

# Television 1976-1977: A Backward Glance

by REX BEST

The 1976-77 season held some interesting surprises for scrutinizers of the tube. It saw the rise of the traditionally third-place network, ABC, to the top spot, overtaking the traditional leader, CBS, by as many as five percentage points in the Nielsen tallies. *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley*, not to mention the bionic group and *Charles' Angels* helped secure for ABC that position. CBS and NBC meanwhile jostled for the number two position, but neither could really find the needed television fare to attract new viewers to their respective networks.

The past television season also brought to viewers new programming: the mammoth multiperiodic *Roots* boasted a television first and gained the largest audience share ever in television history. NBC tried its mini-series, too; packaged as the *Big Event*, the series received varying degrees of success. CBS seemed to look to Norman Lear for salvation from its rating disasters, but even Lear couldn't help out: *All in the Family* dropped from the top position in the ratings to eleven and twelve, and occasionally out of the top twenty shows. Only Lear's *One Day at a Time* managed any type of ratings consistency. *Maude*, *Good Times*, *All's Fair*, and *The Jeffersons* all had erratic ratings, certainly causing CBS to often dip into the third spot in the ratings game. Too, in this season, viewers witnessed the end of one

of the most phenomenally successful situation comedies on the screen, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, while it looked as if her former castmates, *Rhoda* and *Phyllis*, might not make another season with sagging ratings. In the news department, 1976-77 saw CBS's Cronkite still dominating the evening news fare. ABC's countermove to halt Cronkite's success — the team of Barbara Walters and Harry Reasoner — did not seem to produce the results for which ABC had hoped. In late night entertainment, Johnny Carson's formally impregnable late-night talk show began to slip vastly in the ratings, being challenged quite admirably by Lear's syndicated soap, *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*. In daytime programming, audiences saw the continued success of the one hour and forty-five minute soaps, as well as the demise of one soap, *Somerset*, and the creation of a new one, *Lovers and Friends*.

Although the ratings race for daytime and nighttime was interesting to watch, the new fare offered by all three networks was not. Only the specials, such as *Eleanor and Franklin*, *Roots*, *Sybil*, etc. gave any creative programming to audiences. New shows, such as *Charles' Angels*, *Eight is Enough*, *CPO Sharkey* and the like ranked at the bottom of creativity and production. Yet, no matter how bad some new offerings were, television produced some excellent drama from a few new shows and several old entries. As Emmy time nears, we take this chance to reflect upon the past television

season by selecting our choices for Emmys, in both daytime and nighttime programming.

Best New Show (comedy): ALICE

Best New Show (drama): FAMILY

Best Comedy: MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW

Best Drama: RICH MAN, POOR MAN (PART II)

Best Supporting Actress (comedy): BETTY WHITE (MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW)/JUDITH LOWRY (PHYLLIS) (tie)

Best Supporting Actress (drama): SUSAN SULLIVAN (RICH MAN, POOR MAN)

Best Supporting Actor (comedy): GARY BURGHOFF (M\*A\*S\*H)

Best Supporting Actor (drama): GARY FRANK (FAMILY)

Best Special (drama): ELEANOR AND FRANKLIN/ROOTS (tie)

Best Variety Series: CAROL BURNETT SHOW

Best Actress in a Single Performance (comedy): POLLY HOLLIDAY (ALICE)/DODY GOODMAN (MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN) (tie)

Best Actor in a Single Performance (comedy): TED KNIGHT (MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW)

Best Actress in a Single Performance (drama): JANE ALEXANDER (ELEANOR AND FRANKLIN)

Best Actor in a Single Performance (drama): WILL GEER (THE WALTONS)

Best Actress (comedy): MARY TYLER MOORE (MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW)

Best Actor (comedy): ALAN ALDA (M\*A\*S\*H)

Best Actress (drama): SADA THOMPSON (FAMILY)

Best Actor (drama): RICHARD THOMAS (THE WALTONS)

Best Actress in a Single Performance: JACQUE COURTNEY (ONE LIFE TO LIVE)/LOUISE SHAFFER (THE EDGE OF NIGHT) (tie)

Best Actor in a Single Performance: JOE GALLISON (DAYS OF OUR LIVES)

Best Actress: BEVERLEE MCKINSEY (ANOTHER WORLD)

Best Actor: DONALD MAY (THE EDGE OF NIGHT)

Best Supporting Actress: KATE MULGREW (RYAN'S HOPE)/IRENE DAILY (ANOTHER WORLD) (tie)

Best Supporting Actor: LARRY HAINES (SEARCH FOR TOMORROW)

Best Daytime Drama (one-hour): ANOTHER WORLD

Best Daytime Drama (half-hour): THE EDGE OF NIGHT

Best Producer: PHIL SOGARD (GENERAL HOSPITAL)

Best Director: ALAN FRISTOE (AS THE WORLD TURNS/THE EDGE OF NIGHT)

Best Writer (one-hour soap): WILLIAM J. BELL/PAT FALKIN SMITH (DAYS OF OUR LIVES)

Best Writer (half-hour): HENRY SLESAR (THE EDGE OF NIGHT)

## 'Leaves' Explores Cannibalism

by JOY BRIDGES

A Fringe of Leaves by Patrick White

Patrick White is a fourth-generation Australian writer who was not widely known in this country until about three years ago. In 1973 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and the Royal Swedish Academy described his writing as "an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature." Mr. White donated his Nobel Prize money to establish a fund for Australian writers.

He was educated in England, attending public schools and then studying modern languages at King's College, Cambridge. His first published novel was *Happy Valley* in 1939 and since then he has had published nine novels, two collections of short stories, and a collection of plays — most recently, *The Cockatoos* and *The Eye of the Storm*. He was an intelligence officer in the Royal Air Force during World War II, stationed in the Middle East and Greece. He traveled in Europe and the United States for several years before returning to live on a sheep farm in New South Wales.

*A Fringe of Leaves* is the story of the life and adventures of Mrs. Ellen Roxburgh, a Victorian lady who had the misfortune to be shipwrecked on an island off the Australian coast in 1836. Patrick White may have drawn the idea for his fictional character from the real-life accounts of certain Australian women who were kidnapped by the aborigines and then lived among them for a time before being rescued. There are several such accounts available, all of them remarkable for the way in which these women adjusted to a savage way of life in order to survive. This would be a major accomplishment for any woman, even today, but these ladies had been formed by the most artificial and woman-restricting society history has ever known. To go from a society where women were not officially recognized as having legs (they had only "limbs") to one in which they were mostly naked except for "a fringe of leaves" must have called for major powers of adaption.

Ellen Roxburgh had been a simple Cornish girl, impoverished but living a wild and free existence in an isolated part of Cornwall. She met her husband when he came to stay at her family's farm in order to improve her health. He was English, well-to-do, a gentleman, a life-long invalid, proper, well-read — and impoverished emotionally. He was of the opinion that strong emotions of any sort might wreak

his health. He was attracted to Ellen, and since he had little occupation of any other sort, he decided to marry her and make a lady of her. Seeing her as his work of art he improved her speech, her dress and her deportment, a la "Eliza Doolittle." Since Ellen had few other options available to her she agreed to the marriage to a man twenty years her senior and tried to "earn her keep" by devotedly looking after his health. He was killed by the aborigines after the shipwreck off Australia where she was taken captive.

At one point in her captivity she follows the tribe deep into the bush, thinking that she is going to the funeral service of a tribe member who had been killed. When she finally catches up with the group she realizes that the dusty

thing on the ground that reminds her of a bear-skin rug is the hide and head of the dead tribesman and that the group has been participating in cannibalism. Oddly enough she feels a strange sense of communion among the group and accepts this as a part of life. Later, on the march, a thigh bone left over from the feast falls from the bundle of the native in front of her and she finds herself eating human flesh. She had the excuse that she had eaten nothing but scraps that the tribe had dropped for weeks but still, when a civilized person resorts to cannibalism, a certain barrier is broken, in the mind if no where else, and she wondered what other horror she was capable of committing in order to stay alive.

While living with the aborigines she met an

escaped felon who was also living in the bush. Jack Chance was a murderer who had been transported to the penal colony at Hobart Town and had escaped into the interior. She fell in love for the first time in her life as he helped her to escape from the tribe and took her back to the settlement. However, he preferred a free life, no matter how brutish, to re-imprisonment, and went back to the bush after bringing her to civilization.

As the story ends, Ellen is trying once more to adjust to corset-stays and civilization after finding love and a sort of freedom in the bush. In many ways the author points out that a primitive, simple way of life has its compensations, among which the sense of being fully alive from a direct struggle for survival gives a person.



Yield and overcome;  
Bend and be straight;  
Empty and be full;  
Wear out and be new;  
Have little and gain;  
Have much and be confused.

Therefore wise men embrace the one  
And set an example to all.  
No putting on a display,  
They shine forth.  
Not justifying themselves,  
They are distinguished.  
Not boasting,  
They receive recognition.  
Not bragging,  
They never falter.  
They do not quarrel,  
So no one quarrels with them.  
Therefore the ancients say, "Yield and overcome."  
Is that an empty saying?  
Be really whole,  
And all things will come to you.

- Lao Tzu