

# editorial

## M\*A\*S\*H

### No thanks vs. thanks a lot

At the risk of being seen as a sort of Ebenezer-Scrooge-like figure for television fanatics, I would like it to be known that I did not watch the final episode of M\*A\*S\*H, and I'm glad of it.

It is a sad commentary on our society when millions of people are drawn, lemming-like, to sit mesmerized by the idiot box. I will admit the program in question has certain virtues, but portraying the last show as the death of a fine friend is morbid and tasteless. If my best friend was going to die Monday night at 8:30 p.m., I don't imagine I would sit by the bedside and quaff beer, and afterwards walk away, my need for entertainment sated.

Furthermore, were my friend about to snuff it, I certainly wouldn't sell advertising time to soap companies - morticians maybe, but not soap companies. I cannot imagine a worse way of spending an evening than watching ads every seven and a half minutes, although for those with weak bladders I suppose it's useful. Obviously, a lot of people don't mind watching silly, boring housewives and househusbands telling the world how white their shirts are, how fresh their breath is, and how regular their bowels can be.

Personally, I can't abide that sort of thing, so I avoid it. But for two days before the "Big Event", all I heard was 'Are you going to watch M\*A\*S\*H? and won't it be exciting?' It reached the point where I felt guilty about saying no. Why must people feel obliged to do something they don't want to? I never watch television. I

saw no reason to have started to do so at a time guaranteed to have more unpleasant interruptions than ever before.

It seemed everyone was jumping onto the bandwagon. The newspapers were full of it; newsmagazines devoted covers to it; even the *Bruno* is getting in on the act with editorializing about the thing. Sometime in the near future, we even expect to show the film M\*A\*S\*H, with the proceeds going to the Third Century Fund.

But it's only fiction for God's sake! Why do people insist on identifying with people that don't exist? It looks to me like a lot of television viewers have a rather tenuous grasp on reality if they can become so wrapped up in a mere TV program. Whither Reality? I say. What the world needs is down to earth people who are not hung up with other people's problems. Surely they have enough problems of their own - I know I do. If they concentrate on those, they'll be more likely to solve them. In addition, there are nefarious groups which try to take advantage of these misguided souls.

For some reason, local groups managed to promote alcohol as an integral part of watching the show. The Social Club had a M\*A\*S\*H night, featuring Swamp Cocktails, while residence dwellers made trips to the liquor store before the show (they probably could have made a complete trip during a commercial break). Imagine this emphasis on booze after our last editorial! For those of you who began their Spring break early, and were

unable to see the *Bruno* Friday morning due to a hangover that would fill an emu, the editorial was about alcohol abuse.

The promise of a combination of heavy drinking, obnoxious advertising, and a roomful of people was just too much for me. Call me a social reject if you must, but I didn't watch the last episode of M\*A\*S\*H - bah, Humbug!

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At the risk of sounding like a television addict, because I'm truly not, I must say that I did watch the final episode of M\*A\*S\*H which aired on Monday, Feb. 28. I didn't drink Swamp Cocktails, eat lumpy, mess tent food, or dress in army greens. Instead, I sat back and appreciated what I believed to be one of the finest TV shows of all time, consisting of a cast far superior to those of today's sitcoms. And I'm not even, or have never really been, a M\*A\*S\*H fanatic. But I liked what I saw, and I saw it a lot.

What I'm a fanatic of, is sincere, interesting, conscientious entertainment, and I even hesitate to use the word, "entertainment," because sometimes M\*A\*S\*H wasn't really entertaining in the "ha, ha" sense of the word.

What it was, really, was an in-depth look at how war, in this case, the Korean War, affects the lives of people. It bound the lives of several very different people together, through blood and gore and bombs and heartaches, and in the end we really came to care for these people; these zany, wonder-

ful, warm people.

I watched M\*A\*S\*H, not for commercials every seven and a half minutes, (30 second commercials cost 400,000 dollars), not out of some masochistic idea of seeing "good friends" die, not because everyone else was going to watch it and I was afraid to be left out. I watched because I was curious about exactly how the producers intended to end eleven years of television history.

I read the hype; I read how the cast and crew cried every time a scene started, and ended. I read about how many Emmy's the show won, about how the individual actors felt about their roles, and I was constantly reminded, yes, indeed M\*A\*S\*H was only a show, a bright, human extremely witty show, anti-war maybe but pro-humanity. I watched M\*A\*S\*H because I believed I could learn a lot about people and I did.

M\*A\*S\*H was not afraid to poke fun at war, at people and at all the silly mistakes we make. When I think back at the stupid things Frank Burns (Larry Linville) did, at the development of characters such as Hotlips (Loretta Swit) and Klinger (Jamie Farr) and best of all, the zeal for life held so closely, so happily by Hawkeye (Alan Alda) I realized we didn't have a "Three's Company" on our hands. We had a masterpiece whose zaniness, though reruns, should follow our children into adolescence. Thank God, at last they'll see we weren't totally inane.

Thank you, M\*A\*S\*H for eleven wonderful years!!