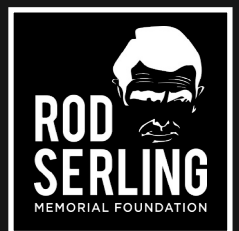


DIMENSIONS OF IMAGINATION

The Official Newsletter of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation



SUMMER 2025



BLAST and RSMF Host a Dramatic Reading of Serling's "The Happy Place"

By Andrew Polak

We all know Rod Serling was a prolific writer, so it's exciting to find something of his that we haven't had the opportunity to see or read.

On the second weekend of July, the Bold Local Artists of the Southern Tier (BLAST) and the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation held a fundraising event consisting of a dramatic reading of "The Happy Place" at the Cider Mill Playhouse in Endicott, New York. BLAST Executive Director Kate Murray, who also sits on our Board of Directors, directed the two performances.

If you're not familiar with "The Happy Place," Amy Boyle Johnston, another RSMF Board member and the author of *Unknown Serling*, discovered the script in Serling's archive in the

early 2000s while doing research. It was written in 1958 to be the pilot episode of *The Twilight Zone*, but was considered too dark by the networks at the time and thus never produced.

Rather than perform the television script as a play, a dramatic reading was chosen as the best method to highlight Serling's writing.

"There's a big difference between reading a script versus sitting back and hearing the words read," said Johnston. "Serling wrote for radio before he wrote for television, and his dialogue has always been crisp. His dialogue has always been entertaining. To hear it, at least the way Serling presented it, versus in your mind's own ear, it's wonderful."

Without giving too much away of the story, it is set in a dystopian



society obsessed with perfection where people turn a certain age and are then sent to the Happy Place. "A lot of things that are old can become new again," Murray said. "A lot of people will notice that many of the themes and many of the twists and turns that are happening during this script, a lot of it has come back around nowadays."

As with many of Rod's stories, the timelessness seems almost eerie. "The part about the society, the culture, is actually quite small. What is important in the story is the dynamics behind it," Johnston said. The staging had the stark look the script demanded – a screen above the seated actors placing the scene location with music stands in front where the

various scenes were performed by the actors dressed in black and white. A narrator sitting to the side reading the stage direction that Rod had incorporated in the script.

"That's one of the things I love about doing this kind of project," said actor Danny Cellabos. "That I can take on different characters, and really get into what is the point of view of each of these particular characters." Added actor Adam Holley: "You're going to see a very ambitious character who is the head of an agency that on the outside looks very nice but has dark secrets."

The Rod Serling Memorial Foundation had a table set

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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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Front Cover by Molly Gallagher
Comic: Christopher Tupa - see more at ctupa.com

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Postcard Collection

by Andrew Polak

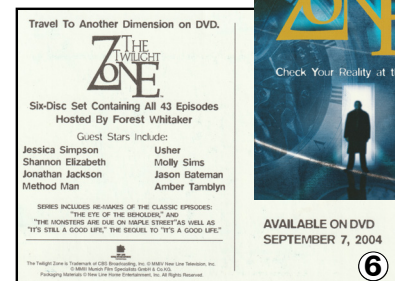
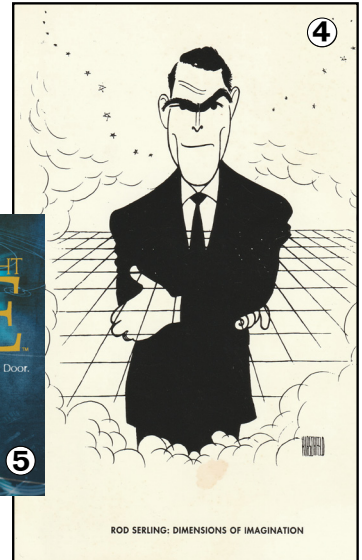
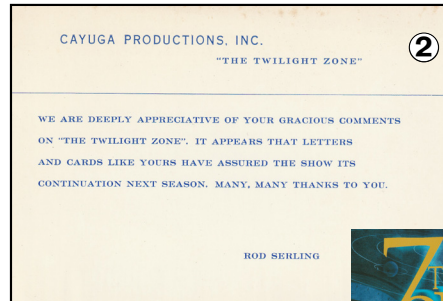
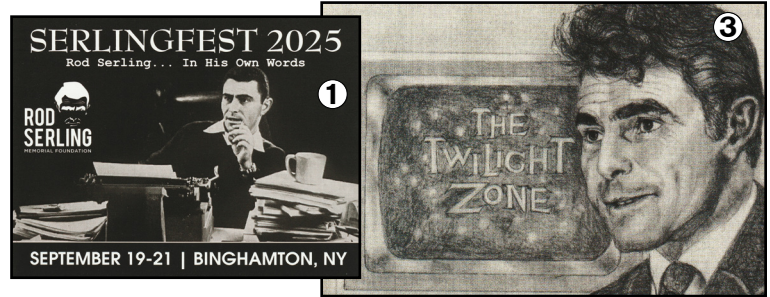
Over the years since the Foundation's start in 1985, we've collected a handful of Serling-related postcards. Since we are using a postcard designed by our Board Member Gail Flug to promote SerlingFest this year (Image 1), I thought it'd be fun to pull out some of our collection.

Probably our coolest one is the Cayuga Productions' postcard (Image 2) that was sent to letter-writing viewers, during *The Twilight Zone's* original run, to announce a new season had been approved. Our very own postcard (Image 3) was artwork from one of our founding members and childhood friend of Rod's, Robert Keller. He finished his career as an art professor here in Binghamton.

Other promotional postcards include the Al Hirschfeld artwork (Image 4) promoting the 1984 exhibit "Rod Serling: Dimensions of Imagination" at the Museum of Television and Radio, now the Paley Center for Media. To promote the DVD release of the 2002 reboot of *The Twilight Zone* (Image 5, front; Image 6, back), CBS used the updated version's title sequence as the artwork.

The last three featured cards (Images 7, 8 and 9) were all put out by Viacom in 1984. They held the rights to *Twilight Zone* at that time. The set has ten in total; these along with "A Game of Pool," "Caesar and Me," and "The After Hours". I don't know about the rest of the cards in this series, but if anyone has more information about them, I'd love to hear from you.

Andrew Polak is Treasurer of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation.



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2025 Recipient of the RSM Foundation Scholarship Announced!

Congratulations to Olivia Ehmke, the 2025 Recipient of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation Scholarship!

Born and raised in Binghamton, New York, Olivia is passionate about academics and performance—dance in particular. At Binghamton High School, she joined theatre, chorus, and after-school dance groups, including the BHS competitive dance team.

Olivia gained inspiration from the staff at the Rod Serling School of Fine Arts and especially from her every-year dance teacher Chelsea Gavazzi. Last summer, she ran a theatre camp and worked to fund a European tour with American Music Abroad.

In local theatre, she won roles such as Maria in *The Memorandum* and Angela Robson in *Billy Elliot*, where she worked alongside Broadway professionals and earned credit toward Equity status. She earned lead roles as Roxie Hart in *Chicago* and Donna in *Mamma Mia*.

Ranked 7th in her BHS graduating class, Olivia excelled in Advanced



Placement, International Baccalaureate, and college-level courses. She held a membership in Tri-M, National, Science, and Math Honor Societies.

Olivia writes: Thank you so much for this generous scholarship. I plan to major in Musical Theater at the University of Buffalo, which is a decision I wouldn't have come to without the Rod Serling School of Fine Arts.

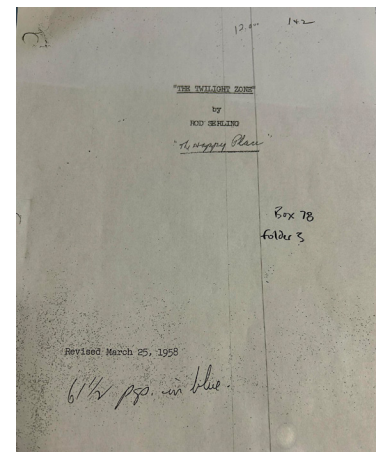
The Foundation is glad to contribute to this inspiring hard worker's bright future!



HAPPY PLACE: FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

up in the lobby where I had a chance to promote the upcoming SerlingFest and chat about Rod Serling and the show with many of the attendees. While mostly a local audience, some traveled to see the show, like long-supporting member Drew Russo. Another notable guest who made the journey was Doc Wagner from the Triple Clowns Network Podcast (www.youtube.com/@TheTripleClowns), who said, "The theatre itself was such an intimate setting I feel lucky to have been there."

We hope to hold more of these type events with BLAST and are thankful for all the hard work put in by everyone at the Cider Mill Stage.



Above: The original copy of the unpublished script, "The Happy Place."

Andrew Polak is Treasurer of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation.

TWILIGHT ZONE

Flight of Fancy: Twilight Zone's "King Nine Will Not Return"

By Tony Albarella

In "King Nine Will Not Return," Rod Serling pilots a captivating little thriller and steers it on an *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* flight path. Yet the crash-landing is pure *Twilight Zone*.

This first episode of the second season is a virtual remake of the series pilot, "Where Is Everybody?" Both stories feature a lone protagonist who is lost in a nightmarish setting that is bereft of people or logical explanation. This time around, however, Serling is unencumbered by the need to sell a fantasy series to jittery sponsors. Never satisfied with having had to explain away the plot of the premiere episode, Serling revisits the theme and tags "King Nine" with an imaginative ending.

The tale is based on a real-life incident: the 1959 discovery of a World War II aircraft, the *Lady Be Good*, lost 16 years earlier during the war. The B-24 bomber departed a Libyan airstrip on April 4, 1943, to complete a bombing run on a port at Naples, Italy. Thirty minutes from the target, she turned back due to poor visibility and engine problems caused by sand at the takeoff site. She never made it back to home base.

Air-Sea Rescue conducted an extensive search that focused on the sea, but the *Lady Be Good* was nowhere to be found, and the operation was eventually abandoned. Fifteen years later, a British exploration team from the D'Arcy Oil Company discovered the aircraft in the Libyan Desert during an aerial survey. D'Arcy geologists visited the ship, preserved remarkably well by the dry desert climate, in March 1959.

Her nine-member crew had vanished without a trace. In the months and years to come, the remains of eight of the nine crew members were eventually found in various locations, having perished either during bailout or in the course of a grueling trek across the vast desert terrain. But their absence at the time of the initial find was mystifying.

The recovery of the derelict plane received worldwide media coverage and sparked the imagination of Rod Serling.



In crafting his script, Serling retained the desert location, the notion of a lost bomber found years after it went down, and the enigma of the missing crew. Upon this framework of reality, the writer built a compelling fictional character in Captain James Embry, who struggles to remember the events leading up to the crash and the whereabouts of his crew.

The mystery only deepens when Embry looks to the sky and recognizes jet aircraft that couldn't possibly exist in 1943. Serling drops clues along the way by bringing Embry's sense of responsibility to the fore, as the captain makes several references to his own accountability as commanding officer. This pays off when we find that the whole experience was a "hallucination" caused by Embry's guilt upon learning that the doomed plane has been discovered; he should have been lost with his crew but survived because he was too sick to make the final flight.

To end the tale at that point would not have been a letdown for a conventional series. Serling, however, goes one better to define "King Nine" as a story truly fit for *The Twilight Zone*. The revelation that Embry may have visited the crash site in body as well as mind—as evidenced by the sand found in his shoe—quickly and cleanly transports viewers to the realm of the supernatural.

"Having been in the Air Force, 'King Nine' was a show that was close to me," says Associate Producer Del Reisman. "I was very, very pleased with it. I had nothing to do with writing this, but I flew in B-17s in the Air Force.



When Rod wrote 'King Nine' he was basing it on an actual incident that took place with a B-24, a heavy bomber, and he changed it to a B-25. We shot it in the desert up in the area of Edwards Air Force Base."

A surplus B-25 was purchased for \$2,500, then stripped down and reassembled in the desert. The crew, cast and equipment were flown in and allowed to use a highway adjacent to the location as a landing strip. It was an arduous shoot.

"I was there while they were filming," notes Reisman. "I wasn't always on the set, but I was there this time. It was very rare that we would go on location because we had the use of the MGM backlot, which was extensive. But we went up there in this tremendous, 108-degree heat. It was really bad for the crew, and for Bob Cummings, who was in

every shot."

Cummings carries this one-man show with a deft performance. Known primarily as a light comedian while launching a career in several films of the 1930s and 1940s, he cemented this reputation by starring in his own self-titled comedy series from 1955 to 1959. But Cummings also broke out into serious drama along the way, and won an Emmy Award for his performance in the original live television presentation of Reginald Rose's classic "Twelve Angry Men."

Cummings embraces the role of Captain James Embry with passion and vitality. His character retains the calm rationality of a trained officer in the early going, but rapidly segues into mounting panic and frenzied delirium as he unravels under a scorching sun and the trauma of his situation. Of

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TWILIGHT ZONE

The Plane Truth: Twilight Zone's High-Flying "King Nine Will Not Return"

By Paul Gallagher

The Twilight Zone launched its second season on Sept. 30, 1960, with an episode that — thematically, at least — echoed the Season 1 opener: "Where Is Everybody?"

In "King Nine Will Not Return," we meet Capt. James Embry, a World War II pilot who awakens to find himself in a desert. Beside him lies the wrecked fuselage of the King Nine, a bomber that shows no sign of its crew anywhere.

Embry seems to recall that he crashed while on a mission with his men, only ... where are they?

"King Nine" is largely a one-man show, and Bob Cummings carries it admirably. As Embry, we see him go from surprise, to bewilderment, to giddiness, to anger — and back again. It's easy to believe that we are, in fact, watching a man slowly losing his mind as he struggles to understand what's happening.

A radio crackles to life, then falls dead. His men appear and disappear. At one point, he sees jet aircraft flying overhead. He realizes that, although jets didn't exist during World War II, he knows what they are. How can that be?

We see why near the end, after we see Embry collapse in the desert, then come to in a hospital. It's all been a dream, a psychiatrist explains. He had spotted a newspaper story that morning about the King Nine being found — his aircraft during the war. Because he was ill, he had missed its final mission. Its discovery in the desert 17



years later quickly drew Embry's overwhelming guilt to the surface and landed him in the hospital.

His trip to the desert? Just an illusion. Except ... why is there sand in his shoes?

In planting that final twist, Rod Serling did something he had wanted to do in the *Twilight Zone* pilot, "Where Is Everybody?" Remember Air Force pilot Mike Ferris wandering around an empty town? We learn in the end that he's been cracking under the strain of a lengthy isolation test.

At one point, Ferris goes into a movie theater. Serling's idea was

to have a ticket stub fall out of his pocket at the end, so viewers would say, "Wait a minute ..." But this was a bridge too far, though, for sponsors who were not yet used to such off-the-wall stories. Instead, the show ended on a more straightforward note. Ferris hallucinated it all. End of story.

Serling did, however, add the ticket-stub detail when he wrote a short-story treatment of the episode for the 1960 book *Stories From The Twilight Zone*. And once *The Twilight Zone* was an established success, he felt comfortable adding the sand-in-the-shoes twist to "King Nine." He finally got his "Wait a minute

..." moment. Viewers are left wondering: So Embry *did* go back to his plane?

Naturally, we're not handed a pat answer. This is the fifth dimension, after all.

"The question is on file in the silent desert," Serling says in his closing narration. "And the answer? The answer is waiting for us ... in the *Twilight Zone*."

RSMF Board Member Paul Gallagher is editor of the *Dimensions of Imagination* newsletter.

KING NINE: FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

course, the actor was assisted by desert heat that was alarmingly real.

"He was great," adds Reisman. "All the scenes involved that one actor. He had to get into that plane mockup, which must have been 120-130 degrees. This was the first *Twilight Zone* that Buzz Kulik directed, and he was very good. Bob would say to him, 'Now look, Buzz, I've got one take on this speech, otherwise I'll be a drop of sweat on the floor.' Seeing Cummings in the actual plane, watching him discovering

this wreck in the desert and being in the craft itself, and moving in and around it and so on, was really, I thought, extremely well done."

Interestingly, Cummings starred in a previous Serling-scripted tale of a World War II bomber pilot struggling with issues of command, cowardice and guilt: 1958's "Bomber's Moon" on *Playhouse 90*. The actor was well-prepared for both roles as he had seen action as a pilot during the war. Cummings piloted his own plane for most of his life and was taught to fly by his godfather... the famed aviator and father of

flight, Orville Wright.

Two first-draft scenes were cut prior to production. The first involves an establishing scene as the King Nine's difficulties are reported to headquarters, and offers little more than technical jargon that does nothing to enhance the plot. The second contains a more detailed discussion regarding the origin of the sand found in Embry's shoe, and serves only to rob this key disclosure of its urgency. While these scenes make for interesting reading, the flow of the episode benefits greatly from their removal.

"I was so pleased," Del Reisman says in summation. "I think that 'King Nine Will Not Return' used *Twilight Zone* to its fullest and without getting into anything that was beyond the imagination. Sometimes, I think, *Twilight Zone* would stumble a little bit where the reach was too far. In 'King Nine' I think it was just right. I was really very happy with that show."

RSMF Board Member Tony Albarella is the editor of numerous books on Serling's work, including the 10-volume series *"As Timeless as Infinity: The Complete Twilight Zone Scripts of Rod Serling."*

TWILIGHT ZONE

Zone Reboots and Imitators: Can Lightning in a Bottle Strike Twice?

by Steve Schlich

Nostalgia can be a trap, especially when it finds you wanting to duplicate a beloved moment in time. Just ask Martin Sloan. And yet, here I am again, wishing for a fresh episode of Rod Serling's carefully crafted, inimitable and original...lightning in a bottle.

The Twilight Zone.

With fools like me, no wonder Hollywood is "stuck on repeat" (according to a recent article in the London newspaper *The Guardian*). This summer's major examples are the sixth *Jurassic Park* sequel and the ninth *Superman* flick. For starters.

Many great movies—and TV shows—have spawned an excellent sequel. But go beyond that, to III or IV or more, and the photocopy grows ever fuzzier. Thus it is with the 60-plus-year stream of *Twilight Zone* wannabes that owe so much to the original...but have too often paid inadequate attention to all that made it special.

I expected so much more from Jordan Peele's 2019 reboot. His movies *Get Out* and *Us* were brilliant—succeeding by offering tales that were *Zone-ish* without trying to replicate the original masterpiece. Alas, his TV remake fell short. To me, it just didn't have that *Zone-ish*-ness of the original. And maybe it couldn't.

What does being *Zone-ish* really mean?

For me, George Clayton Johnson captured the original *Twilight Zone*'s narrative essence in a speech he gave at an L.A. convention around 2004: most episodes were firmly grounded in the real world. Then came a "touch of strange" that pushed ordinary people into extraordinary circumstances.

"The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" is a classic example: inexplicable electricity failures meet a tween's imagination to transform a comfortably normal neighborhood into a circus of panicked enemies.

"Eye of the Beholder" captures



that essence by reversing it: the touch of strange in a universally ugly world is a beautiful woman.

Get Out used its touch of strange like "Maple Street" did, playing it out in an otherwise normal world. *Us* channeled "Eye of the Beholder" by teasing us throughout but withholding its touch of strange for the big reveal at the end.

The genius of those two flicks earned Jordan Peele his TV remake, but slapping the name *Twilight Zone* onto any TV series sets up impossible expectations.

And *Zone-ish* covers far more than the plots! It's the gestalt of the writing, the acting and directing, the cinematography and the production values. Finally, let's not forget how much *TZ* tapped into the zeitgeist of the times.

Tony Albarella's entrancing additional material in his *As Timeless As Infinity* script series reveals what a remarkable time capsule the show is. The early 1960s are ancient history, a powerful reason why efforts to duplicate *Twilight Zone* are probably doomed to failure.

You know the cliché: *That was then, this is now*. While *now* is overflowing with content, 21st century TV remains starved for quality Speculative Fiction (SF). And anthology shows are even rarer.

I browsed YouTube for science-fiction anthologies prior to *Twilight Zone*, hoping to discover some worthy ancestors. I found a lot of shows, often hosted, but consistently unimpressive, in the writing and the acting and the kinescope-like video quality.

After all, this was the first Golden



Clockwise: Alfred Hitchcock Presents "Change of Address" intro; The Outer Limits episode "The Mutant"; Way Out host Roald Dahl

Age, the dawn of mass-produced series TV, FCC Chairman Newton Minow's "vast wasteland." Populated by many prospectors, this wasteland produced very little actual gold.

The best shows, and perhaps the only good ones, were actually *TZ* contemporaries: *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1965) *The Outer Limits* (1963-1964) and *Way Out* (1961).

The Outer Limits may have invented the art form "Monster of the Week." Its anthologies featured outlandish makeup but often compelling plots. Their host was a disembodied voice doing B&D on your psyche. Like *TZ*, this show has been revived at least once.

Way Out had host Roald Dahl, himself a humorously dark delight, and some remarkably *Zone-ish* story lines. One episode featured a rude and heartless actor duplicating a homeless man's deformed visage with heavy makeup for a role...only to discover *after* the show that it had become his permanent face.

Like that classic writing class exercise where all students start with the same first sentence, *Twilight Zone*'s "The Masks" (1964) shares the permanent new face concept but little else. Serling's

version is gut-punch effective, but *Way Out*'s version could have been a *Twilight Zone* episode; just add *TZ*'s primo production values and cinematography.

Hitchcock had great production values, clever twists, and the host's dry and dark humor. He occasionally actually discussed the story. The twists were plentiful and murderously delightful. I enjoy that show, but I have never cried over an episode.

"Walking Distance," though, does it to me every time...

The carousel climax that produces those tears is a triumph of atmosphere and cinematography in addition to the writing and acting that got us to that point. And you know that Serling is speaking to a mirror when Martin Sloan's father asks his adult son not to make his childhood self share that summer.

Hitchcock's and Dahl's shows are worthy of comparison to *Twilight Zone*, but both seem obsessed with relatives plotting to murder each other. Serling's show touched on so much more.

Not that *TZ* shied away from violence. Both "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TWILIGHT ZONE

REBOOTS: FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"The Shelter" reveal how easily a group of old friends could slip into anarchy. Serling's closing remarks in "The Shelter" model the simple authenticity of *Zone-ish*-ness.

"For civilization to survive, the human race has to remain civilized."

Heart. Attitude. Authenticity. Cinematography!

The melding of those elements is what makes the original *Twilight Zone* so timeless. We watch it again and again, to the point where we can turn off the sound and supply the dialog ourselves. It's the humanity—and the contrasting lack of it—that draws me to *TZ*'s most iconic episodes.

I don't need guns or blood splatter or the-world's-at-stake plot devices. I can be drawn in by the despair, dreams, or disdain of a single person. Rod Serling wrote those people very well.

Consider the humanity of the spaceship captain who delivers a robot companion to convict James Corry in "The Lonely" (season 1, episode 7). Also featured: the inhumanity of his first officer, who seems to delight in Corry's agony.

Then consider the tragedy of Corry forced to abandon his robot love in exchange for freedom. The beauty of "The Lonely" was never simply *what if*; it was the heart-rending humanity of the story's *what then*.

If you're a serious *Twilight Zone* fan, you've watched the video pitch Rod made for potential sponsors. In it, he includes a brief but salacious tease of that episode:

"As to the physiological extensions of their relationship, that is man and female machine, what they do in their spare time, we're leaving this wide open."

It was bait for those sponsors. The episode contains nothing salacious. What Corry and the robot do is fall in love. There is no sex, not even vaguely implied. The tragedy comes when he has to leave her behind, in fact watch her destroyed, by the man who gifted her to him.



Witness the death of the love who made his bleak life bearable, and I dare you to find that kind of humanity in the dozens of shows now available to you.

I grew up on short science fiction, as did a lot of Boomers: Harlan Ellison, Ray Bradbury, Damon Knight. And of course Rod Serling. I actually read the original *Twilight Zone* episodes, as well as watched the show in reruns. (*TZ* and *I Love Lucy* helped invent syndication.) Newsstands offered a dozen-plus short-story magazines.

What's left of new short stories these days you can count on one hand, and anthology video fare reflects that.

So thank the internet for streaming! *Black Mirror*, the *Dust* series, and two other shows that moved me like the best of *Twilight Zone* while being unique themselves: *Severance* on Apple TV+ and *Tales from the Loop* on Amazon Prime.

Black Mirror (Netflix) often feels *Zone-ish*. It's one of just a few modern anthology series, a task much easier when a season is fewer than 10 episodes. But it leans sooo heavily into dystopias.

Severance (on Apple TV+) grabbed me from its first moments with a musical theme (by Theodore Shapiro) that whispered *Twilight Zone* without replicating Marius Constant's masterpiece in any discernable way. The show's content and presentation do the same thing. Is it a critique of office life? A metaphor for slavery? A universe that even its creators are still discovering?

Tales from the Loop offers straight science fiction that doesn't leave the planet and centers around just a few people. The world isn't

threatened. But the stories do contain irreversible changes for the characters.

The show's single season is a collection of connected stories, each standalone and starring a different character from the same community. The Loop is a place for experimental physics, and it provides each episode's *touch of strange* — a piece of impossible technology.

That's the *what if*. What makes this show *Zone-ish* is the *what then* that follows... realistic depictions of what people like you and me would do in a strange situation. Often, the tales are worth a sympathetic sigh.

Dust is a loose YouTube collection that offers a vast array of science fiction in varying lengths—usually less than a half hour. It disappoints as often as it pleases, so you have to be patient. But it comes free with any internet connection.

All of these shows, and others, are modern-day successors to *TZ*. But we keep watching the original. We keep dialing in to the yearly marathons.

There is no better example of the symbiosis that makes *Twilight Zone* inimitable than "Nothing in the Dark," George Clayton Johnson's debut *TZ* script from the third season. Consider these perceptive observations of symbolism in the *Twilight Zone Vortex* review of the episode (link below.)

"There is the obvious symbol of Wanda Dunn's dilapidated dwelling as a physical representation of her own crumbling existence. There is also the obvious symbolism in the character of the building contractor ... whose occupation (the razing and construction of buildings) is a parallel to the life/

death process in the natural world.

"A more subtle use of symbolism is that of imprisoning bars as a symbol of the nature and effects of Wanda's psychosis. We first view Gladys Cooper's sleeping form through the latticework of a chair back. She pushes this away as though opening a door when she is awakened by noise in the street. Later, when she awakens from the fall caused by the building contractor, (director) Lamont Johnson chooses to film Gladys Cooper clutching the iron bars of a bed frame, giving the distinct impression of an imprisoned person."

Thank you, *Twilight Zone Vortex*! After all these years, you gifted me some great new details that I never noticed.

Is there another TV episode that compares with "Eye of the Beholder"? Not only does it turn a deeply-set concept on its head, its inventive contortions of lighting and camera angles make the literally last-minute reveal devastating. That episode and "The Howling Man" both achieve a remarkable synthesis of writing, acting, makeup and cinematography, to define *Zone-ness*.

What would Rod Serling be writing now? He would have just turned 100 last Christmas, so this is at best a thought experiment. As previously noted: it's not the 1960s anymore, and of course television has evolved. And of course, a talent like Serling would also evolve.

The next *TZ* "reboot"—yes, sooner or later there will be another—could benefit greatly as a multi-episode, entire-season tale. I thrill thinking about what Serling would do with that kind of space to tell a single story.

That's what I think he'd be writing right now. Nostalgic old me, I wish he was.

Steve Schlich is the *Foundation's Webmaster*.

Twilight Zone Vortex review of the episode:

tinyurl.com/TZVortex-Nothinginthedark

TWILIGHT ZONE

Battling a Bigot: Rod Serling Defends Theodore Bikel

By Tony Albarella

Researching Rod Serling's work is sometimes like being an archeologist. Occasionally there are big, important dig sites that yield Indiana Jones-level historical finds, such as the scouring of Serling's personal drafts of original scripts and correspondence or the preservation of nearly 1,200 Dictabelts recorded by Rod.

But some of the sweetest discoveries come from the small, unexpected artifacts that randomly drifted in and out of Serling's orbit – a faded candid photo, a personal memory gleaned from an interview, a vintage letter or telegram. Dust them off, methodically chip away the accumulated detritus of the decades, probe into their contextual history...and you reveal miniature but significant time capsules, the examination of which yields incremental insight into Serling's life, career, personality.

I made one such find in February of this year, on eBay, for the princely sum of \$5.99 (\$11.55 with shipping and tax). It's an original four-page letter of reply, dated August 22, 1960, from actor and activist Theodore Bikel to a couple who wrote to him in support of a controversy in which Bikel was embroiled.

What's important from the Serling research perspective is not that the letter is hand-signed by Bikel; what shines is the story the letter reveals, and the fact that two of the pages are a statement written by Rod Serling.

The controversy is this: On July 26, 1960, Theodore Bikel appeared on a television program entitled *Caucus with Backus*, which aired over KNXT-TV, Hollywood. A fellow guest, former silent film star Corinne Griffith, dismissed the legitimacy of Bikel's political comments and dressed him down for his nationality and immigration status.

This display angered many viewers, including Serling, who rose to Bikel's defense by attempting to publicly voice his outrage. The attempt failed. I'll let Bikel himself explain why in his letter, which is reprinted below along with Serling's unabridged statement.



Bikel went on, of course, to appear in *Twilight Zone*'s "Four O'Clock," a dramatic diatribe on McCarthyism and intolerance that first aired on April 6, 1962. "My episode of *Twilight Zone* was indeed a morality play, which carried the notion of witch-hunting to its absurd conclusion," Bikel told me in an interview in 2001.

"Another feather in Rod Serling's cap," he added. "My appearance on *Twilight Zone* was to me, as an actor, a great delight. It is not often that a role like this comes along that you can get your teeth into. What made it even better was the fact that Rod Serling himself wrote the script. We did manage to talk quite a bit, and I found him a fascinating man. He was as good a conversationalist as he was a writer."

Twilight Zone fans can now view "Four O'Clock" through a different lens; one formed two years prior

in a real-life event shared by both Bikel and Serling. And the cast-off historical artifact reprinted here sheds a small but revealing ray of light on the decency of both men, who encountered bigotry and, often at the peril of their careers, used their respective platforms to stand up and fight it.

August 22, 1960

Mr. and Mrs. James Buck

Dear Friends:

How an ugly incident, shameful and distressing as it was, can turn to golden fruition was amply demonstrated by your kind letter. For myself let me say that my firm belief in the basic decency of our community is not that easily shaken: It would take much more than an army of bigoted reactionaries to make even a dent. On the other hand your letter, and the hundreds of

others I received, were honest expressions not only of outraged decency but also of spontaneous and immediate reaction in our community to fight evil as it appears.

The lady who saw fit to abuse me in front of a television audience used the oldest tactics of demagogues: If you cannot counter a man's point by honest discussion and argument (*sic*), you question his right to have a point of view at all or attack him personally. I have known many of her ilk; they have a way not only of dividing the human race into Americans and Others, but also of subdividing American citizens themselves into first-rate and second-rate or lower. It obviously did not occur to the lady that citizenship is not a prerequisite for freedom of speech, and moreover that I had been expressly invited on the program to state my views.

All this was most admirably put by Mr. Rod Serling, who was prevented by the network from making public the statement enclosed. In their anxiety to avoid further "trouble" they suppressed a most eloquent voice for American thought.

The delay in answering your letter was caused by my desire to get permission from Mr. Serling to include his statement in my reply to you.

My very best wishes,
Theodore Bikel

The following is a statement by Mr. Rod Serling:

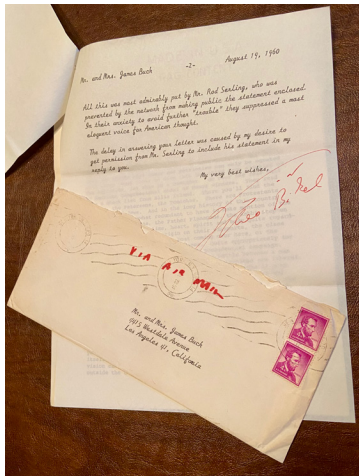
On this program on July 26, an actor of considerable stature appeared by invitation. His name is Theodore Bikel. Aside from his talents which are considerable, his reputation as a gentleman and a human being is probably the most unsullied and exemplary of any man in this profession. While appearing on this program he was subjected to a vicious and predatory attack by Miss Corinne Griffiths (*sic*), that eminent star of silent screen. Singularly, as a basis for Miss Griffiths' disparagement of this man was the fact that he was of foreign birth. I am not an official spokesman for any group, but I think the following

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TWILIGHT ZONE

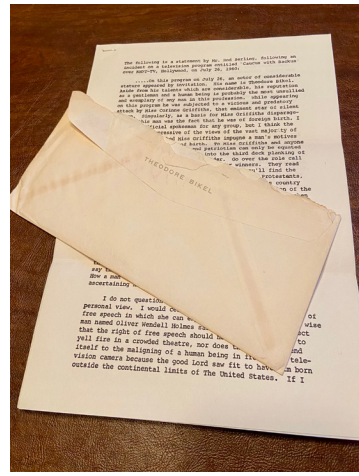
BIKEL: FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

is expressive of the views of the vast majority of Americans who watched Miss Griffiths impugn (sic) a man's motives because of an accident of birth. To Miss Griffiths and anyone else who thinks that honor and patriotism can only be equated with those whose roots go deep into the third deck planking of The Mayflower, let this be a reminder. Go over the role (sic) call of American Congressional Medal of Honor winners. They read like a check list from Ellis Island. There you'll find the Perezes, the Petersens, the Tomiches. There are Protestants, Catholics and Jews. And in the long history of this country of ours it is somewhat redundant to have to make mention of the Booker T. Washingtons, the Father Flanagans, the Rabbi Stephen S. Wises, who gave of time, heart, spirit and body quite regardless of the countries of origin on their passports, the class of their accommodations on the boat coming over here, or the number of letters in their last names. Quite appropriately for all of this, we're in the middle of a presidential campaign. You'll hear tell that this is a political battle between a man who tends toward conservatism and one whose leanings are liberal. This is probably valid and certainly legitimate. You'll note that lines are drawn



between a Republican and a Democrat and this too is part of the workings of a democracy, but let no one say that this is a battle between a Protestant and a Catholic. How a man worships his God should be of little consequence in ascertaining his qualifications and his capacities.

I do not question the right of Miss Griffiths to hold a personal view. I would certainly not try to limit her area of free speech in which she can expound that view, but a very wise man named Oliver Wendell Holmes said something to the effect that the right of free speech should not permit a person to yell fire in a crowded theatre, nor does this right extend itself to the maligning



of a human being in front of a television camera because the good Lord saw fit to have him born outside the continental limits of The United States. If I haven't said this properly or pointedly or with sufficient lyricism – there happens to be a great historical figure who said it far better. He said, and I quote, "As a nation we began by declaring that 'All men are created equal.' We now practically read it, 'All men are created equal, except Negroes.' When the know-nothings get control it will read, 'All men are created equal, except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics.' When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty – to Russia for instance where despotism can be taken

pure and without the base alloy of hypocrisy." This was said by Abraham Lincoln on August 24th, 1855.

There is room in this country, I'm sure, for dissent and for legitimate (sic) self-criticism. It seems to me that subversion can take hold only when the standards by which we judge our fellow men are subversive in themselves. And to judge a man by his color or his creed is not only wrong – not only ludicrous – but a guarantee that democracy is unworkable. And this surely must be wrong. A democracy is workable with its faults, with its immaturities, with the errors in judgment – it works because its basic tenet is simply the recognition of the dignity of its citizens. The kind of dignity that permits the son of Lithuanian immigrants to say to Miss Griffiths...judge a man, Miss Griffiths, as a man. Judge a citizen by his works. Judge a human being by his compassion and his sincerity. Judge all of us not by our geography...but by our humanity.

.....
RSMF Board Member Tony Albarella is the editor of numerous books on Serling's work, including the 10-volume series "As Timeless as Infinity: The Complete Twilight Zone Scripts of Rod Serling."

From Visiting the Zone to Hobnobbing with a Beatle, Kenneth Haigh Got Around

By Paul Gallagher

I'm usually pretty good at spotting faces and coming up with a name right away: "Oh, that's So-and-so. He starred in Such-and-such." But while my memory — at least for show-biz faces — is above average, it's not perfect.

Take "The Last Flight." We all have some episodes of *The Twilight Zone* that aren't particularly famous, but that really hit a sweet spot for us. That's how I feel about this story, which concerns a World War I pilot who lands at a modern-day air base (well, modern in 1960, when the episode first aired) and discovers that he's done some inadvertent time-traveling.

I'm also a huge fan of the Beatles. Seriously, I could run a blog about them, too. And one of the many films I can quote almost word-for-word is *A Hard Day's Night*.



It's a lot of fun — very witty and comedic, and loaded with great tunes, of course.

So why did it take me so long to figure out that Kenneth Haigh, the actor who plays Lt. Decker in "The Last Flight," also starred as Simon Marshall, the sardonic advertising executive who interviews George Harrison in *A Hard Day's Night*? It's not as if they were filmed that



far apart. "The Last Flight" was filmed in July 1959 and first aired on February 5, 1960, while the Beatles film was filmed in March/April 1964 and released that July. So it's not as if Haigh has aged much. He looks pretty much the same.

Of course, he's dressed differently for each role. More importantly, he acts differently.

Maybe it's because we bring varying mindsets to certain shows and movies. When I watch the Zone, I'm in sci-fi/fantasy mode. When I watch *A Hard Day's Night*, I'm there for a few laughs and some first-class music.

Plus he did just one scene in the movie. It's not as if we're looking at his face the whole time. He's on screen for less than three minutes. But still, I have a reputation to uphold! ;)

I don't know why it took a while to finally click a few years back. But whatever the reason, here's a toast to Haigh, who made two of my favorite things to watch funnier, more intriguing — and more memorable.

.....
RSMF Board Member Paul Gallagher is editor of the Dimensions of Imagination newsletter.

ROD SERLING

Rod's Letters Prove What a Wordsmith He Was

By Gordon Webb

Who knows what makes a great writer, but few would deny that Rod Serling possessed immense talent – first with radio scripts, then for television, and eventually for “the big screen,” including Hollywood blockbusters like the 1968 *Planet of the Apes*.

I believe he was a true “wordsmith” – someone with a unique command of the English language. His text possesses a special “cadence” and in his plays, the dialog he gives to characters has a unique sound – which actors love to perform. Beyond that, *even when composing a personal letter*, Rod Serling seemed able to give his words the same “special treatment” that made him an award-winning scriptwriter.

Examples of this can be found in several letters he wrote in the 1960s, which were shared with me by Leslie (Goodman) Crossley. Now a retired real estate broker, Leslie grew up in 1930s’ Binghamton, NY, and recalls that, as a young girl she had a “kid down the block” as a babysitter – none other than a young Rod Serling.

Thinking back almost 60 years, she remembers: “He wasn’t so strict,” although she thinks he yelled at her once, adding “I must have been misbehaving.” She



Ann Goodman and Ethel Serling, 1939

recalls that he took her skating at Recreation Park, just a few blocks from where they both lived. Today, visitors to “Rec Park” can see a full-sized bronze statue of Leslie’s “now famous” old babysitter.

Leslie’s parents, Sam and Ann Goodman, were good friends with Samuel and Ethel Serling, who lived a few blocks away on Bennett Avenue on the city’s south side. They owned “Goodman’s Gift Gallery” in downtown Binghamton, and Rod’s father operated “Serling’s Sanitary Grocery.”

The two families had a lot in common as fellow Jewish merchants during a period when antisemitic sentiment was

spreading nationwide. As their friendship grew, the families even vacationed together, and their “circle of friends” included Rod’s seventh grade English teacher – Helen Foley – who’s credited with developing his skills as a writer and social activist. According to Leslie, “Mom and Helen were ‘tight.’”

It seems that Rod’s connection with Ann and Sam Goodman continued into adulthood. Shortly after the war, Leslie remembers that Sam ran into Rod in Binghamton, who told him that if he wanted to hear him on the radio, he should listen at noon. Sam rushed home and tuned in to WINR... hearing Rod’s voice say: “The time at the tone will be 12 o’clock.”

Over the years, Rod and his wife Carol stayed in touch with the friends Rod had made as a teenager. Their close relationship is evident in 1963 – when the fifth season of *The Twilight Zone* was just beginning on CBS. At the end of this letter (Figure 1), after a flowery description of their six-week vacation in the Orient, Rod enquires about the Goodman’s new business venture, and expresses his concern about Sam’s health.

In another letter (Figure 2) Rod relates one of his own health scares, which hints at the heart problems that would plague him a few years later. He admits “that a man over forty should not try to travel along on cylinders that he doesn’t own.” At this point, the Serling family now includes daughters Jodi and Anne, and their home is not far from the writer’s office in Hollywood. Rod refers to the annual summer get-together with the Goodmans – presumably at the Serling family cottage on Cayuga Lake in upstate New York.

To help understand the next letter (Figure 3), it’s important to know that Rod’s wife, Carol Kramer Serling, had been raised by her grandmother, Louise Orton Caldwell, after her own mother died when Carol was a baby. Louise passed away on February 1, 1966, at the age of 88 – just two

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

November 14, 1963

Mr. and Mrs. Samuel A. Goodman
6 Campbell Road Court
Binghamton, New York

Dear Ann and Sam,

I’m sorry as hell I wasn’t around when your letter arrived. As my girl wrote you, Carol and I were on an extended tour of the Orient, returning just four days ago—beat, bushed, but deliriously delighted with everything we saw and did. It was an extended six and a half week, 35,000-mile tour—mostly business but eminently satisfying.

There seems to be a very strong possibility that I’ll be going back early December to shoot some film; and this, of course, would mitigate against my arriving in Binghamton for the Broome Tech meeting, but

this will be settled in a few days and if I do get there, I’ll naturally phone you. Incidentally, I’d appreciate your not mentioning this because I’d hate to have the powers that be there hear secondhand that their speaker isn’t arriving. This unpleasant communication I’ll have to handle myself.

Someone wrote us that Sam had been feeling under the weather and we’re deeply concerned. Please let us know what’s happening there, how he feels, what the new business is, and how it’s doing. With Affection,
Rod



Figure 1

April 5, 1965

Mrs. Samuel A. Goodman
Goodman’s Gift Gallery
Capitol Building
Binghamton, New York 13901

Dear Ann,

Many thanks for your gracious note of March 29th.

To reassure you, I suffered more of a scare than a disability. It appeared I’d had a coronary, but a rather complete examination proved that it was exhaustion compounded by food poisoning. It did prove one point—that a man over forty should not try to travel along on cylinders that he doesn’t own.

I’m on the way to recovery now under a rather strict medical

regimen, looking after myself a little bit better and really, almost back to normal.

Give our love to Sam and tell him we’re looking forward to seeing you this summer. We hope to arrive the end of June.

Incidentally, Deedie Kramer is Carol’s step-sister and really quite a lovely little gal.

Affectionate regards,
Rod



Figure 2

ROD SERLING

LETTERS: FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

days following the death of Sam Goodman in Binghamton. In a belated letter to Ann Goodman, Rod regrets not responding sooner...and his expression of condolence is obvious... and poignant.

Another letter from Rod, which is just a short, typewritten note to Cliff Robertson (Figure 4) seems to be the result of a chance meeting at an air show. The Oscar-winning actor appeared in two episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and liked Rod, calling him a "most ingratiating guy who was sympathetic to actor's needs."

Robertson was also a certified pilot, owned several vintage airplanes and was active in the air show entertainment industry, while Rod's brother, Bob, was a pilot and the two enjoyed building model airplanes together as kids. So, without any historical evidence to back it up... it appears that the two may have just missed connecting at an air show. Perhaps Robertson tried to get in touch with Rod, but "the clods" (perhaps hotel bellhops) failed to deliver the message in time. Who knows if they ever got together after that?

We don't know much about the last letter in this series, dated May 30, 1975 (Figure 5). According

to one of several biographies of Serling (Gordon Sanders's *Serling: The Rise and Twilight of Television's Last Angry Man*, p. 23), Rod spent several summers at a camp for Jewish kids in rural central New York not far from Binghamton. In this letter, he refers to Sunset Camp as "his camp" which is apparently across the lake from another, unnamed camp – attended by the letter's recipient.

The teenage Rod was well-known for having no trouble attracting young women, so perhaps Jean Carter Peterson – after nearly 50 years – learned of an old boyfriend's now-serious heart condition and sent him a get-well card. We may never know the

whole story... and, of course, Jean Carter Peterson had no way of knowing that less than a month later Rod would be gone.

Hopefully, these examples of "Letters from Rod" demonstrate the care he always took with words – ANY words. Defining his role as a writer, he maintained that his job was to "menace the public conscience." He certainly did that... but his power over words extended far beyond his professional writing.

Gordon C. Webb is an advisor of the Rod Serling Memorial Foundation.

February 21, 1966

Mrs. Samuel A. Goodman
Campbell Road Court
Binghamton, New York

Dear Ann,

I had every intention of phoning you the week following Samuel's death. Talking to you as I did at that particular time when you were so close to it and still in shock from it, was most inadequate. But then, as fate would have it, two days later Carol's grandmother had her third stroke, lingered for three days, and then died on Tuesday. The next week and a half were spent in Columbus for the funeral, estate, etc.

It is pointless to think up the proper language covering Samuel's passing on. I must tell you, Ann, that that evening after talking to you, I walked the streets and thought of the other times. Not only did I suffer a loss, but there seemed to be the departure from the premises of a "time"—a fast diminishing memory of youth and serenity and

growing up and embodied by my recollection of Sam. Sam, the humorist—Sam, so jovial—Sam... so much a part of the fabric. And needless to say, you were a part of the recollection—your grace and charm and vitality.

I know how redundant and really quite meaningless are the phrases of condolences. I only wanted you to know that Sam is missed and loved.

Please let me hear from you and assure me that you are well and hearing up.

With affection,
Rod

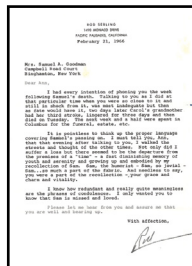


Figure 3

May 30, 1975

Mrs. Jean Carter Peterson
1 Riegel Oaks Lane
Homewood, Illinois 60430

Dear Jean,

It was an incredible event among incredible events—getting your card and then (as one is wont to do in hospitals) thinking back to other times.

I've thought so frequently of you and the summer at Sunset Camp (that was mine—what the hell did they call the camp across the lake?) but my God, girl, this is—what—twenty-eight, twenty-nine years ago! And that you should take the time and trouble to send me a get-well card after almost three decades must mark you as one of the compassionate women of our time.

As to life and tastes—I'm fifty now, have two daughters, one married, the other going into her Junior College year. And you've already read in the paper what else I have to annotate my mid-century status.

Now I'm sitting, looking out at Cayuga Lake, where we have a summer place, and recuperating slowly and not at all well. I'm not built for this kind of total serenity and this almost complete surrender to inactivity.

Now what about you? There's a wedded name there—"Peterson"—so there must be a Mr. Peterson. And are there young Petersons? And where is Homewood, Illinois? And what have you done with your life? Please drop me a note and give me a phone number or something. I'm sure Mr. Peterson can't be jealous of a semi-invalid old bastard whose excesses now lie mostly in the field of nostalgia. So please do let me hear from you.

With warm regards and special thanks for your note.

Rod

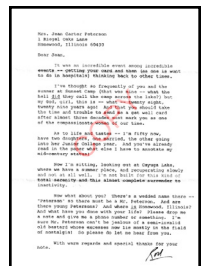


Figure 5



Cliff Robertson, with a Spitfire he acquired from the Belgium Air Force, was awarded the Experimental Aircraft Association's highest honor, the "Freedom of Flight Award," in 1987. Photo: airportjournals.com

January 16, 1962

Mr. Cliff Robertson
1311 North Kanter
Los Angeles 49, California

Dear Cliff,

I got your note at ten o'clock Sunday night. If the clods had come to me quicker we could have had a dinner or at least a drink. But why the hell do we have to wait till our paths cross at air shows? Let's do it here. It'd be my pleasure.

All best to you,
Rod Serling

January 16, 1962

Mr. Cliff Robertson
1311 North Kanter
Los Angeles 49, California

Dear Cliff,

I got your note at ten o'clock Sunday night. If the clods had come to me quicker we could have had a dinner or at least a drink. But why the hell do we have to wait till our paths cross at air shows? Let's do it here. It'd be my pleasure.

All best to you,

Rod Serling

RS/ml

Alton
'Grandfather'
Age: 74

Sandy
'Grandmother'
Age: 73

OUR FIRST TIME TO WATCH:

The TWILIGHT ZONE

Rylan
'Son'
Age: 16

Christopher
'Dad'
Age: 48

Rod Serling
Creator and Host

Season 2, Episode 1: King Nine Will Not Return



Captain James Embry finds himself the sole survivor of a B-25 plane crash during WWII. But what happened to the crew? And where are they? The Captain starts to break down, but the ending explains everything...or does it?

The main character is Captain Embry, played by Bob Cummings.



Wow! They used a real plane in the desert. Where did they get the plane?!



The serial# is 42-32354. The plane is in storage, waiting restoration in Borrego Springs, CA.

According to the internet this episode was filmed in the desert near Lone Pine, CA and the plane was a surplus B-25 bought from the Air Force for \$2500.



THIS WAS A GOOD EPISODE!

IT SHOWS JUST HOW CRAMPED IT REALLY WAS INSIDE THE B-25.

THE ENDING MESSES WITH YOU A LITTLE. YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT...

...THAT'S COOL!

PRETTY NEAT EPISODE. IT SEEMED SHORTER THAN THE OTHER EPISODES WE WATCHED.

CAPTAIN EMBRY DIDN'T EXPLORE VERY FAR FROM THE AIRPLANE THOUGH.

THE MORE WE TALKED ABOUT THE ENDING THE MORE INTERESTING IT GOT...

AT FIRST I THOUGHT HE WAS A GHOST. BUT A GHOST WOULD KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CREW.

AND THERE WERE NO FOOTPRINTS OR SKELETONS...

PLENTY TO THINK ABOUT.

IT WAS FUN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

ANOTHER GOOD EPISODE!

THE NOSE ART ON THE AIRPLANE WAS VERY DETAILED!

IT WAS SAD THOUGH. IMAGINE YOURSELF IN HIS SHOES: NOTHING IS REAL AND SLOWLY GOING CRAZY NOT KNOWING WHAT IS GOING ON OR WHY.

AND I AGREE WITH RYLAN. THERE IS NO ROOM INSIDE THE PLANE!