

# Writer's Roost

by Willis Webb

## Archie and Cosby teach us understanding

Some might not agree "All in the Family" and "The Bill Cosby Show" have much in common but if you think about it, both have a place in the history of improving race relations in this country.

"All in the Family," which debuted as a mid-TV-season replacement Jan. 12, 1971, featured a hard-nosed, bigoted blue-collar working man and his family.

Archie was played by the incomparable Carroll O'Connor, who was actually the antithesis to his TV show character. I thought his TV last name was an inside joke because the show "de-bunked" prejudice and racism and showed how foolish bigots can look.

His wife, Edith, was a sweet, simple woman very typical of the time in which she grew up and was often verbally abused by Archie. Jean Stapleton, a fabulous Broadway actress, played Edith, who Archie often told "stifle yourself," refer-

ring to her as "dingbat." Frequently, Edith shamed Archie with her sweet, innocent manner.

Periodically the show, which presented its last episode April 8, 1979, is in syndication.

No group escaped Archie's ill-informed criticism — African Americans, Hispanics, Jews, Irish, Poles, Catholics, women and on and on — but his verbal ravings came back to bite him in an appropriate spot.

One particularly funny and deserved comeuppance for Bunker came in a show which featured the late Sammy Davis Jr. Archie was moonlighting as a taxi driver and Davis, playing himself, was a fare for the cab.

After dropping Davis at a hotel and going home, Archie discovered Davis' wallet and called to let him know he'd found it. Davis agrees to come to Archie's home to retrieve the wallet. As he awaits Davis' arrival, Archie is calling all his friends to let them know the famous Sammy Davis Jr. is coming to his house.

Upon Davis' arrival, Archie asks if there could be a picture of the two of them. Davis agrees and just as the camera is about to snap, Davis plants a kiss on Archie's cheek. O'Connor, a master at facial expression and physical comedy, did one of his famous, bug-eyed "omigod, how'd I get caught in this?" looks.

With the outlandish bigoted remarks and actions, O'Connor and the cast created brash and daring comedy that held bigotry up for appropriate scorn.

"All in the Family" spawned several other shows.

One, "The Jeffersons," featured an African American family that debuted as Archie's neighbors in "All in the Family." George Jefferson, described as a black Archie, was the successful owner of a dry-cleaners chain and became a millionaire. George was played by Sherman Hemsley, his wife by Isabel Sanford.

Bea Arthur appeared in several "All in the Family" episodes and proved enough of a hit to start another series, "Maude," in which she played the central character. Maude was a bright and outspoken feminist (the alter-ego of her cousin Edith) who ranked Archie and put him down regularly.

"The Bill Cosby Show"

debuted Sept. 20, 1984, and lasted through 1992. It is also frequently in syndication.

Cosby's show was the first to display a successful African American family that lived a middle class life. It was more subtle than "All in the Family" but equally as effective for what it taught about equality and opportunity.

Cosby played an obstetrician-gynecologist. His wife, portrayed by Phylicia Ayers Rashad, was an attorney. The couple raised four children, prominently featured in the show. It was filled with humor and wonderful lessons in life. And, it was clean and respectable — G-rated.

The show thrust the Huxtable family into national prominence as role models for not only African Americans but all Americans.

Cosby, holder of a doctorate in education, has become a national icon for strong principles, achievement and living a productive life.

"All in the Family" and "The Bill Cosby Show" are great milestones in this nation's growth in humanity and in combating bigotry, prejudice and racism.

*Willis Webb is a retired community newspaper editor-publisher. He can be reached by email at [wwebb@wildblue.net](mailto:wwebb@wildblue.net).*

# Plans continue for motorcycle rodeo

Relay for Life hosts Ride for the Cure! motorcycle rodeo April 24 in Fairfield.

The event will feature a fun run and skill events, with hamburgers, hot dogs, nachos, drinks and more available.

Bicycle events will be available for children under age 18, and adults must accompany the children.

## Before I Get "Seniler" by Bill Whitson

### Modern Movies

The movies can't escape public scorn. She wants popcorn and he wants porn.

### Another Bad Sign

If you take her out to dine and she orders a jug of wine.

### Lonesome Ain't the Word

I miss you, Dear. I need you back for just an hour. There is something growing in the shower.

### Indian Casinos

Indian no longer take scalps. Now the scalper take pale face's wampum from "um".

### Democracy at Work

While Obama was making healthcare speeches, the insurance lobby was quietly doling out campaign money.

### TV Fine Print

It is too small for me to see it, and there is not enough time to read it.

Camping space is available.

Set from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the rodeo will be held at the Moody Reunion Grounds in Fairfield, and is sponsored by Relay for Life of Fairfield, area fundraiser for the American Cancer Society.

Contact [Ride4Cure@gmail.com](mailto:Ride4Cure@gmail.com) for more information.

But it raised my concern. There must be something that they don't want me to learn.

## Dew VFD sells chili Saturday

Dew Volunteer Fire Department's annual chili dinner is Saturday and will be held at the Dew elementary school cafeteria.

Chili will be ready at 4 p.m. and will be sold until it is gone.

## RFL chili lunch Friday

A chili lunch will be on sale Friday at the Fairfield Conference Center, with proceeds benefiting Relay for Life of Fairfield.

Chili will be served 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with a bowl costing \$5 and refills costing \$3.

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