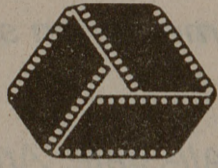


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'Late Night' worker sees odd tryouts for TV show

NEW YORK (AP) — They chug-a-lug beer, spin around in clothes dryers, dive head-first onto the floor, play tunes on unusual parts of the body, inadvertently set off fire alarms and occasionally throw up.

"I could send out a flyer that says, 'We don't care what you can stick up your nose, we aren't interested,'" says Susan Hall Sheehan, the hard-nosed but good-natured and apparently iron-stomached woman who auditions Stupid Human Tricks for "Late Night with David Letterman."

Sheehan took over the job from Chris Elliott when he graduated to staff writer. She says he used to place ads in such outlets as college newspapers that opened with the question, "Can you do something odd?"

"We decided the word 'odd' was a mistake," Sheehan says. "Between that and 'For more information, call Susan,' I got a lot of obscene phone calls."

the trick, the show's producer, Barry Sand, sees it.

Unusual aptitudes that might dazzle the average beer-bust crowd do not necessarily make it on network TV.

"A lot of people can play the 'William Tell Overture' on different parts of their body," Sheehan says.

Just a dash of panache can turn a mundane trick like spinning in a clothes dryer into boffo late-night entertainment.

"We had a lot of calls on guys who could ride around in a dryer, but it wasn't enough," Sheehan says. "This one guy called back and said, 'Well, I can change shirts while I'm in the dryer.' And there we had it. And it was terrific."

Perhaps the most memorable Stupid Human Trick was performed by a Long Island bartender who stopped an electric fan with his tongue.

Everybody's going to be talking about it."

Letterman does not see the show. He was clearly alarmed by the bartender's trick, but it was a show get a union scale pay of \$490. Sheehan was disappointed to learn that each member of that formed a pyramid while holding spoons on their noses have to be paid, so the trick is expensive.

Sometimes the trick goes even get past the first phase. Like the guy who said he chugged two dozen eggs.

"As soon as he chugged down, he threw them back," Sheehan says. "And you thought goes through my mind they don't pay me enough."

If human tricks have merit and pose no immediate threat to her safety, Sheehan conducts first-phase auditions in person for those who can get to New York. Hopefuls in other parts of the country can send videotapes. If Sheehan approves of

Sand failed to come up with amusing stories of people desperate to get on TV, but the fan guy immediately sprang to mind. "That was one where you start to think, 'Do we want to do this?'" he says. "That's a gray area. But you say, tomorrow ev-

Star stands with producer against critics of TV series

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A bunch of glib television critics were ready to make toast of producer Stephen Cannell after screening his new show, the sugary-sweet, cliché-ridden "J.J. Starbuck."

Cannell, a sincere man who makes popular entertainment that is anathema to critics, faced off with a roomful of them at a news conference during NBC's preview week.

same thing," Robertson said, chalking it up to the right place at the right time.

Then he proceeded to defend Lt. Col. Oliver in the Iran-Contra scheme and Richard Nixon's tergate.

"Any plans for Starbuck to rescue hostages?" "There may be," Cannell said, sending a storm.

"Robertson said, 'If I could find out a way to be the first one to volunteer.'"

Trying to get back into the critical mode, a reporter suggested that Robertson's character had too many homilies.

Luckily, series star Dale Robertson was there to pluck Cannell from the jaws of cynicism.

Robertson plays Starbuck, an eccentric Texas billionaire in Stetson and string ties, and with steer horns on his car, who has retired from the oil "bidniss" to go around helping others.

Cannell, executive producer of the series, was asked by a reporter to respond to advertisers' complaints that Robertson's thick, Southern drawl was unintelligible in the pilot.

Cannell said the print shown to advertisers must have been bad, and that he had found no such problem.

Robertson butted in, "Well, another thing. We're not putting a leather coat over that lapel mike, either. I agree with you. The print that I saw, I said the same thing. I couldn't understand it."

"Nobody's ever mistaken me for Ronald Coleman. So I need all the help I can get when it comes to being understood."

His response broke the critics up.

After that, the room was his.

The next question was about Robertson's World War II service under Gen. George Patton Jr.

What medals did he get? The Cross of Lorraine, Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart. "Any decorations I got I think that any man there would deserve the

Cannell he admitted he might have "overdone" writing the pilot.

Siding with the reporter, Robertson said, "I agree with you there. A couple a show is plenty."

But it's the steer horns that really get Robertson's goat.

"Let me tell you, we don't always agree with thing either, like the horns," Robertson said. "I've never knew with horns on his car was Nudie's, out here, and he wasn't from Texas."

Cohen owns Nudie's, the Hollywood cowboy store once favored by rock stars.

Later, Robertson explained he'd invented the background story to explain the steer horns to satisfaction.

He figures a grateful recipient of Starbuck's sophical largesse must have given him the steer and good oil," Starbuck just couldn't say no.

Robertson, an Oklahoma horse breeder, is known for his series "Tales of Wells Fargo" a year ago. Recently, he has done guest shots on TV and had a stint as a regular on "Dynasty" in 1986.

'America's clown' stays busy entertaining U.S. with classic comedy

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (AP) — Red Skelton, America's classic clown for five decades, leans forward so his message can be heard above the clatter of dishes at the swank cafe.

"Today's comics use four-letter words as a shortcut to thinking," Skelton says, toying with a bowl of soup. "They're shooting for that big laugh and it becomes a panic thing, using four-letter words to shock people."

"You'll laugh, but when you leave and your dignity returns, you say 'Why?' I know more dirty jokes than any guy who ever lived. But I don't do them on stage. I have too much respect for my audience."

Skelton became a national institution on radio in the 1930s and ran a record 20 consecutive years on television before his program was yanked in 1971. Today, at 73, he still is tickling America's funny bone with 75 concert dates a year plus videos and TV reruns of his old shows.

The passing of time has proven Skelton's comic genius.

At a recent performance at Caesars Palace, Skelton received a standing ovation before he had even delivered his first line — something that rarely occurs in Las Vegas showrooms.

Skelton mesmerized his audience during the one-man, two-hour show.

He kept asking them if they were tired, always drawing a chorus of "nos."

Skelton admits that Tuesday nights — when his show ran — still are tough on him, after decades as a staple in America's home entertainment menu.

"Our show was never out of the Top 15 on radio or TV," Skelton says. "When CBS canceled us they said we weren't reaching the buying public, the college age."

"They said we were reaching children and the elderly, but not the buying power."

"They forgot the little kids were going to grow into buying power. They're the ones coming to see me now."

Skelton was born July 18, 1913, two months after his father died. His mother raised four boys, working as a cleaning woman and elevator operator in an Indianapolis office building.

She taught him an appreciation for art, which evolved into his second love, and she sparked his interest in comedy by providing tickets to vaudeville shows on her meager salary.

At the age of 10 Skelton left home to join a medicine show traveling through the South and Midwest. "Mom used to say I didn't run away from home; my destiny just caught up with me at an early age," he says.

Two years after his TV show was canceled he headed out for the college campuses he continues to play throughout the United States.

He often donates the money he makes from his appearances to student projects.

In mid-July, he celebrated his annual birthday party in Honolulu, bringing together art connoisseurs who have paid \$25,000 to \$81,000 for his original oil paintings.

The paintings are big business for Skelton, who began his art career at 5 by painting faces on old round-topped clothes pins. Today, he estimates the sale of his lithograph reproductions alone annually tops \$2.5 million.

"Mom used to say I didn't run away from home; my destiny just caught up with me at an early age."
 — Red Skelton, comedian

Oddity works for guitarist on 3rd album

TEANECK, N.J. (AP) — Scholz's method for creating multi-platinum albums is odd: Get rid of your band, guitar stretched out on your spend six years writing and producing the record, add it then release.

The finished product: a chart-topping third album, "Third Stage."

Scholz played lead rhythm guitar, acoustic grand piano, electric piano and drums on "Third Stage" but only after writing and producing each song. Scholz added the record.

"It was a relief to have (Delp) come in to do what somebody else was doing," Scholz says. "It's easier to wear all those hats."

Boston has become a city of the studio, brought to Scholz in the Massachusetts city the MIT graduate from scratch, Tom Scholz's away Studio. The band's down to Scholz playing and singing.

Scholz worked with musicians more on the first albums than on "Third Stage."

It worked in 1978, when ton followed up its smash album of two years prior with another hit, "Don't Look Back" when Scholz went back for No. 3, the problems began.

A back injury caused by household lifting was pounded by a basketball. The result was extreme pain, resulting in six months of back. He recorded the last song, "I Think I Like playing guitar while lying in a makeshift diving board."

Scholz admits he was how the album would fare.

"If the guys at the court like it, or a guy tells me something," Scholz