

The Golden Age of Chicago Children's Television

by Ted Okuda and Jack Mulqueen



“Today, we can be nostalgic about the passing of great local children’s fare such as *Bozo’s Circus* . . . and *Garfield Goose*. However, I believe that today’s children have more and better choices in programming. . . . **What is missing is the localism, The heart and soul that emanated from these and other programs.** Economics, regulation, and expectations for what a program should look like have altered children’s television forever. As you read this book, perhaps you will not only find memories or curiosities from a bygone era, but inspiration to create children’s television for today’s audiences. A pie in the face is still funny, kids still like to dance, and the last time I looked, you could still buy six buckets and nail them to a board and call it a Grand Prize Game.”

—from the foreword by Neal Sabin, WCIU-TV, Chicago

Behind-the-Scenes Stories of the Golden Age of Chicago Children's Television as Told by the People Who Lived It

At one time every station in Chicago—a maximum of five, until 1964—produced or aired some programming for children. From the late 1940s through the early 1970s, local television stations created a golden age of children’s television unique in American broadcasting. Though the shows often operated under strict budgetary constraints, these programs were rich in imagination, inventiveness, and devoted fans. The mere mention of their names brings smiles to the faces of Midwestern Baby Boomers everywhere: *Kukla, Fran, & Ollie*, *Super Circus*, *Garfield Goose*, *Bozo’s Circus*, *Mulqueens’ Kiddie-A-Go-Go*, *BJ & Dirty Dragon*, *Ray Rayner and Friends*, and a host of others. In 1972 the FCC changed the regulations governing the relationship between sponsors and local programming, effectively bringing to a close this chapter of television history.

What Chicago kids’ show had *American Bandstand* host Dick Clark dancing on TV for the first time ever? Why did one have to wait months and, more often, years to get tickets for *Bozo’s Circus*? Which very popular and successful host *never* wanted to do a children’s TV show? Who really made the puppet *Garfield Goose* (you may not have known it was a mystery)? Remember the “talent” that bit the head off a parakeet on live TV and the shocked emcee’s reaction? What sent television executives into a quandary when *Kiddie-A-Go-Go* went on the air? Which show was almost forced off the air because a giant soft drink company opposed a so-called rival’s use of the word *sip*? Now, discover the back stories and details of this special era from the people who created, lived, and enjoyed it—producers, on-air personalities, and fans.

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or by ordering direct from Lake Claremont Press.**