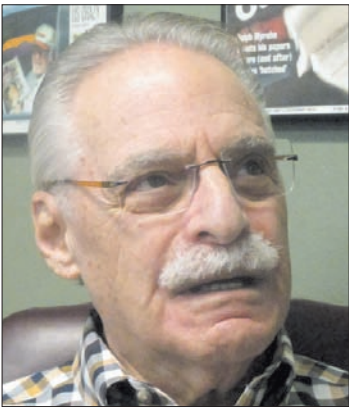


Retiree

Howard Rosenberg retired last summer after 51 years as an art professor at the University of Nevada, Reno, movie critic at KTVN for a couple of decades, 12 years as a Nevada regent and four years as a Washoe County School Board member. He will be teaching a four-session class for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in February.

Seen any good movies lately?

As a matter of fact, no. I've seen some mediocre movies. I was looking forward to *Vice*. I really was. I expected Christian Bale to do something, and it came out as a one-note performance, as Dick Cheney, but by the same token, it scared the hell out of me. I think it's a performance of quiet menace, is the only way I can describe it. Amy Adams is fantastic as his wife. She comes off as an actress of excellence as the character [Lynne Cheney]. ... The best film I've seen in a long while—and a lot of people will disagree with me—is *Bohemian Rhapsody*. I really enjoyed it. I knew nothing at all about Freddie Mercury except that he dressed outrageously, but that's par for the course in those kinds of bands. The film had a beginning, a middle and an end. I could follow it. And what's driving me nuts—even with *Vice*—they went back and forth, back and forth. The only way I could tell where I was is what color Dick Cheney's hair—or what little he had of it—was.



PHOTO/DENNIS MYERS

So they don't make movies like they used to. I sound like my parents now. But they're not good.

There's a saying these days that the best movies are on television.

I'm not sure, Dennis. The thing that's good about television is that it is an hour or an hour and a half. Sometimes two hours, but you'd have to really work at it to get it there. I can remember Frank Capra saying to my students one year that "For a film to be over 90 minutes, there's got to be a good reason. The time has to fly by. If it doesn't, something's wrong with you, the film-maker." And I tend to agree with that. Plus, the good part about television movies is they have an order that they follow, because you've got to tell the people what it is that they need to know so they understand what's going on. In movies,

it's somewhat laissez-faire. You're supposed to be able to figure it out. I'm not that smart. Sorry.

You're going back into the classroom a bit for Capra.

We're going to do "Capra/Capraesque" for OLLI. That's the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute up at the university. And there'll be four films in February [on succeeding weeks]. ... What I'm going to do is I'm going to show, to start, *It Happened One Night*, which was the first really major, major success that Capra had that really worked the way that he hoped that it would. Now, 20 years later, they made a film called *Roman Holiday*. Had nothing to do with Capra, but it is the same story that Capra told in *It Happened One Night*. Then, the next week we're going to show *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, which is terribly apropos today, and finish off the class with *Dave*, the Kevin Kline film, which isn't Capra but it is Capraesque. And we'll be able to discuss things in between. What I'm looking forward to is that the majority of my students while I was teaching were young people. This is older than that, I'm told, so that they're going to remember. At the same time that we're going to be looking at things, they'll tweak those memories.

Is this the start of something, where you'll be doing Wellman or Ford and so on?

I don't know.



BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

Sales pitch

What if a current TV show ended every week with the host saying, "You've made this a special day, just by your being you. There's no person in the world like you, and I like you just the way you are." Pretty corny, right? No way that would fly in today's jaundiced, cynical world. And yet, that's exactly how Fred Rogers signed off every week.

As a kid in the '60s, I didn't get a chance to hang with Mr. Rogers in his 'hood, who came along a bit later. I did, however, get a chance to party with the outrageous and insanely ridiculous Soupy Sales. If Soup had been shrewd enough to sell sweatshirts back then, my brother and I would have effing *lived* in them. We went totally apewire for Soupy and his dogs Black Tooth and White Fang and all the madness that went down in his playhouse. (I would guess

that Soupy's place had a big part to play in the mind of young Paul Reubens, who would then go on to create his own playhouse scene in the 1980s as Pee Wee Herman.)

Over the holidays, I was waxing nostalgic with friends about our fave shows as kids, and we eventually realized that, with the magical power of YouTube, we could probably revisit some of them. Made courageous by wine, we dove into the Web Swamp, curious to see if our old pals were actually as good as our somewhat suspect memories insisted. (After all, a lot of this stuff is 55-60 years old, and a lot what we remember as really terrific was, unfortunately, pretty lame.) Sure enough, there was all kinds of Soupy avail, and god bless him, his zany jive was still pretty darn funny, and, at times, even hilarious.

"Maybe you had to be there" is certainly a fair warning here, but goddammit, there was one clip of Soupy messing around with giant dog White Fang that absolutely blew my mind it was so freakin' good. And nobody, but *nobody*, could blast Soupy with a pie to the face like Fang (pie facials as a splattering Art Form!).

Speaking of pies to the mug, none other than Ol' Blue Eyes was a big fan of Soup's, and he told Sales he would love to drop in sometime but *only* if he got the pie treatment. So one morning, Frank Sinatra *and* Sammy Davis Jr. *and* Trini Lopez showed up at Soupy's Playhouse. The pie fight that ensued was somewhat legendary, to put it mildly. A lot of whipped cream on the set that day!



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