

THE FIRST TIME I WAS MADE AWARE OF THE WILLFUL DESTRUCTION OF VIDEO TAPES WAS IN 1962, AFTER THE SUDDEN DEATH OF MY HUSBAND, ERNIE KOVACS. HE HAD BEEN WORKING ON TWO SHOWS FOR ABC TV HERE IN HOLLYWOOD.

THE FIRST WAS A QUIZ SHOW CALLED "TAKE A GOOD LOOK" WHICH ERNIE DECIDED TO MAKE A PEG FOR COMEDY-HE USED COMEDIC BLACKOUTS AS 'CLUES'... AND GOD HELP YOU IF AS A PANELIST, YOU INADVERTANTLY GUESSED THE RIGHT ANSWER AND HE HAD SOME FUNNY BLACKOUTS LEFT UNSEEN.

THE SECOND WAS A SERIES OF ODDBALL SPECIALS, INCLUDING THE FAMOUS "SILENT SHOW". HERE IS A 3 MINUTE SAMPLE OF THOSE SHOWS

INSERT VCR A) SHOOTING AT DUCKS IN A GALLERY DUCK TURNS AND SHOOTS BACK . B) MOTZOH HEPPELWHITE-SWORD DROPS, C.) GIRL IN TUB+FOOT, D) TUB TAKES OFF, E) END OF NAIROBI TRIO

NONE OF THOSE SHOWS WOULD EXIST TODAY IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR THE CARING AND FORESIGHT OF HIS CO-WORKERS ON BOTH OF THOSE WHACKY ABC SHOWS

ERNIE'S BRAVURA GENIUS FOR PUTTING UNUSUAL IMAGES ON THE SMALL SCREEN DID NOT CARRY OVER TO THE MUNDANE DAILY MANAGEMENT OF MONEY . WHEN HE DIED, HE OWED A LOT OF IT-TO A LOT OF PEOPLE. (MAINLY THE I.R.S. (WE WERE IN A 91% BRACKET), A FEW GAMBLING BUDDIES, AND THE ABC TELEVISION NETWORK

THREE MONTHS AFTER HIS DEATH SEVERAL MEMBERS OF HIS ABC TV CREW CAME TO SEE ME AT HOME AND ASKED IF I COULDN'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE FACT THAT ABC WAS USING THE WALL OF KOVACS MASTER TAPES AS "USED" TAPE TO TAPE OVER THE NEWS, WEATHER REPORT, PUBLIC SERVICE BLURBS-ANYTHING TO RECOUP SOME OF THE MONEYS OWED THEM BY ERNIE.

I CALLED UP MY LAWYER AND TOLD HIM TO USE THE MODEST INSURANCE POLICY TO PAY THEM OFF AND BUY BACK THE 12 FOOT WALL OF KOVACS TAPES THEY WERE 'SAVING MONEY ' BY USING.

IN THE TRANSFER TO MY STORAGE FACILITY- SOME HOW ABOUT 30 OF THE 60 TAKE A GOOD LOOK SHOWS GOT LOST IN THE SHUFFLE, AND HAVE SURFACED RECENTLY. THE COLLECTOR WHO LIFTED THEM NOW WANTS TO CHARGE ME AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT TO REPOSSES MY OWN SHOWS!

NOT ALL COLLECTOR'S AND TAPE SAVERS HAVE PURE ALTRUISM AS THEIR GOAL-THE LACK OF SOME MASTER PLAN OF SAVING AND RESTORING AGING TV TAPE HAS CREATED A WHOLE UNDERBELLY OF SLEASY TV PIRATES-COPYRIGHT INFRINGERS WHO DAILY AND WITHOUT GUILT PACKAGE AND SELL SHOWS CLEARLY NOT BELONGING TO THEM (BUT THAT'S ANOTHER HEARING)

WHEN I FIRST STARTED TO WORK ON DAILY TV IN THE EARLY '50'S, THERE WAS NO TAPE AND KINESCOPIES WERE EXPENSIVE. THEY WERE ONLY MADE ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH BY ADVERTISING AGENCYS TO SELL COMMERCIAL SPOTS ON THE SHOW.

AT FIRST ,ON THE DAILY SHOW IN PHILADELPHIA,I ONLY HAD MY SONGS RECORDED BY RADIO RECORDERS,A PROFESSIONAL RECORDING STUDIO WHO WOULD PUT SONGS ON ACETATE-WE CALLED THEM AIR-CHECKS.

BY THE TIME WE MOVED UP TO CBS IN NEW YORK FOR OUR DAILY SHOW (52-53), I HAD RADIO RECORDERS RECORD THE WHOLE SHOW...I KNEW EVEN THEN THAT WHAT ERNIE WAS DOING WAS SPECIAL...AND WANTED A PERMANENT RECORD OF IT KEPT FOR POSTERITY...MAYBE IT WAS MY JUILLIARD TRAINING WITH IT'S ENDLESS DISCUSSIONS OF 'WHAT IS ART?'

I JUST KNOW I HAD NEVER SEEN ANYONE ON TV OR LIVE WHO DID THE THINGS ERNIE DID.

THE NEXT NETWORK WAS DUMONT ,CHANNEL 5.(54-55)I ORDERED DAILY AIR CHECKS OF THE HOUR LONG LATE NIGHT SHOW

WE NEVER HAD A REGULAR HOUR ON ANY NETWORK FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME(AS DID MILTON BERLE OR ED SULLIVAN DID AT 8 P.M TUESDAY AND SUNDAY) ...IF YOU WERE A FAN, YOU COULD FIND US -DAILY ON ALL THREE NETWORKS THROUGHOUT THE FIFTY'S

BY THE TIME WE GOT TO NBC, WE GRADUATED TO A BIG TIME DAILY SHOW -FULL NETWORK WITH THE EARLY NBC STAFF TONITE SHOW BAND I ORDERED THIS SHOW ON DAILY KINESCOPE- SOMETHING UNHEARD OF IN THOSE DAYS- FINALLY A VISUAL DAILY REC ORD AT LAST

A NETWORK SPOKESMAN SAYS THAT ITS THE ONLY RECORD OF WARLY 50'S DAILY TV THAT REMAINS ANYWHERE... ABOUT FOUR YEARS OF AUDIO ONLY- AND 18 MONTHS OF INTERMITTANT KINESCOPIES.

AFTER I BOUGHT AND PUT AWAY IN A CONTROLLED TEMPERATURE FACILITY THE ABC SHOWS IN THE EARLY 60'S, I STARTED TO SEARCH OUT ANYTHING I COULD FIND FROM THE OTHER NETWORKS. I BOUGHT BACK WHATEVER WAS AVAILABLE FROM NBC AND PUT THEM IN STORAGE IN THE LATE 60'S. I TRIED TO TRACK DOWN THE CBS SHOWS AND THE DUMONT SHOWS, I WAS TOLD THAT THEY WERE "UNAVAILABLE"

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CBS SHOWS , BUT I HAVE RECENTLY LEARNED WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DUMONT SHOWS -THE EARLY JACKIE GLEASON SHOWS-INCLUDING THE ORIGINAL "HONEYMOONERS", CAPTAIN

MIDNIGHT, AND THE KOVACS SHOWS WERE TAKEN CARE OF IN A MOST UNIQUE AND SWIFT FASHION.

IN THE EARLY 70'S THE DUMONT NETWORK WAS BEING BOUGHT BY ANOTHER COMPANY AND THE LAWYERS WERE IN HEAVY NEGOTIATION AS TO WHO WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIBRARY OF DUMONT SHOWS CURRENTLY BEING STORED IN THE FACILITY---WHO WOULD BEAR THE EXPENSE OF STORING THEM IN A TEMPERATURE CONTROLLED FACILITY, TAKE CARE OF COPYRIGHT RENEWAL ETC.

ONE OF THE LAWYERS SAID HE WOULD "TAKE CARE OF IT" IN A "FAIR MANNER"----HE TOOK CARE OF IT ALL RIGHT-

AT 2AM THE NEXT MORNING HE HAD 3 HUGE SEMI-S BACK UP TO THE LOADING DOCK AT ABC, FILLED THEM WITH ALL THE STORED KINESCOPIES AND 2" VIDEO TAPE, DROVE THEM TO A WAITING BARGE IN NEW JERSEY, TOOK THEM OUT ON THE WATER, MADE A RIGHT AT THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AND DUMPED THEM IN UPPER NEW YORK BAY! -VERY NEAT....NO PROBLEM!

THE AUDIO DISCS, (MANY HUNDREDS OF THEM) I DID MANAGE TO SAVE HAVE BEEN HOUSED IN THE UCLA FILM AND TV ARCHIVE ON CAHUENGA ALONG WITH SOME 800 DAILY TV SCRIPTS THAT MATCH THEM ON CAMPUS AT UCLA'S SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT - SINCE THE LATE 60'S.

A FEW WERE DAMAGED IN THE 94 EARTHQUAKE HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THESE FRAGILE 16" TRANSCRIPTIONS DIGITIZED BEFORE THE NEXT ONE -EVEN IF IT'S NOT THE BIG ONE.

AFTER LISTENING TO THE AUDIO TAPES OF THE EARLIER TV SHOWS AND SEEING THE MOVIE "TOY STORY", I BELIEVE THAT IN ADDITION TO ADDING THE "V" CHIP TO OUR TV, WE MIGHT MAKE THINK ABOUT A "K" CHIP USING SOME OF THE "SPACE AGE" -"BACHELOR PAD"- "COCKTAIL" MUSIC AND 'ODES TO SILLINESS' THAT DEFINED THE MELLOW FIFTIES AND THE KOVACS MISTIQUE.

I THINK OF THEM AS REPRESENTING A KINDER, GENTLER TIME, WITH A NEW LIFE OF THEIR OWN, DONE FOR A COMPUTER ANIMATED SERIES WITH THE MUSIC AND VOICEOVERS ALREADY DONE BY ERNIE HIMSELF.

I'VE ALWAYS HEARD, THAT IF WE DON'T SPEND TIME ON OUR OWN HISTORY, WE TEND TO REPEAT IT.