



A M E R I C A N PLAYHOUSE®

1989

A Presentation Of:

KCET Los Angeles
South Carolina ETV
WGBH Boston
WNET New York

For Immediate Release

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JEAN SHEPHERD'S "OLLIE HOPNOODLE'S HAVEN OF BLISS"

TO AIR ON AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE MAY 31 OVER PBS

James B. Sikking, Dorothy Lyman, Jerry O'Connell And Jean Shepherd
Co-Star In Off-Beat Comedy About A Memorable Summer Vacation

"Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss," a zany comedy from the pen of humorist/actor Jean Shepherd, will be televised on **AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE** Wednesday, May 31, at 9:00 p.m., ET,* over the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). James B. Sikking ("Hill Street Blues"), Dorothy Lyman ("Mama's Family"), Jerry O'Connell ("Stand By Me") and Shepherd himself co-star in the off-beat comedy about a memorable summer vacation.

The film is the third original teleplay by Jean Shepherd to be broadcast on **AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE**. The first two were "The Great American Fourth Of July And Other Disasters," which originally aired on March 16, 1982, and the second, entitled "The Star-Crossed Romance Of Josephine Cosnowski," was televised on February 11, 1985. All three teleplays reflect Shepherd's fond remembrances of growing up in middle America.

AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE is presented over PBS by KCET/Los Angeles, South Carolina ETV, WGBH/Boston and WNET/New York. The series is made possible by funding from the nation's public television stations, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts and by an underwriting grant from the Chubb Group of Insurance Companies.

(More)

*Please check local listings for area broadcast date and time.

"OLLIE HOPNOODLE" GENERIC

2-2-2

"Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss" recounts the hilarious adventures of 14-year-old Ralph (Jerry O'Connell), his kid brother Randy (Jason Clarke Adams) and their parents ("The Old Man," James B. Sikking and "Mom," Dorothy Lyman) as they hit the highway to partake of a typically American rite -- the annual vacation at the lake.

As narrated by the grown-up Ralph (Jean Shepherd), seemingly insurmountable obstacles threaten their trip to "Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss" -- the perfect family resort where all the cabins are named for the famed Dionne quintuplets -- even before they leave home.

For starters, the family dog Fuzzhead disappears and Mom informs Dad that under no circumstances will she leave without her beloved pet. For 14-year-old Ralph, there won't be any vacation at all. He has secured his first job -- heavy lifting at Scott's Used Furniture Palace -- and boss Scott (Jean Shepherd) makes sure that Ralph's dreams of an economic windfall are dimmed by a torturous day's work.

But suddenly, the way clears: Fuzzhead is found (she has tried to better her station in life) and Ralph is mercifully fired. Preparations for the happy trip begin. The family car, a cantankerous Chevy, is loaded with the stuff caravans are made of: folding camp chairs, inner tubes, a bath mat, golf clubs, lanterns, pots and pans, an accordion, a tennis racket, and more.

Finally, the family takes to the road. But their sense of expectation is short-lived. Younger son Randy, in what has become his own annual vacation ritual, gets carsick. The auto overheats. A stray bee becomes an unwelcome passenger. Ralph realizes that he forgot to pack the fishing gear.

Complicating matters, a truck loaded with chickens sprays their car with an avalanche of feathers and "everything that chickens can do." Add to that a flat tire, an overheated engine, an encounter with a dog the size of a grizzly bear, as well as the author's unique way of capturing these events, and you have the makings of a delightfully zany vacation to remember.

(More)

"OLLIE HOPNOODLE" GENERIC
3-3-3

Jean Shepherd gained a reputation as a gifted monologist during the years he hosted an all-night radio show on WOR-AM in New York City on which he told funny and compelling stories about his Indiana boyhood and his experiences in the Army. He also has appeared Off Broadway, in one-man shows and as a stand-up comic/story teller. He began his career as host of a midwest television show called "Rear Bumper," before moving to New York where he became a founding writer and artist for The Village Voice.

A prolific writer, Shepherd's books include: "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash," "Wanda Hickey's Night Of Golden Memories" and "A Fistful Of Fig Newtons." He also has written a book about the American humorist George Ade.

"Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss" is a Creative Television Associates (CTA) and Pholly, Inc. production in association with WGBH/Boston. Fred Barzyk is the executive producer. Al Potter is the executive in charge of production for CTA and Pholly, Inc., and Olivia Tappan is the producer. Dick Bartlett directed.

David M. Davis is the Executive Director of AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE. Lindsay Law is the series' Executive Producer. Lynn Holst is the Director of Program Development for the series.

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For Use At Will

HUMORIST JEAN SHEPHERD PRESENTS HIS UNIQUE VIEW OF
'THE ALL-AMERICAN VACATION' IN THE AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE OFFERING,
"OLLIE HOPNOODLE'S HAVEN OF BLISS," AIRING MAY 31 OVER PBS

"It's an American ritual as important as the Fourth of July, or your first car, or prom night," says celebrated humorist/author/actor Jean Shepherd of America's preoccupation with 'The Summer Vacation.'

"We are a nation of nomads, a nation that lives for vacations," Shepherd explains. "It's especially important among the industrial classes because they don't get the long weekends that guys with fancy suits and expensive cars get."

One family's unforgettable summer vacation forms the centerpiece of Shepherd's "Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss," an original comic teleplay that will be broadcast on **AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE** Wednesday, May 31, at 9:00 p.m., ET,* over the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

Written and narrated by Shepherd, who also has a key dramatic role in the production, "Ollie" tells the story of the Parker family -- 14-year-old Ralph (Jerry O'Connell), his kid brother Randy (Jason Clarke Adams), their parents (James B. Sikking and Dorothy Lyman) and family dog Fuzzhead (Daphne) -- as they hit the American highway in search of the perfect, and seemingly elusive, summer vacation at 'Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss,' where all the cabins are named for the legendary Dionne quintuplets. Enroute, the family must overcome a series of wildly funny obstacles which almost put their dream vacation out of reach.

Jean Shepherd, who, like Ralph, grew up in the Midwest, drew on his own family vacations to write "Ollie."

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"My father would get two or three weeks vacation every year and we would always go to the same place. Being a kid, I loved it, the whole idea of going to 'The Lake.'"

The Indiana native used his own love of fishing to create a portrait of a family mad for the sport. "It's the Number One sport in America," Shepherd claims. "Some people wrongly think that distinction belongs to tennis, but if you go into great vast areas of America, you'll find the sporting goods stores are full of fishing equipment. Tennis rackets are few and far between. Everywhere people are spinning or buying casting equipment or just going out with a cane pole and fishing the little lakes. It's a part of American life."

Shepherd, who also wrote "The Great American Fourth Of July" and "The Star-Crossed Romance Of Josephine Cosnowski" for AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE, believes that "Ollie Hopnoodle" comments on more than just the American ritual of vacation. "It's also about the American work ethic," he says. "In this case, Ralph gets his first job and it turns out to be horrendous. It gives him a lifelong attitude towards bosses and jobs."

The author notes that the film also examines another peculiarly American phenomenon -- America's love for its pets. "Our cats and dogs have become an integral part of most American families," says Shepherd, "almost as much as the kids."

For the lead canine role in the film, Shepherd insisted that it be cast with his own dog Daphne. "This is Daphne's fourth Shepherd film," he says, "and if I have anything to say about it, it won't be her last. I'm in the movie business, and if I can't indulge in a little nepotism, I'm not in the right racket."

However, Shepherd does admit that fame is changing the petite four-legged starlet. "She demands to be walked more than usual, and she insists on better quality food. When we were on location in Boston and Texas, she lived off room service. She loved the attention."

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WHO'S WHO

Presentation Of:

"OLLIE HOPNOODLE'S HAVEN OF BLISS"

ET Los Angeles
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GBH Boston
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JASON CLARKE ADAMS (Randy) has worked extensively in both print and television commercials. He makes his television acting debut in Jean Shepherd's "Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss." He recently filmed an after-school dramatic special for network television.

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DOROTHY LYMAN (Mom) is known to millions of television viewers as one of the stars of the nationally syndicated series "Mama's Family." On daytime television, she has won two Emmy Awards for playing Opal Gardner in the long-running ABC-TV daytime soap opera "All My Children," and she had a continuing role on NBC-TV's "Another World." She also has guest starred in "Alf." A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, Ms. Lyman began her career in the theatre, appearing on Broadway in "Dancing In The End Zone." Off Broadway, she produced, directed and starred in "A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around And Talking." Her other Off Broadway work as an actress includes Sam Shepard's "Action." Ms. Lyman operates her own theatre company in Los Angeles, Directors Theatre, where she recently mounted "The Sum Of Us."

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JERRY O'CONNELL (Ralph) won critical praise for his feature film debut as Vern Tassio in Rob Reiner's acclaimed "Stand By Me." On television, he has appeared in the Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation "The Room Upstairs," an ABC Movie Of The Week entitled "Kingdom Chums" and "The Equalizer" on CBS-TV. He currently has a continuing role in the nationally syndicated series "My Secret Identity."

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JAMES B. SIKKING (The Old Man) most recently was seen as Lt. Howard Hunter in NBC-TV's acclaimed series "Hill Street Blues." His other major television credits include "The Jesse Owens Story," the miniseries "Dress Gray," "Tales From The Hollywood Hills" on PBS and guest starring roles in more than 200 primetime series, including "Columbo" and "M*A*S*H." His feature film credits include "Ordinary People," "The Star Chamber," "Outland," "Soul Man" and "The New Centurions." He has toured in Neil Simon's "Plaza Suite" and starred in the West Coast premiere of "Nobody Loves An Albatross."

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JEAN SHEPHERD (Author, Ralph, The Man, and Scott) is one of America's premier humorists. A native of Indiana, he has drawn upon his memories, experiences and fertile imagination to create films, television shows and books which paint unique and vivid portraits of Americans at work and play. He began his career as host of a midwest television show called "Rear Bumper," before moving to New York where he was a founding writer of The Village Voice. He also created numerous pen and ink drawings for the publication.

(More)

JEAN SHEPHERD (Continued)

Shepherd first gained recognition as a gifted monologist during the years he hosted an all-night radio show on WOR-AM in New York City and told compelling stories mostly about his Indiana boyhood and his Army experiences. He also appeared Off Broadway in one-man shows and in single performances as a stand-up humorist. A prolific writer, his books include "In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash," "Wanda Hickey's Night Of Golden Memories" and "A Fistful Of Fig Newtons," as well as a book about the American humorist George Ade. Shepherd created and starred in two series of personal American excursions ("sensual essays," he calls them) for public television, called "Jean Shepherd's America." His other television work includes the films "The Phantom Of The Open Hearth," "The Great American Fourth Of July And Other Disasters" and "The Star-Crossed Romance Of Josephine Cosnowski," the latter two for AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE. Shepherd's first theatrical film, "A Christmas Story," was both a critical and box office hit and has become a perennial favorite among holiday movies.

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DICK BARTLETT (Director) previously worked with Jean Shepherd when he directed and edited "The Great American Fourth Of July And Other Disasters" and "The Star-Crossed Romance Of Josephine Cosnowski" for AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE. He also edited Shepherd's "The Phantom Of The Open Hearth" which was broadcast on public television. Bartlett also edited the AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE production of "The Trial Of Bernhard Goetz" as well as "The Voyage Of Mimi."

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FRED BARZYK, AL POTTER and OLIVIA TAPPAN (Executive Producer, Executive In Charge Of Production and Producer, respectively) head Creative Television Associates, one of the entertainment industry's most prolific and diverse production companies. In addition to "Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven Of Bliss," the Boston-based organization's roster of television films includes "Jean Shepherd's America -- Parts I and II;" "The Star-Crossed Romance Of Josephine Cosnowski," "The Great American Fourth Of July And Other Disasters" and "The Phantom Of The Open Hearth," all written by Jean Shepherd; "Countdown To Looking Glass," recipient of an ACE Award; "French In Action," a 65-part series on French language and culture for PBS; "Puzzlemania," a two-hour, live interactive children's program produced for public television; and "Tender Places," a Peabody Award-winning film for WBZ-TV, Boston. In addition, CTA produces programming for home video.

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