

**ARIZONA
SUPPLEMENT**

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Lessons from Vintage TV
by Peter Johnson, Editor

Perhaps the most aired TV series of the past is the beloved Andy Griffith Show. It is a program devoted to solving basic problems of everyday life. A loving and beautiful solution to the “bump in the road” is worked out in the course of thirty minutes and all is well. The stories often center on the theme of redemption: the transmutation of a character to a higher way of living.

The main character, Sheriff Andy Taylor, is an idealized man. He is self-effacing and humble, yet very wise. He has a great sense of humor, goes to church on Sunday, is an avid outdoorsman, and also sings and plays the guitar beautifully. As a lawman, his character is so strong that he need not carry a gun. He also understands that the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law when dealing with everyday people. We could say he IS a Master Mason. Curiously, like Hiram Abiff, Andy seems to be a “widow’s son” who, like his son Opie, is raised by the matronly, yet nurturing, Aunt Bee.

The other main character that plays so well off Andy is, of course, the bumbling Deputy, Barney Fife. We all love Barney because he is so human. We also identify with his “screw ups” and irritations with everyday life; there is a little Barney Fife in all of us. Perhaps Barney teaches us not to take ourselves too seriously and “lose our cool”.

Many of the other characters in the show also represent parts of our own personalities. These individuals make us laugh, but actually deal with very serious issues. We all sympathize with poor Otis, the town drunk. He is a lovely person with a demon that he just can’t lick. Ernest T. Bass is like our lowest animal nature. Ernest T. is wild and totally out of control. Everyone has at least some part of their own nature that is like Ernest T. Floyd, the barber, and Gomer Pyle, at Wally’s Service Station, are what Barney refers to as “non-intellectual types.” They are plain folks that just kind of bumble through life in a good-natured way.

The female characters of the show are also very interesting. Andy and Barney’s girlfriends, Helen and Thelma Lou, are the “good girls”: sweet, kind, understanding, and patient. They are contrasted by the “fun girls” from Mt. Pilot, Daphne and Skippy. Daphne and Skippy are definitely the “bad girls” – the type of women that tempt men and get them into trouble.

Why do we love this show? In some small way watching this program, having a good laugh, and thinking about its simple message makes us all a little better. Each episode challenges us to continually search for wisdom and deal with our fellow man in a more kind and loving way.

Happy New Year

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from the Grand Commandery