

THE EPOCH TIMES

LIFE &

TRADITION

Audiences laughed at humor gleaned from situations and stock characters, not snark.



Television's Golden Age of Family Sitcoms

By Jeff Minick

Once upon a time, television shows delivered good humor, moral lessons, and family values

"The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there," wrote L.P. Hartley in his 1953 novel "The Go-Between." If you're looking for proof of Hartley's claim, just tune in, as I recently did, to the early episodes of "The Donna Reed Show," where you can time travel all the way back to 1958.

Alex Stone was a small-town pediatrician whose office is connected to the house. His wife, Donna (Donna Reed), was a homemaker. And both were ar-

ticulate, bright, and witty. Their teenage daughter, Mary, and adolescent son, Jeff, sniped back and forth, but without any real rancor. Donna wore a dress while working around the house—gasp!—and the family took their meals together. (Double gasp!)

In a 2008 online article, Paul Peterson, who played Jeff, commented:

"The Donna Reed Show" depicts a better time and place. It has a sort of level of intelligence and professionalism that is sadly lacking in current entertainment products. ... The messages it sent

out were positive and uplifting. The folks you saw were likable, the family was fun, the situations were familiar to people. ... It provided 22-and-a-half-minutes of moral instructions and advice on how to deal with the little dilemmas of life."

Our Early TV Culture: Some Brief Notes

Interestingly, the writer of that article, Glenn Garvin, snidely belittled Peterson's observations. He called other family sitcoms of the period, such as "Ozzie

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BARRETT WARD/UNSPLASH

FAMILY

Outdoor Activities to Boost Children's Health

Teach your child to be a '90s kid with a summer outside

By Annie Holmquist

It's sometimes said that those who were kids in the 1990s were the last generation to have a true childhood. This is because they came of age before the digital trends of the internet, smartphones, and other tech devices went full throttle.

Having spent part of my own childhood in those apparent glory years, I feel rather bad for today's kids, who are missing out on the delights of a carefree

summer in the fresh air. It's likely they would be a lot happier and more creative—even if they were forced outside for an entire morning and told to drink out of the garden hose if thirsty, as the proverbial kid of yesteryear was.

So since a summer outdoors is a thing of the past, here are a number of ideas to pass along to your children and grandchildren to help them experience firsthand the glories of being a '90s—or any previous generation—kid.

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◀ Bikes offer a way for kids to experience a bit of freedom and responsibility.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION Advice from our readers to our young people

6 Tips for Life

A good life starts with how you approach it

Dear Next Generation,
My advice for the younger generations:

1. Follow Christian values, especially that of treating others the way that you want to be treated.
2. Believe in yourself, even if you're trying to do something totally new. Research what you want to do before you start, and find people who were successful and those who were unsuccessful. If you can't find anything or anyone who attempted it, make a plan and don't be afraid to change that plan over and over.
3. Listen to others. Even people you don't know may have just the right opinion. Have an open mind.
4. Follow your dreams. If you don't believe in yourself, you'll never follow your dreams. Keep trying and

listen to others. Your dreams will change over time, and that's OK.

5. Pay special attention to another Christian value: Help those who need help, no matter how small or large. You'll be rewarded by the satisfaction that you'll feel for helping. You might do something you think is very small for someone, but what's small to you can be the help the person needs to go forward—and maybe exactly what you need also. Never pass up an opportunity to help others.
6. If you have regrets, determine why, then make plans to fix them. If it's not possible to fix it, apologize to the person affected by what happened. If that isn't possible, ask God to forgive you and move forward.

—Frank Wissel, Idaho



SOLSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

◀ Helping someone else might seem a small kindness, but it might be just the thing they need to keep moving forward.



Help those who need help, no matter how small or large. Never pass up an opportunity to help others.

Frank Wissel

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations? We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive. Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to Next-Generation@epochtimes.com or mail it to: **Next Generation, The Epoch Times**, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

'JUDGE ME NOT'

New Show Tackles Mental Health Awareness

Judge Lynn Toler's new show explores mental health struggles through municipal court cases

By Catherine Yang

Judge Lynn Toler has spent her career imparting life wisdom and grounded advice. She served as the longest-reigning arbitrator in the longest-running courtroom show, "Divorce Court," for 14 consecutive seasons, and co-hosted three seasons of "Marriage Boot Camp," where she mentored couples after watching them for 10-hour days and always made a point to explain—in a way the recipients of the advice were sure to understand—what it is that they were doing that resulted in communication breakdowns.

Toler has also long been vocal about her own mental health battles, discussing them openly and telling audiences they were nothing to be ashamed of, but something to be aware of and worked through. Years before "mental health awareness" entered the cultural lexicon, Toler discussed mental illnesses, and how she saw a psychiatrist because she wanted to know about her problems before anyone else did.

Her father was born in 1919 and worked in a coal mine as a teenager to help provide for his family, as his own father was disabled. He was also bipolar, and Toler herself grew up in a volatile home environment where she experienced emotional trauma at a young age. But she saw through her mother how to not just

live with, but even thrive with mental illness. In 2007, she published "My Mother's Rules: A Practical Guide to Becoming an Emotional Genius," with 43 rules that guided Toler through life. As someone who graduated from Harvard undergraduate and then University of Pennsylvania Law School, became a lawyer, wife, and mother of four, and then won her first judicial race as a Republican in a district where Democrats held the majority five-to-one by the age of 34, Toler says she's an example of thriving despite mental health issues.

And now her career is to be the basis of a new show, on which Toler is a creator and writer. "Judge Me Not" premiered May 25, starring Chyna Layne as Zelma Jay Johnson.

"I wanted to tell a story about a municipal court," said Toler. "Most of these court shows are about these big monster cases, but municipal court is where humanity comes in waves, and exciting and it's fast-paced and people never get to see that."

"I also wanted to do an honest story about mental health struggles

so that people know, and I used to talk about it all the time on 'Divorce Court,' I do have mental health struggles, and it doesn't define you. It doesn't demean you. It doesn't limit you. And on occasion, whatever different affect you're sporting will assist you. I wanted to give a broad understanding."

Toler's first case with a mentally ill man stuck with her: She was given a note from the man's psychiatrist that said the man refused to plead guilty by insanity, "because of his delusional belief that he is not insane," and thought, "What do I do with that?" In the television drama series, Toler says she's turned that case into a completely fictional storyline that is woven throughout.

"Everybody struggles, and I think I read people well in part because I'm always managing my personal self. I know where my emotionality lies. I manage it. Most people are just emoting. I never do because I understand that, and I actually think it's a process and procedure to use; we should all think about how we feel before we act on how we feel."

"I was forced to do that, because of my mental health circumstance. I think it was a boon. I think it helped me as a municipal judge, because I understand feelings, and reading people, and I understand people do things because of how they feel, not because of what they know," Toler said.

Layne ("She's Gotta Have It," "Precious," "The First Purge") found Toler's book "My Mother's Rules" incredibly inspirational, and useful, for getting into her role.

"The authenticity in the material and the stories was just incredibly attractive," Layne said.

Start the Day Grounded

Both Toler and Layne have daily practices to keep themselves grounded, and one of the most important ones is to start the day the right way.

"I always stop in the morning and do a 'weather report.' How am I feeling and why am I feeling that way? What do I have to do today?" Toler said.

"I do all the stuff I don't want to do at the beginning of the day, because that frees up my psyche. If I'm in a depressive period, I go on the treadmill. I listen to music in a particular order, from sad to happy, so I can adjust my mood in a forward fashion."

"Then I read certain things. I keep a journal," Toler said. These days she journals online too, sharing her own process along with humor and wisdom on social media.

For Layne, therapy is something new, something she's added the past year, but staying grounded is not.

"I listen to a sermon every morning," Layne said. "Strengthening my relationship with God and putting more of the focus on trusting what He has in store for me, and that He's taking care of my battles so I don't have sit there and fight every single battle that comes my way, that's been incredibly important and healing."

Hindsight is 20/20, and both Toler and Layne felt if they could give advice to their younger selves, it would be to stress less, and that was as good a reminder as any to do so going forward as well.

Working on "Judge Me Not" together has been an experience in humanity and empathy for both women, who hope the audiences who watch it will leave with a more nuanced and less judgmental understanding of people—including themselves.

"You can be running and gunning and trying and crying and fighting and carrying on, and still, you can show up, show out, and get it right," Toler said.



▲ "Judge Me Not," created by Judge Lynn Toler, is based loosely on her own life and career in municipal court.

"DIVORCE COURT"/FOX

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