

entertainment

Even my mama calls me Wolf

Wolfman still riding high on success

United Press International
HOLLYWOOD — Even my mama calls me Wolf," says plain old Bob Smith, better known as radio's Wolfman Jack.

Gone are the days of plain Bob. His wife, Lu, is called "Wolfwoman," and the husky-voiced, growling DJ even signs his checks "Wolfman." And contracts, too, of which there are plenty.

He has his fangs in many pies, including three syndicated radio shows — disco, oldies and top 20.

"Aaaa-ooooo!" comes the shout from Wolfman's wood-paneled offices at the famous intersection of Hollywood and Vine. His voice goes to 2,200 stations, including armed forces radio, in 42 countries. He also hosts "Midnight Special" on television and makes several movie, TV and personal appearances.

Wolf's distinctive sound, brought up from the underground in the film "American Graffiti," lurks even in his normal speech.

Although he does not remember

the exact year, it was during the early 1960s that he moved to Del Rio, Texas, and, in a scene that could have come from the movie "Viva Zapata," used guns and bribes to take over XERF, a failing, 250,000-watt radio station across the border in Ciudad Acuna, Mexico.

"I went to Del Rio because I wanted the biggest stage I could get (most AM stations have a maximum of 50,000 watts)," Wolfman said. "The biggest station was XERF. It was the most powerful radio signal in the world. It's an all-time legendary radio station."

"Nobody knew where the station was, which gave it a mystique. You couldn't go to the station, you couldn't call us. And if you wrote, you'd only get a post office box."

The station made a fortune selling mail order products — "everything from police pills to pigeons to burial policies."

The Wolfman himself was a mystery. For years, his race was of much discussion. Because of his

voice, his lingo and the soul music he often played, many thought he was black.

"I was uni-racial," he said, with a gleeful cackle, stroking his pointy beard. "I was reaching them all, not only different races, but different cultures from grandmas to little bitty kids who thought I was real cute."

Despite his earthy image, fed by suggestive radio whisperings and a deep throated chuckle that sounds like the punch line to a dirty joke, Wolf, 42, is very much a family man careful about his image.

"There are lots of things I've turned down. I try to keep a good image. I feel a responsibility to the kids who listen and to the public. When people take you on, you have to do right by them."

However, his craziness has occasionally gotten out of hand. For example, while on KDAY in Los Angeles he caused a "War of the Worlds"-type panic by broadcasting a fictional "snoid attack" about "catpillar-like creatures who were crazy for beer."

"I had all these folks calling up, believing these things existed, calling the police. It took hold and got completely out of hand. I couldn't stop it. It went on through the

night. I never got that serious again."

But the best stories about Wolfman, particularly about the Del Rio days, come from his wife of 18 years.

They had been married three years and had two children when Wolf went to Del Rio. Although they lived in a nice house, Mrs. Smith said she kept her children inside most of the time.

"You never knew who was knock-

ing at your door. Once, a man brought a skinned baby goat with its head cut open.

"It seems like a fantasy now," said Mrs. Smith, a chic and attractive blonde. "I was young and naive. I didn't realize the danger. It was exciting, but not necessarily fun."

The couple met in Newport News, Va., where he was a disc jockey and she worked for an ad agency.

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'Mork & Mindy' to change; Grandma and Dad are out

United Press International
HOLLYWOOD — It is a sacred television maxim that you don't tamper with a hit series, but "Mork and Mindy" has undergone a major overhaul during its recent hiatus in which half the cast was lopped off.

Gone are Conrad Janis and Elizabeth Kerr who played Mindy's father and grandmother, respectively, in what apparently is a bid to attract a larger segment of youthful viewers.

The move is unusual in that "Mork and Mindy" was the most highly rated new show of the 1978-79 season, seldom out of the top 10 and not infrequently in the No. 1 spot.

In place of the elderly Janis and Kerr, the ABC show is bringing in Jay Thomas and Gina Hecht to play the brother-sister proprietors of an Italian delicatessen. Also added is Jim Stahl in the person of Mindy's stuffed-shirt cousin.

"Mork and Mindy," moreover, will begin its second season with a million dollar hour-long fantasy episode including some spectacular special effects.

Robin Williams (Mork) and Pam Dawber, who plays Mindy, had questioned changing the show's focus. But after four new episodes Pam has concluded the series will be as good or better than it was in its premiere season.

"Robin and I wondered why they make such drastic changes," said Pam. "You don't tamper with success. I think they're looking for more story potential with younger people."

"We really miss Elizabeth and Conrad. They were great fun to work with. But I think the network wanted to involve Mindy with friends her own age."

"They also wanted to get rid of the music store set. It was static and hard to shoot."

The essentials of the series will remain the same. Mork from Ork will continue to attempt to adjust to living on earth with his benefactor Mindy. No one seems concerned that Mork and Mindy — both young, both single, both attractive — live together.

"I guess I'm the only unmarried girl on the tube living with a man," Pam said, "except for the two girls living with a bachelor on 'Three's Company.'"

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