

# 35 Years Later And Still Rockin'

Today marks the 35 anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley. A record 75,000 fans were on hand at Graceland for the candlelight vigil held every year beginning last night. This morning, his ex-wife Priscilla and their only daughter Lisa Marie were interviewed side-by-side for the first time inside the mansion. Remarkably, Elvis' biggest fear was that he would be forgotten as quickly as his fame rose. Obviously, it can be argued that he is at least as popular today as he was in his prime.

Also highlighted in a 24 hour marathon is the Hollywood years. 31 movies made in only 13 years (in 1968 he made at least 4 movies). A few show what he could have become. Many are fun to watch while a lot are painful to watch and for him, personally, to make. This afternoon while sick in bed, I tried to watch *Double Trouble*. In one scene, he sings "Old MacDonald" to a 17 year-old girl who throws herself at him every chance she gets. I gratefully rolled over and went back to sleep.

This morning, I also heard a rendition of one of my 3 favorite Elvis songs performed as a duet with Lisa Marie and found a video of it to share. Almost remarkable how much daughter resembles father. Over the years, I have come to not only appreciate the power and heart that he brought to the more "meaningful" songs but to prefer them. What a loss at only 42 years of age.

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# So Long

It was never goodbye. It seems that whenever Dick Clark signed off for any of his broadcasts, it would be with his traditional salute and his familiar "This is Dick Clark... so long." Whether it be the myriad incarnations of the original Pyramid game show, "Bloopers and Practical Jokes" (along side another icon, Ed McMahon), his 30+ years of hosting his own Rockin' New Year's Eve show, the "oldest living teenager" seemed to have his hand in every aspect of every show he was associated with. I was not around to really enjoy the heyday of American Bandstand; however, popular music owes the show and the man most associated with it a huge debt. Bandstand not only brought rock'n'roll to teenage homes on Saturdays but also broke the color barrier by showcasing acts like Chubby Checker, Sam Cooke, the Supremes, Gladys Knight and the Pips, amongst others.

Today, Mr. Clark bid his final *adieu* after suffering a massive heart attack at the age of 82. I'm not sure which I remember him more from. Every New Years for as long as I can remember, the TV was tuned to ABC from 11:35PM onward to witness whatever elements were being thrown on Times Square to ring in the New Year. Until the last few years (after he suffered a stroke), Clark was in the thick of rain, snow, sleet, or 60°+ degree weather counting down the minutes until the ball would drop from atop Number One Times Square to ring out the old and bring in the new.

From time to time, I catch reruns of the many Pyramid shows on GSN. Others have attempted to recapture the success of the original but have failed for whatever reason.

While I was not alive in the 50 and 60s, I do remember seeing

some of the hit artists of the 80s on Bandstand. From Michael to Janet to (I'm almost embarrassed to say) Prince, and Madonna AB was a staple after cartoons ended.

HOWEVER... I have been trying to recollect if Mr. Clark had one of those famous "poke their head out the window" cameos on Batman visitng Gotham City from his home Philadelphia way.  
SURE ENOUGH!

Rest in Peace, Mr. Clark. May you ring in the New Year for eternity.

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## Songbird

Yes, as you may have guessed I am adding my own thoughts on the music of one Whitney Houston. Saturday evening, I received a text from my cousin asking me if I had heard of Whitney's passing. Right after reading the message, I checked out the hub of social activity and sure enough there were already 20 posts devoted to the diva. Growing up in the 80s, I was lucky enough to have lived to see and hear the infectious music of two powerhouse phenomenons: both of them are gone. However, they each left an indelible mark on the music world that still has yet to be surpassed. In the 1980s, Ms. Houston shared a stat of having 7 number one singles in a row! Not only was she a pop diva but frequently returned to her gospel roots with such notable entries as the soundtrack to her film *The Preacher's Wife*.

The 1990s was also a high point for Whitney with the monstrous film and soundtrack to *The Bodyguard* which featured a cover of Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You" as well as performing what is arguably the finest performance of the National Anthem of any Super Bowl. Who else can claim to have had their version played on radio stations across the country weeks after it was presented?

Say what you will about the tragic life outside the music. I choose to leave that for the tabloid mongers. Anyone who lived during the 80s-90s can name at least one Whitney Houston song. Like it or lump it, her music is infectious whether it be a hit pop ditty that makes you want to get up and dance

(With somebody who loves me) or a powerful torch song. OH... and lest I forget, she served as the Executive Producer and Fairy Godmother on a multi-ethnic version of a televised version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*.

My favorite Houston's song is a duet with Jermaine Jackson that I do not believe was a major hit. I only discovered it as part of a Greatest Hits compilation more than a few years ago.

And her remarkable Anthem from 1991:

She could have so over done this but chose to keep it straight and simple and is all the more powerful for it. Thank you Whitney!

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## MOVING ON!

Honestly, he is **NOT retiring!** Moments ago after 28 1/2 years, and a combined on-air time over 53 years of 17,000 hours (a Guinness record), [Regis Philbin](#) said goodbye to HIS show. He moved from NYC to California years ago after graduating from his beloved University of Notre Dame. In 1983, he returned to his home and eventually created what I have enjoyed since it went national in 1985 (not every day, but every day I was able). Whether it was with Kathie Lee or Kelly (Lee as Letterman refers to her), the warmth that Reege brought to millions will never be replaced. Succeeded but never replaced.

The celebration of his career in the morning began almost minutes following the announcement of his vacating the role on January 18, 2011. Support from fans both in the limelight and we ordinary joes poured in from all over the country. It culminated the past few weeks with extended tribute segments paying tribute to the legend. Last night, a Katie Couric special followed his backstage ritual and around the city.

Something that surprise me as they made their way to Cardinal Hayes High School and the auditorium that was named after Regis: He never performed on the stage during his time at his alma mater. I could tell that he wished he had. During his "exit Interview," Big Daddy stated that he was happiest when he was entertaining people (so he won't be gone long). I could NOT agree more.

Later, David Letterman presented a gift to his frequent (scheduled or otherwise) guest: a motorized scooter. Regis went outside the Ed Sullivan Theatre (been there, inside, AND performed... but that is another post) and proceeded to crash after about five feet! Way to go Dave; kill the man hours before his final bow!

This morning was a fantastic send off. The audience was filled with friends, dignitaries, and other special people. We finally got to hear the details of Regis and Joy's honeymoon... something that has been hinted about for several years. Also interspersed were "Reflections by Regis" on his life. And what would a Regis celebration be without the 100s of people who have (for better or worse) come up with their own interpretations on the King's unique personal.

For me, the greatest part of the show has been Regis, himself. He's like the uncle everyone wishes they had (or actually do have, who knows). He is a remarkable story teller. In fact, I tuned in every morning I could to see the first 15 minute host chat and if the guests did not appeal to me, I turned the channel. He created a totally family feeling atmosphere by introduced his audience to Joy, his daughters Joanna and JJ, his son-in-law Michael Schur (a writer on *The Office*), and his grandkids Mr. Trouble and Ivy. Everyone on the show from Kelly to his executive producer Michael Gelman to the "Executive in Charge of Production" Art Moore (whatever it is he does besides sit in the corner begging for air time) were like an extended family coming into homes every weekday morning for an hour. Regis really did entertain for an hour with the extraordinary brand of "guerilla television" and made us feel better.

Thanks for the memories, Reege! We will see you soon!

And anyone looking for that GREAT Christmas gift idea: [How I Got This Way](#)<sup>x</sup>. I do like some reading material in actual book form instead of downloading it onto my Nook. ☐

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# Help Wanted

Well... it seems that Oscar is in need of a host once again.

Yesterday, amid scandal and controversy the producer of next year's Academy Award extravaganza Brett Ratner backed out of his duties. Shortly after, Eddie Murphy stepped down as host.

This morning, I heard two possible contenders being promoted (two being rather subjective). On GMA, there was a huge push for the soon to be returning to the silver screen Muppets to take the gig. What a boon that would be! An instant band for the evening courtesy of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem.

Comedy provided by Fozzie Bear. Joan Rivers could be joined on the red carpet by the queen of fashion, Miss Piggy. The Oscar parties could be catered by the Swedish Chef. Gonzo could do... Whatever. Even heckling would be provided by the masters, Statler and Waldorf. And of course, your Master of Ceremonies... Kermit The Frog. YAAAAAAAAAAAAA! I cannot wait for the movie to open in time for the holidays. There is even an on-line push for the [Muppets](#) chance at the gig

Later during my morning cup of cocoa (boy it is starting to feel like November), Regis jokingly threw his hat in the ring.

Of course, after next Friday, the Reege will have plenty of time to devote following the final episode of his 28 year run on his morning program. I don't know where they will possibly come up with a worthy successor to his charming, acerbic wit.

Maybe even an unknown... Mr. Philbin's memoir is soon to be on bookshelves everywhere. Of course, he is "**JUST MOVING ON!**" and NOT actually retiring. If memory serves, Regis did serve as the host of a pre-Oscar show a few years ago and did take over on New Year's Rockin' Eve after Dick Clark suffered a

stroke. Maybe he should step up to the big show?

Or... dare I say... combine the two.



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## Thanksgiving Tragedies

The holiday weekend was replete with joyous gatherings and happenings but two events seemed to have drawn a dark curtain upon its close. One was the passing of one of my all-time favorite slap-stick comedy performers. Leslie Nielsen was known in his later days as a master of deadpan antics in such classic spoofs as *Airplane!* and the *Naked Gun* trilogy of movies. However, did you know that he got his start as a serious actor mainly as guest spots on Golden Age television?

It was 1980s spoof of the airplane disaster movies of a decade earlier that put him into the comedy spotlight.

Shortly after that came the short-lived *Police Squad!* television series which led to the films. Mr. Nielsen lost his life Sunday after complications from pneumonia. He was 84.

Another event hit much closer to home. Three young boys have been missing from their Morenci, Michigan home since Thursday. An Amber alert has been issued for young [Andrew \(9\), Alexander \(7\), and Tanner \( 5 years old\) Skelton](#). They were last seen with their father who now is in a mental health facility undergoing treatment after an apparent suicide attempt. The search led to the small town of Pioneer and the surrounding communities, a mere 25 miles from my own small town. Very little is known at this point about the whereabouts of the

youngsters. I'm sure that any prayers offered up to the family of these three little ones would be more than appreciated.



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## Farewell To A Couple Of TV Parents

This week, fans of 50s and 70s television lost two beloved character. On Saturday, Barbara Billingsley who played June Cleaver on *Leave it to Beaver* passed away. Throughout the 1950s Ward and June were the parents of Wally and Theodore "Beaver" Cleaver. It is almost inconceivable in today's world to have a mother who wore a pretty dress and apron all day long and would have a plate of cookies and a pitcher of milk waiting for you when you got home from school. It seems that some of the biggest problems she had to deal with was the Beaver's refusal to eat Brussel Sprouts. Of course, there was the time when Beaver and his pal Larry Mondello were stuck in the giant coffee cup on the billboard. Not to mention enduring the frequent visits by one Eddie Haskell and his "My that's a very lovely dress you are wearing, Mrs. Cleaver."

Not only did she later reprise the role of one of tv land's favorite mothers, Ms. Billingsley also was the voice of "Nanny" on the animated Muppet Babies series.

Tuesday, Tom Bosley who played hardware owner/father for eleven years on Happy Days lost his life. Week in and week out, Howard Cunningham leant and ear and sage advice to Richie and Joanie. Not so much to Chuck... who wasn't around long enough but maybe to bounce a basketball during the first

handful of episodes. Long after Fonzie “jumped the shark” on skis in his trademark leather jacket, Howard and Marion watched their children grow, move out, and (in their daughter’s case) move back in. Years after the series ended, Mr. Bosley originated the role of another father, Maurice (Belle’s father) in the Original Broadway Cast of Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*.

AH... simpler times with simple problems. Rest in peace June and Mr C.

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## **A Pair of Thick, Woolen Socks**

I just finished watching a fascinating interview on Oprah. I am not a regular viewer by any means but she seems to be going out with a bang. I could not pass up the opportunity to watch her sit and chat with the world’s first self-made billionaire author. If ever J.K. Rowling has her memoirs published I will be in line to snatch it up. Just one hour totally fascinated me. How from very humble beginnings to a 13 month and one day marriage to the death of her mother and the estrangement from her father all combined to give her the ammunition to create what has become a worldwide juggernaut.

The term “phenomenon” came up in one intriguing moment. Remember back in the mid 80s when Michael Jackson’s *Thriller* was declared the phenomenon of the day. At the time, the concept did not enter the King of Pop’s head. And neither has it entered Rowling’s. If it had, she feels that she would now be trying to do herself one better. Attempting to create the next great world and leaving Harry Potter by the wayside. Incidentally, the author turned down Jackson’s offer to turn her world into a musical.

Did you know it took Jo twelve rejections before, on the lucky 13th publisher, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's* (which we blokes know as the Sorcerer's) *Stone* saw the light of day? Even then, she was warned that children's books make little to no money. Well... after seventeen years, 7 books, 6 movies (with two coming), millions in collectibles, and the theme park... who is laughing now?

She even detailed some of the downside of her life that is very much a part of the masterpiece. In her eyes, every other page seems to point to her mother's failing from MS. The dementors (who prey upon the happiness of their victims and seek to suck out their soul) represent her own battle with depression. However, the prevalent theme throughout the entire series is love. I say shame on all the groups who would criticize or even ban the books when the strongest virtue of Christianity is seen through every page, every frame. However, the surest way to ensure that your work is read is to have it banned.

What does the future hold for the billionaireess? More writing. If she doesn't write she will lose her sanity.

Spoken like a true artist. Did she know that Harry would become so huge while writing at nights beside her sleeping baby daughter while one step away from homelessness.

Absolutely not. She had no idea that: "This boy will be famous. There won't be a child in our world who doesn't know his name."

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## Farewell to the Boss

Praise him or curse him, [George Steinbrenner](#) accomplished what he set out to do when he purchased the New York Yankees the

year I was born. His fiery, hands on approach helped lead the Bombers to 11 pennants and 7 World Championships during his tenure. He holds the record for the most years as owner of a franchise. Early this morning, The Boss succumbed to a massive heart attack.

Mr. Steinbrenner was, for better or worse, responsible for turning the team around after it was struggling under the ownership of CBS. During his 37 year ownership, it has been well publicized about the revolving door of managers. He changed 20 times in his first 23 years including the five time dismissings of Billy Martin.

Also memorable is the grooming policy for the team. Hair length and facial hair were closely monitored. Goose Gossage's beard which turned into his trademark thick moustache; Don Mattingly's mullet (which was lampooned on the classic Simpsons' episode, "Homer at the Bat"). When Johnny Damon was acquired from the Red Sox, I often wondered the price the outfielder was payed to clean up.

In 2006, George turned the day to day operations over to his son who seems to have inherited the same fire and approach. So, it would appear that the Steinbrenner Empire will continue.

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## **Thank You For Bein A Friend**

They say tragedies come in threes. This past week has seen the passing of three celebrities. Each of them left their mark in one form or another. How will they be remembered? Two of them were adored by millions on the small screen while the other made his mark on the silver screen.

I can well remember many Saturday nights in front of the tv watching the pint sized Gary Coleman deliver his catch phrase: "Whatchu talkin' bout, Willis" week in and week out. Hopefully, he will be remembered as the 10 year-old, pinchable cheeked, comedic ingenue instead of the tabloid hunted adult. Not even a week following his death, Coleman's life is being dragged through the muck.

One of my favorite Golden Girls, Rue McClanahan, passed today. Blanche was the hussy of the group. Kind of a modern day Scarlett O'Hara ("a little more Scarlett than O'Hara"). Hopefully, Betty White will be with us for a while longer. Ms. White shows no sign of slowing down. Her Super Bowl Snickers commercial, stint as host of Saturday Night Live, a new sitcom coming to TV Land, and a new petition for her to be next year's host of the Academy Awards have all put her once again in the limelight.

I am less familiar with the work of Dennis Hopper. I am too young to remember *Easy Rider* and have never had the desire to seek it out. I do remember *Speed* as well as one of my favorite sports movies, *Hoosiers* (a little sleeper movie from 1986 for which he was nominated for the Best Supporting Actor Oscar).

Prayers and thoughts to the surviving families and friends. And may the fans remember all three for the artistic accomplishments of each of them.