

Teletrouble

Report discouraging children's TV viewing draws fire

NEW YORK (AP) — Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po have something to say to pediatricians: Back off, docs.

The distributor of "Teletubbies," the only television show aimed at children younger than 2, says the American Academy of Pediatrics' advice to keep those youngsters away from the tube is unrealistic for today's parents.

"It's a bunch of malarkey," said Kenn Viselman, president of the itty bitsy Entertainment Co., which distributes the British series on PBS stations.

The academy said research shows babies need direct interaction with parents and other caregivers for healthy brain growth. Watching TV may also interfere with interaction that helps develop their social, emotional and cognitive skills.

Pediatricians should advise parents to keep children's rooms "electronic media-free," the academy said in a report published in

this month's issue of the journal Pediatrics.

During routine visits, doctors should begin asking how children of all ages use TV, videos and computers, the report said. It even urged pediatricians to set an example by turning off the television in their waiting rooms.

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— Kenn Viselman
itty bitsy Entertainment Co.

"I don't think this takes into account the way parents raise their children anymore," Viselman said.

"Parents use TV in three ways — as an educator, a treat and a baby sitter. That's not going to change, and this report is not going to change it."

"Teletubbies," which premiered last year in the United States, features four colorful characters with a TV set implanted in their stomachs.

They use the cooing voices that toddlers are used to hearing from adults and constantly ask questions designed to pique the curiosity of young viewers.

Viselman said there is nothing wrong with shows like "Teletubbies" and educational programs. Parents should instead avoid letting their kids watch "The Jerry Springer Show," he said.

An expert in children's TV said even "Teletubbies" creates problems, claiming that PBS gave some parents the false feeling that their children would be missing something important if they did not watch.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Jackson stranded in rescue attempt

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, N.C. (AP) — On TV or off TV, it is one cliffhanger after another for "Dawson's Creek" star Joshua Jackson.

Jackson, 21, who plays Pacey Witter on the hit show, had to be pulled out of Masonboro Inlet by the Coast Guard Tuesday evening after he and a friend tried to rescue two girls stranded near a rock jetty.

The pair dived into the ocean and swam out to help the girls, but powerful waves swept all four over the jetty and into the inlet, Coast Guard Petty Officer Jody Howey said.

The falling tide prevented them from swimming back to shore.

Howey said a Coast Guard boat rescued the four about 7 p.m. There were no injuries.

Princes help driver to push stalled car

LONDON (AP) — A princely gesture left one Londoner flabbergasted.

Simon Thompson was trying to push his stalled BMW off a road in suburban Chelsea last week when another driver called out, "Do you want a hand?"

The car's back doors flew open and out jumped Prince William, 17, and Prince Harry, 14. Rolling up their sleeves, the young princes helped push the car out of traffic, then continued on their way.

The story was confirmed by

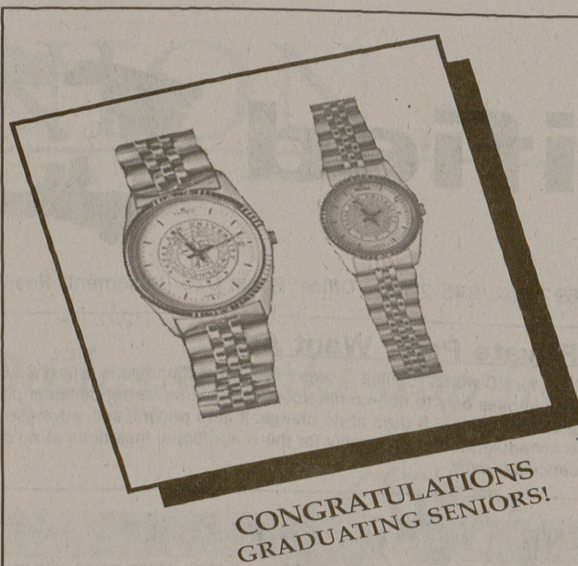
Buckingham Palace, which said the sons of Prince Charles had been headed to a private function.

Spielberg honored for Holocaust work

WASHINGTON (AP) — Academy Award-winner Steven Spielberg is being honored for some of his lesser-known exploits.

The filmmaker will be given the Smithsonian Associates' annual James Smithson Bicentennial Medal next Wednesday in Washington.

Spielberg was chosen for his work establishing the Righteous Persons Foundation, a grant-making organization dedicated to strengthening Jewish life, and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.



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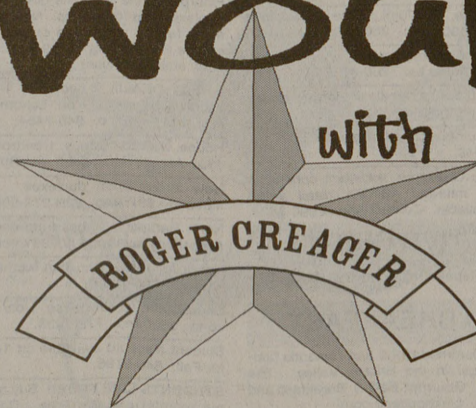
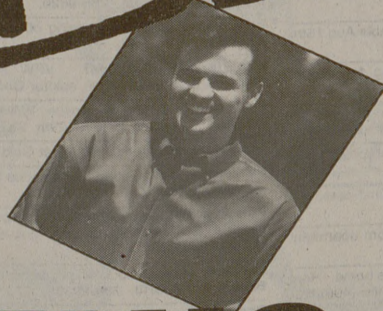
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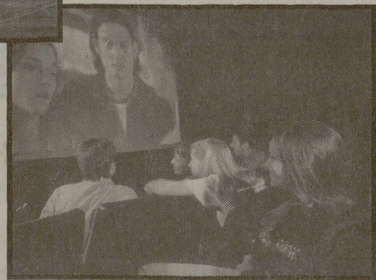
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