

A Tour Guide's Notes – from The Twilight Zone Museum * December 23, 2013

Well, friends, it has been two long years since I last wrote a newsletter about our beloved television series and its ongoings. I hate to use this analogy, but like the Energizer bunny, it just keeps going and going and going. And it always will, as we know. During the past two years, I think the release of Anne Serling's incredibly moving book, "As I Knew Him – My Dad, Rod Serling" was probably the most important new thing in TZ land, for those of us who have had a chance to read it. It has gotten nothing less than five-star reviews. Richly deserved. If you call yourself a fan of "The Twilight Zone", and/or of Rod, you owe it to yourself to buy and read Anne Serling's book. I didn't rush out to buy a copy of it, myself. But when I saw that both Carol Burnett and Dr. Oz, two individuals whom I greatly respect, both gave their seals of approval, I made sure I worked it into my schedule of things to read ASAP. There are so many poignant moments within Anne's narrative...I wish I'd been able to hear her read some excerpts of it at the semi-annual Rod Serling Conference, which is now being held here in Los Angeles, but I was out of town with a work commitment. Next time, for sure.

We continue to bid adieu to many of those who worked on the show, some of whom attended our Twilight Zone Conventions. Jack Klugman and Jonathan Winters, who co-starred together in their episode, died almost back-to-back, concluding their long and wonderful lives. Gloria Pall ("And When the Sky Was Opened"), one of my closest of friends, left us last December. It's hard to believe she's been gone for a whole year. She used to dress up for the holidays, and her Mrs. Claus outfit, adorned with red and white sequins, was a beaut. I personally will always be thankful she was cast in that two-line part on TZ...whose story was written by the great Richard Matheson, whom we also lost this year. Matheson was a legendary writer, and ironically (or not?) "I Am Legend" is one of his best-known works. He was the last of the major TZ writers to pass, and thankfully we still have George Clayton Johnson and Earl Hamner, both still going strong. William Froug, who died in August, was the last of the producers to leave us. By the time he joined Cayuga Productions, "Twilight Zone" was nearing the end of its run and ensured that the series went out on an as high a note as possible, producing a number of memorable episodes. Maxine Stuart, star of the universally-known "Eye of the Beholder", was just short of 95 when her time came this past year. She was the only person to star in an episode and appear on camera, but without her face ever being seen. Miraculous, when you think about it. No Emmy awards ever went to TZ actors, but they should have. And if they had, Gail Kobe should have gotten one. Gail, who appeared three times on TZ (two of which were starring roles) moved on

several months ago. She was a great lady and I am so glad many of us got to meet her. She was never a big star but should've been. Kim Hamilton, whom many remember as the mother of the telepathic boy Henry Temple in "The Big Tall Wish" in the first season, was an outstanding actress. Mind you, this touching story was written by Rod in 1959, long before the civil rights movement. About 15 years after her TZ role, she and TZ alum Charles Aidman appeared together in an episode of "All in the Family" where Lionel Jefferson gets engaged to Jenny Willis, who is half African-American/half Caucasian. Kim and Charles played her parents, and did a great job of it. Sadly, they were replaced by two other actors who were not as good, who remained for another decade on "The Jeffersons" series. TZ alum Ivan Dixon (1931-2008), co-starred with Kim Hamilton's later husband, Werner Klemperer, in "Hogan's Heroes." Just one of many 'Six Degrees of Separation' in The Twilight Zone! One final word on the dearly departed...Ted Post – a prince of a man. So talented, so intelligent, and a great director. He directed four episodes. He was a great fan of Rod's, and Rod genuinely respected Ted too. He never talked in public much, but attended our 2004 TZ convention and, alongside producer Del Reisman (1924-2011) talked about those golden years of TV.

So, what's next for TZ? Anything spectacular? Who knows. It's still generating income for the company which owns it, and for the companies who license the rights to use it, so I'm sure other things are waiting around the corner. If something makes money, you don't stop using it. "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." George Clayton Johnson's bio is out now. I haven't read it, but if it's George's, it's great. It seems that new TZ action figures seem to keep coming out...bobbleheads and whatnot (hey, if it sells, give the people what they want) and I'm sure a new DVD release is not far away. The Twilight Zone Café seems to be chugging along, and remains the "one stop shopping center" for anyone who wants to discuss the show. This past year, 2013, marked a milestone – fifteen years prior, the old 'The Fifth Dimension' website launched its message board. This happened in early 1998. For about two years, this was an amazing forum for intelligent discussion of the show. Unfortunately, it began somewhat of a decline around Y2K that took a long time to recover from, and when The Fifth Dimension (thetzsite.com) was shut down, a few folks carried the message board elsewhere and re-opened it as The Twilight Zone Café. Anyhow, The Fifth Dimension was a wonderful website, and I met so many devotees of TZ, some of whom I remain friends with and who attended the TZ Conventions. I'll always be grateful to a few of those folks who told me, and Bill DeVoe, to "do a convention if you can." And we did! I have not yet had a chance to write about the Stars of the Zone Conventions – the 10th anniversary passed in 2012 and the 11th was this past year. I think, when I do my reflections and recollections, I will have to make a Youtube

video about it instead because to write about it would take way too many words. I still get a ton of emails from people who ask about the conventions and if more will be done. I always have to say no, as much as I'd love to be able to say yes. But "Twilight Zone" is not "Star Trek." There are many loyal followers of TZ – millions of people all over the world. I've stated on this website earlier that TZ DVDs are Image Entertainment's #1-selling product, over and above all the other countless TV shows and movies they sell. That's impressive. So wouldn't it make sense that TZ conventions would be extremely well-attended with thousands of people and that they should've started like, say, back in the 1960s? You'd think so. Unfortunately, the attendance numbers were good but not great. But my gosh, four of the five TZ cons done thus far (excluding the "TZ actor gathering" done by The Hollywood Show in October 2009 amidst a lot of non-TZ actors) were nothing short of amazing.

As for this website, it's still here obviously. It's now one of the oldest TZ websites online now, starting its 12th year online. I'm very proud of that and THANK YOU, sincerely, for visiting and supporting The Twilight Zone Museum. I just renewed the hosting for three more years, thanks to a sponsor who generously made the donation last month, right before the bill at Ipower Hosting was due. So, thank you Diane!! Will I keep updating the website? Yes, as my schedule allows. I would get so much more done during the day if I had about six more hours...if I didn't have to sleep, I could get everything done and more too. Henry Bemis (prior to the H-bomb and his glasses shattering!) and I have the same problem...there's not always enough time. It's been going on 3 years since I last watched an episode of TZ. Is that good or bad? I don't know! I also haven't had a chance to finish reading the fantastic book by Martin Grams, which is almost like a TZ encyclopedia. Speaking of TZ books...there may be more of them in the works, at least one of which will hopefully be done by me. It would be a third volume of the "Forgotten Gems from the TZ" series, with more scripts. Hopefully. We'll see. I don't think I can quite ever separate myself from The Twilight Zone. It just wouldn't work. I've tried to! Even as long as 10 years ago, Steve Charendoff, president of Rittenhouse Archives, told me the same thing – "I think you're too far into it and there's no way you will ever fully retire from TZ-related activities." And while we're on the subject of books, I just got a report from my publisher that stated that the Kindle versions of the two Gems books are selling very well. I'm going to cry my eyes out when libraries with paper books go away – hopefully it won't be during my lifetime – but I'm very glad people are able to read those books (and any books) electronically if they so choose. At any rate, they're cheaper to buy!

Well, did I miss anything? TZ continues to appear and reappear in our popular culture and it's no use trying to count the references or passing nods to TZ and Rod. There are way too many of them. It's touching to see young film students, college kids, and teens and even pre-teens who get hooked on the series at an early age. Hopefully they realize just how important the early years of television were, and continue to be. I am on Youtube a lot myself – I haven't owned a proper television set in so many years – and I saw a student-remake of "And When the Sky Was Opened" – it was done maybe 4-5 years ago now. The kids did a good job of it. Probably better than any network remake of TZ...and wasn't Bryan "X Men" Singer going to do another version of it?? I haven't had a chance to follow up on whatever happened to those plans. Please drop me a line, somebody, and let me know how it turned out? And I call myself a TZ connoisseur...ha!!! I see TZ has an official-looking Facebook page nowadays. Well, so does The Twilight Zone Museum. I'm personally no fan of Facebook but I think every organization in this day and age is perceived to be behind-the-times if they aren't on there. So in July I broke down and started one, so go there and LIKE it! No pressure though. Better Facebook than LinkedIn. Don't get me started on LinkedIn! I don't want people knocking on my door at 2 am or stalking me in the parking lot at work!

Anyhow, if any of you have anything that you think would be appropriate for inclusion on the website, please let me know. Drop me an email at oceanave@usa.net. This is a museum, and we need artwork...well, or at least things that people would like to look at.

As a final word, to anyone who might want to reach out to any of those who worked on Twilight Zone, I recommend the website startiger.com. You can find many address listings on there. Go to the link on the main page (black and yellow banner) and click it to go to the website and join. It's a website mainly for autograph collectors, but it's also for those who simply like writing to celebrities. It costs about \$35 per year or \$4.99 a month. Less than 200 of the 992 actors who appeared on the show are still living. Many of them appreciate fan mail. So if the spirit moves you, drop them a line and say thanks for being so ossom (sic.) I just got a card in the mail today from June Foray. June, you are ossom. 96 years on Earth and still getting up for work in the morning and still winning awards. Let her be an inspiration to all of us. I'm also a firm believer in "work til you drop, retirement is for weeniez!"

Best Wishes Always...and Thank You, Please Call Again!
Andrew Ramage