



Scene from kiddie TV cartoon show, Dastardly and Muttley.

Cartoons as Teachers

New York — Those Saturday morning kiddie cartoons may not only be harmless — despite the amount of violence in them — but they may be the best teaching aids parents have ever had.

These are the conclusions of a psychiatrist specializing in child therapy and a research director for the Children's Television Workshop — creators of Sesame Street — who offers suggestions to parents on how to use standard cartoon shows on TV to tutor pre-schoolers.

The opportunities are numerous, with such current cartoon shows as Dastardly and Muttley, Cattanooga Cats, Penelope Pitstop and Smoky Bear, plus a whole new troop of cartoons to be brought on in September.

But there is no cause for parents to be alarmed by the "scare" or violence content of cartoons, according to Dr. Ner Littner, director of the Child Therapy Training Program at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis.

In a lecture at the North-western Television Symposium, Dr. Littner conceded that some forms of screen violence can be harmful to youngsters, but "cartoon stories, because they are so unrealistic, so caricatured, so bizarre, probably have little traumatic impact. . . . Humor is also a modifying influence in that it tends to take the edge off the violent impact."

Dr. Littner said he believed that Western stories on TV also have very little traumatic impact, despite their violence content, because they "are viewed by the child as being truly make-believe. On the other hand, the closer the violent action approximates the real thing, and the more vividly and accurately it is portrayed, the

greater is the potential harmful effect on children."

The psychiatrist even had something good to say about the frequency of commercials on children's TV programs, which have been coming under attack lately for over commercialization.

"The inevitable commercials have a mental health value as useful tension-breaking devices," Dr. Littner contends. "Thus the child has frequent, forced rest periods as far as the buildup of violence-provoked tensions are concerned."

Cartoons provide numerous teaching opportunities for parents, according to Mrs. Barbara Frengel Reeves, assistant director of research for the Children's Television Workshop, which has made frequent use of the cartoon format in the widely hailed Sesame Street series.

"Children seem to sense that cartoons are meant especially for them," she commented. "Because cartoons do hold such an attraction, the producers of Sesame Street decided to teach the letters of the alphabet and numbers with cartoons. A child who watches a cartoon with many J words about a judge, a June bug and a jar remembers the letter J far better than one taught J only using a photograph of a jacket."

Mrs. Reeves advises parents, therefore:

"When you watch cartoons with your child, take the opportunity to teach him something while he is being entertained. If the cat jumps over a fence, talk about fences and their purpose. Talk about the difference between wood and wire."

TV cartoons and other child

favorites can also be used to teach time, Mrs. Reeves adds:

"Your child probably has a good idea of when his programs are on the air. Perhaps he'll describe one as 'Right after Casper.' When he does this, relate it to the hour. Say, 'That's right, Casper is on at 5:30 and Batman comes on at 6 o'clock. Here's where the hands will be on the clock when Batman comes on.'

"Ask him questions about the program. What did Beaver do next? Why do you like Captain Kangaroo? What does Flipper eat? Television is similar to other activities you share with your child. As you become more involved in the things that interest and attract him, you'll find out more about him."

(Catholic Press Features)

Movie Ratings

Inside

This week the Courier-Journal carries a comprehensive list of films showing this summer throughout the diocese and beyond, along with their ratings by the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures.

Be sure to clip out this feature and keep it handy as a guide to the more worthwhile entertainment available to you during your leisure time.

The list can be found on Page 9B.

Producer Tells Valenti: Be Moral Leader Or Get Out!

Hollywood, Calif. — (NC) — A film producer has called for Jack Valenti's resignation as movie czar for his quasi-endorsement of the X-rated movie "Myra Breckinridge."

Valenti brushed off the movie as "a funny spoof but a picture children should not view."

Paul Monash, who produced "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," said Valenti should quit as president of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) unless he moves against movies of questionable taste.

"If Valenti can't feel a need to exert moral leadership in this critical time, not only in our industry but in our country's history, he ought to leave his position," Monash said. "If Valenti feels this is the kind of film the industry should be making, I feel he lives in a moral vacuum."

Under Valenti's leadership the current rating system of

movies was devised by the film industry, especially as a guide for parents of minor children. But since the rating system was devised, there have been complaints, both within and outside the industry, that there are too few films suitable for children and minors, too many "R" and "X" rated adult movies. Valenti on several occasions has criticized this trend in the industry.

But following the Valenti comments about "Myra Breckinridge," Monash said: "If Valenti won't leave or exert leadership, the MPAA ought to invite him to leave. I say this largely in fear that censorship will be imposed from without the industry."

"Myra Breckinridge" currently is being released throughout the country with an ad campaign which states: "Everything they say about Myra Breckinridge is true." Some critics who have viewed the film have called it dirty, tasteless, vulgar and decadent.



Hi Sister (Mom)! Hi Father (Son)!

Mother and Son, Sister and Father. Sister Mary Denise strolls on the grounds at Marycrest Convent in downstate N.Y. with her son, Father Paul Jacobi, resident chaplain, at St. Francis Hospital, Poughkeepsie. Sister joined the Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate after death of her husband. (RNS Photo)

AN INSIDE LOOK

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