobs to you. Hunks of flesh! Is that what you call a cross to bear? I’ll tell you what they are, these people. They’re decent. They’ve got heart. You can’t sell them on the market, by the pound. Because if you do, you’ll rot in the gutter for it.”

Aubrey disengages himself. “Why do you think everyone wants to feed off some poor guy’s misery? It gets old. They don’t want to cry

every night. They want to laugh.”

He nods over Serling’s shoulder, looking past him. “Like it or not, this *had* to be the future.”

The fighter walks back into view, and now he’s wearing the hillbilly costume. Good God, upon closer examination, he’s no longer the fighter at all...he’s become Jed Clampett from *The Beverly Hillbillies!*

“No!” Serling falls to his knees in throbbing psychic pain. Aubrey grabs him and hauls him up for reckoning. We’re no longer in the dreary black-and-white gymnasium basement. We’re in the Clampetts’ luxurious living color backyard, complete with ridiculous white plaster statues set around a swimming pool, with a mansion in the background.

Aubrey chides Serling. “Don’t you *dare* get sick. You know this is the truth. You sold out for it yourself. ‘Swimming pools, movie stars.’ You lived this life without apology.”

Serling bucks up and faces him. “I paid the price,” he says. “I sold the thing I loved most, *The Twilight Zone*, for a pittance. My masterpiece, my Mona Lisa. I gave it away! I didn’t realize, back then, what syndication was worth. No one did.”

INTERIOR: SOUNDSTAGE

He’s strong again. His confession has brought them back to the soundstage, and to the final black and white TV monitor.

“You’re damned right I paid for my sins. I lost everything.”

On the final TV monitor, Burgess Meredith sits amidst atomic war ruins from the famous *Twilight Zone* episode, “Time Enough at Last.”

“That’s not fair,” Meredith says to the broken glasses that he clutches in his hands. “That’s not fair at all.”

EXTERIOR: URBAN RUBBLE

And now we are in the middle of the episode, in the midst of this post-apocalyptic wasteland. It’s no longer Burgess Meredith sitting down on those blast-scarred library steps, defeated and despondent. It’s Serling himself. He looks up at Aubrey.

“This is the vast wasteland that you helped create. The desolate junkyard that is modern television—strewn with ugly sitcoms, woman-in-jeopardy Movies of the Week, turgid little serial dramas and pointless game

shows. Eye candy that rots the mind. Are you prepared to pay your price for it?”

Aubrey scoffs: “Do you think you’re going to fire me? I got the axe even before you did—1965. Or maybe you’ll send me to eternal condemnation in a moralistic little *Twilight Zone* hell? Don’t make me laugh.”

Serling tells him: “Your personal hell will be of your own creation.”

EXTERIOR: DESOLATE PLANET SURFACE

Serling looks over Aubrey’s shoulder, past him, and Aubrey turns to follow the look. We’re on a desolate planet’s surface now, which doesn’t look much different from the blast-scarred landscape of a few moments ago. But we know that we’re inside a different TV show, because standing center-stage in our point of view is: Robby the Robot.

Serling looks from Robby to Aubrey. “You’re right. No *Twilight Zone* hell. Far more appropriate for you to be *Lost in Space*.”

The robot’s arms flail. He fills the screen:

ROBBY THE ROBOT
Warning Rod Serling!
Warning Rod Serling!
Danger to your
profession! Death to
your art! Ruin to your
livelihood!

The camera pulls back, and we see that the words have transformed Aubrey into Dr. Smith, the cowardly villain of *Lost in Space*. He eyes Robby with Smith’s helpless, yet jaded, distaste.

“Shut up, you stupid Robot!” he tells it angrily.

He eyes Rod Serling, standing to one side and now transformed into the vulnerable, naïve, and trusting Will Robinson.

“Warning indeed,” Aubrey tells Serling. “You know all about personal hells. You built one of the best ever seen, and now you’ve got...what’s your word for it? Temerity? You’ve got the *temerity* to call *yourself* a victim!”

“I cared about TV. I cared about the people watching it. I cared about the message!”

Aubrey shakes his head. “And you absolutely knew that you were right. Who in hell knows that?”

“I tried to do the right thing.”

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"Not enough! Not when you're on display. Do you understand how you embarrassed your bosses? You made your artistic differences personal and public. You fought your battles in the newspapers. You were your own worst enemy."

Serling defends the indefensible: "I had no choice! I was fighting censorship! It's criminal that we're not permitted to make dramatic note of social evils, in television drama."

"You can, now," Aubrey tells him wistfully. "These days, you can. You just didn't live to see it."

A sigh and a long pause. "I died of a broken heart, you know," Serling tells him. "It's a terrible, ironic joke. My bad heart and my addiction to tobacco killed me on the operating table when I was only 50. But Television had already done the job, years before that. I worked myself to death for TV, and as a reward they threw me out like some useless reel of videotape!"

"Me too," Aubrey says softly. "They threw me away, too."

Sudden anger lights up Serling's eyes. "I remember what you did for TV, Jim Aubrey. I remember! When you came to CBS in 1959, the network's jewel was *Playhouse 90*. Relevant dramas about important social issues. Stories that made people think. And when you left in 1965, your legacy was *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Hillbillies! You murdered live television! You killed intelligence!" With anguish: "You killed me."

INTERIOR: SOUNDSTAGE, DRESSED

The camera pulls back from Serling's emotion-charged speech, and we are now in the Warsaw Ghetto of World War II, as it was recreated on a 1960 soundstage for *Playhouse 90*.

Aubrey wears a polished leather Nazi officer's uniform, and Serling is dressed in the disheveled horizontal stripes of a concentration camp prisoner. A crude Star of David graces the breast of his dirty canvas shirt.

"You're a murderer," Serling hisses at Aubrey. "I know when I'm in the presence of mine enemies!"

Aubrey stares him down calmly. "No sale! You killed yourself. Your unprofitable playhouse dramas were as deadly as those constant cigarettes. Now listen to me, my naïve Mr. Serling."

AUBREY

I'm going to talk about banality. Because

banality was our clue to survival. It offered money, and TV fed on it. We found our strength in it. We were nurtured by it. (pause) We needed unity. And there you stood, shouting at us, insisting on your social issues and your drama. An unassimilated foreigner in our midst! The very essence of the unprofitable past! We hated you; it was so easy. And in the process of hating you, we were unified.

Aubrey closes his eyes and sighs, as if considering his actions for the first time. Now his voice fills with anguish.

"Do you know how many shows I cancelled? Not just yours. How many careers I ruined in the name of ratings? I'm not proud of that."

INTERIOR: SOUNDSTAGE, BARE

They're on a half-lit empty soundstage, seated on the floor, looking out into an auditorium of empty chairs. The words echo eerily in this space. Aubrey speaks to Serling, but keeps his eyes on that phantom audience.

"You thought TV was an art form. Hah! It's a business and it has to show a profit. The sponsors were on my back, just like you. And I wanted to be great, just like you. *That genius Jim Aubrey*, they'd say. *He made TV pay for itself. He taught an artistic medium to survive in a money-obsessed world.*"

Now he's weeping.

"You can't dress me up as the bad guy forever. It's not even within your jaundiced definition of fair, Serling. I didn't invent the Neilson ratings; I just did my job and paid attention to them. And all that money I earned for my bosses—they should have given ME those Emmy awards. In the end, I got exactly what you got: a big fat boot out the door!"

He slumps. Serling stares at him incredulously, marvels at the confession just witnessed, and finally, grudgingly, hands his nemesis a handkerchief.

Instead of the anger he expected to feel, the rage he has always used as a sword and worn as armor, Serling is blanketed by poignant, wistful regret.

He shakes his head. "Money. All the money that *Twilight Zone* earned over the years. All that

money. So little of it went to my family."

"You sold the rights. You didn't have to."

The statement carries no malice, just a simple, sad truth.

"God help me," Serling confesses. "I did live long enough to realize that. Who knew the value of reruns, back then? No one at the network told me. I never dreamed it would become a franchise. I just wanted out. I was glad to escape for a while." A painful pause. "But when I wanted back in... there was an attitude... that I came from another era. A comet that burst across the sky of Television and then faded out. It was strange and so horribly unfair, because nothing happened to my talent."

Aubrey folds his arms. "I never understood how you could be so smart, but so naïve. Fair! After World War II, after Hitler and the Holocaust, how could you possibly expect the world to be fair?"

Serling has no answer. He looks into the unfocused distance. "After that, all I had to sell was my image. Mr. *Twilight Zone* hosting floor wax and beer commercials, that's not how I want to be remembered! The departure of the aged is neither philosophical nor graceful, but there is an aching poignancy."

INTERIOR: BASEMENT PASSAGEWAY

Aubrey sits down next to his old enemy, and we've changed locations again. It's a basement passageway under the *Playhouse 90* theater/studio, with bare pipes and scaffolding. An area of transition, a Purgatory if you will, like the place where the freshly dead Jack Klugman met Gabriel in "A Passage for Trumpet."

"So," Aubrey says to him, "do you still want to send me to Hell? Let's go together. We can sit side by side and complain about how we got screwed."

Serling looks around. "It wouldn't be much of a scenery change, would it?"

They share an ironic chuckle. Then Serling nods. "Your advantage. I always granted my enemies power over me. I had no right to judge you, or condemn you. All I really did was condemn myself."

Serling fights tears. And he wins, for now.

Aubrey gives him back his handkerchief. "Go ahead," he

says. "It's good for the soul."

But no tears. Instead, Serling confesses: "I understand now. This isn't about what you did. It's about what I *didn't*. What I never accomplished because I was too angry to compromise."

"You did good things," Aubrey tells him. "I can only wish for a legacy like yours."

Serling smiles. "You know what happened? Somewhere along the line, I forgot about all that good stuff. Yeah, that's it, I just forgot."

"You've got a choice, you know."

Serling looks at him. "A choice?"

"A choice. You can stay in this Hell of your own creation. Wallow in self-pity. Or you can accept your life, with all its successes and failures, all the victories and defeats..."

"...and be redeemed." Serling nods. The statement has that *feel* of truth to it. "If I've got a choice...I mean, if I've still got a choice..."

They rise together and stand, supporting each other.

Serling dabs his eyes. "Okay. I accept my life. It wasn't perfect. And I guess I can accept that the world is unjust. But I'll never stop cursing injustice. I won't stop crying for it for it to be different. Can I still do that? Because in wishing for the impossible, maybe we can achieve the improbable."

"You can. Nothing else would be fair."

As the two walk slowly down the hallway, arm in arm, weeping at last...

VOICEOVER

The path away from revenge can be long and winding; but for enemies willing to bury the hatchet, it becomes the briefest of walks toward redemption.

This outcome well-earned by a writer who granted salvation and second chances often, but never dreamed that he might find them for himself... in the *Twilight Zone*.

FADE OUT

The quote that begins this story is from *Rod Serling: The Facts of Life, An Interview by Linda Breville*, published in a 1976 *Writer's Digest* issue.

Christopher
'Dad'
Age: 45

OUR FIRST TIME TO WATCH:

Rylan
'Son'
Age: 13



HOW FUN!
I'VE NEVER SEEN
ANY OF THE
TWILIGHT ZONE
EPISODES!

The TWILIGHT ZONE



UGH...
BLACK AND WHITE.

Season 1, Episode 11: And When the Sky Was Opened

EPISODE SYNOPSIS:

Three astronauts (Colonel Clegg Forbes, Major William Gart and Colonel Ed Harrington) crash back on Earth after a flight into space. But immediately things go awry, as the astronauts feel like they don't belong and one by one fade from existence.

It starts with Colonel Clegg, the only person who remembers or even knows who Colonel Harrington is.

Colonel Clegg



WHERE'S HARRINGTON?!

WHERE'S
HARRINGTON?!



JUST SHOW THEM THE
CAMERA FOOTAGE.

DUH!



THEY DIDN'T
HAVE CAMERAS
EVERYWHERE
BACK IN
THOSE DAYS.

Colonel Clegg again



THERE WERE
THREE OF US!

THREE!



IT'S ALL IN
HIS HEAD.

OR HE
WENT BACK
IN TIME.



INTERESTING
THEORIES.
CURIOUS TO
SEE HOW THIS
PLAYS OUT.



I liked this episode, it kept me enthralled until the very end and I liked the outcome.

I thought Rod Taylor, who played Colonel Clegg was good.

I didn't like how he tried to pick up the lady at the bar but then later seemed to have a girlfriend.

I would definitely watch more Twilight Zone episodes.

Rylan, however, tuned out after ten minutes.

It wasn't interesting and I couldn't wait for it to end.

It was boring and nothing happened.

I definitely don't want to watch anymore, ever again.



MY FAVORITE LINE FROM THE EPISODE: "SOMEONE OR SOMETHING LET US GET THROUGH WHEN WE SHOULDN'T HAVE GOT THROUGH".