

LIFE'S LIKE THAT

By FRED NEHER



"Oh, Merrick... We forgot the dog food!"

A Closer Look

By Ernest Kreiling

HOLLYWOOD—This column normally concerns itself with broad issues in television and with television programming as a whole rather than with individual programs.

But reviews of individual programs remain an important part of the whole body of television criticism, even though Jackie Gleason characterized them as "reporting accidents to eye witnesses." Reviews are not only important but they are popular, ranking, according to one survey, as the most popular type of television column.

But today I'm going to invade the reviewer's province and comment on some recent programs and their reviews, including those of NBC's The Kremlin and the Johnny Carson Show.

THERE HAS been a rash of columns recently about Johnny Carson and the Tonight Show, sparked by the fact that his program originated for two weeks from Hollywood. Most of the writers emphasize that Carson is getting a bigger audience than Jack Paar did and that sponsors are flocking to the program in unprecedented numbers. And without fail the critics can't resist the temptation to couple Paar's name with adjectives such as "weepy," "tearful," or "maudlin self-pity." The impression is that Johnny Carson has brought late evening television new, sparkling, fresh, and invigorating entertainment.

Such critical appraisals must be based primarily on antipathy to Jack Paar, which is not uncommon among journalists, because by almost any reasonable standards Carson deserves the nomination as the Yawn of the Year.

AS A PERSON Carson is as amiable a non-entertainer as is ever likely to embarrass an audience with bad taste and with painfully bad opening monologues. While in Hollywood the program did step out of character and enlist some interesting guests. But over the total season the typical program was studded with guests who's staggering anonymity was exceeded only by their soporific monotony.

Carson is singularly lacking in ability to engage his guests in meaningful conversation, falling back instead on underscoring whatever double entendre creeps in. Because Paar had the temerity to attack some of society's sacred cows (including the press, which is not without its vulnerable

spots) reviewers too often feel compelled to praise anything that reflects badly on Paar, a technique that resembles vengeance rather than criticism.

Paar's polemics brought some zest and reasoning to a medium that thinks it deserves medals for courage because it airs weather predictions. Carson and his program have the excitement of Pabulum seasoned with Sleep-Eze.

IN THE FIELD of the documentary many reviewers are apparently inclined to react like Pavlov's dog to any program that purports to be serious and informative. But instead of salivating the conditioned reflex sets into motion whatever mental gears are needed to bring forth praise phrases. NBC's The Kremlin received a most unanimous praise, generally in such high flown terms as "stunning magnificence," "fascinating," "tremendous impact," and "wonderful hour."

Had these writers brought to this program the same critical standards or even instincts, they bring to less prestigious sounding programs, they would have had to characterize it as a monumental bore, as lacking in purpose, unity, focus and direction.

The program was at far greater pains to say to the audience, "Look how cultural and educational we are" than to methodically and coherently tell a story or to impart and interpret information of importance. It was concerned with photographic trivia, not social, political, or historical significance.

IT'S SUCCESS apparently hinged on the color, an aspect few could enjoy and therefore a bogus basis for critical approval.

As a rule television critics are more inclined to overlook and ignore significance and importance in TV programs where they do exist. But here is a case where they jumped to impute great art to a program where it was almost totally lacking.

Knuckey Earns Degree at Kansas

Richard Lee Knuckey, 17030 S. Crenshaw Blvd., has received a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Kansas. Knuckey was one of 2,222 students graduated last week by the University of Kansas. He graduated with distinction.

'Gaming' Detailed For PIRA

Albert W. Charles, president of Personnel Factors, Inc., and member of the Torrance school board, was the speaker Tuesday at the monthly meeting of Personnel Industrial Relations Assn., District 6. Charles introduced an adaptation of gaming which he has developed. Gaming is a widely recognized system of training and improving managerial skills through solving problems in simulated situations. President of Personnel Factors, Inc., since April, 1960, Charles has over 12 years diversified experience as director of industrial relations with major national firms.

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