

“Frank and Television Reruns”

OR: “There is Nash Bridges in Heaven”

By Heidi Szpek-Idzikowski

(Delivered at Frank’s Celebration of Life in Lynnwood, WA on March 8, 2025.)

Those of you who knew Frank or read his obituary knew that Frank liked stories. Not until Frank's passing did I realize the value of certain things that he did, and such seems to be commonplace for many of us. So this story is about everyday life that has a greater implication. The title is “Frank and Television Reruns” or the alternative title, “*There is Nash Bridges in Heaven!!!!*”

Frank enjoyed Jim Beam, Diet Mountain Dew – even for breakfast, hot dogs - not beef, traveling, Sunday drives. We have visited just about every park imaginable, especially on the West side of the Cascades. He enjoyed his children and adored his granddaughters. He enjoyed reading military history but above all he loved television, especially certain reruns. Together Frank and I enjoyed television, especially French murder mysteries or PBS murder mysteries or German murder mysteries or Swedish murder mysteries thrown in with an occasional Gordon Ramsay's *Hell's Kitchen*. Often these shows became the inspiration for our travels to Sweden, to France to Germany.

But Frank had a television world that was uniquely his own. He would tell of a horrible childhood experience when he was about 8. It was Christmas time; he had been naughty, and his mother said he would not get to watch *Miracle on 34th St.* unless he apologized. I'm not sure what Frank did, but he did not apologize. Frank’s mother was strict; he didn't get to watch *Miracle on 34th St.* that Christmas. He remembered that memory very distinctly. But he also spoke of his favorite childhood TV series. There was *Dobie Gillis*, *Donna Reed*, *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*. As he got a little older, there was *Perry Mason* and the first year of *Hawaii 5-O*. Then Frank was off to the Army with apparently no television and a forever gap in his TV watching was established. I recall, too, an episode in our early years of dating, when suddenly Frank became unavailable Monday through Friday mid-afternoons. Before he had waited for my classes at UW Milwaukee to be over. We’d go out for coffee or take a drive. But suddenly that stopped. Was our romance already over?! I asked him why aren't you free in the afternoon? He looked at me a bit confused and responded, “I watch *General Hospital* with my mother each day!” *General Hospital* was no ordinary soap opera for it had the World Security Bureau (WSB) with Scorpio, Anna Devane and Frisco Jones – a perfect drama about the world of intelligence and espionage Frank had participated in Vietnam. I confess for quite a few years, Frank got me hooked on that series, too.

In our first years of marriage, there was little time for reruns but with the advent of a DVD player, shows could be recorded and then watched over and over again. However, with raising children and careers, moving from Wisconsin to Arizona, and then to Washington, there was little time for TV, much less reruns.

But then came cable TV, with unlimited Recording. Now Frank could record *NCIS*, *NCIS Las Vegas*, *NCIS New Orleans*, *NCIS Los Angeles*, *NCIS Hawaii*, *NCIS Origins*, but also *JAG*; and *CSI Miami*, *CSI Vegas*, *CSI NY*, the new *Hawaii 5-O* as well as the original *Hawaii 5-O*, *Nash Bridges*, *Blue Bloods*, and occasionally, *Perry Mason*. But above all, he would record, watch and rewatch, *12 O'Clock High* (1964-67). He would sneak in a rerun after work and before dinner. When I was teaching at CWU in Ellensburg, I'm not sure how many reruns he watched. I do recall, however, that when Frank could work out of the home for the VA, his double monitor allowed him to stream a show. He also set up an old laptop adjacent to his monitors, to watch a second show while working! With his reruns on, Frank could multi-task like no other.

In retirement, especially in the winter months and as the Recording memory grew larger, Frank watched even more. I would find Frank in our living room with the TV on, his laptop on his lap, his cell phone, Jim Beam or Diet Mountain Dew on his end table at right, his tablet at left, while enjoying his shows. There were times when we were watching an evening show together that I would get up to use the bathroom and much to my chagrin 5 minutes later I'd come back to find *12 O'Clock High* on.

As annoying as I found these reruns, I eventually learned that Frank did some of his best work while those reruns played in the background. He did his VA work, our taxes, organized thousands of family photos and videos, thousands of photos from our volunteer cemetery project, and he was the best proofreader and research assistant I ever had. Frank would spend hours delving into archives, countless university databases, the National Library of Israel, the Library of Congress and more.

Ironically, while we were going through papers after Frank passed, Sara came across a letter from his army buddy sent shortly after they were discharged. In it his buddy Scott wrote: "Please don't watch those *12 O'Clock High* reruns." Maybe Frank and his buddies actually did watch too much *12 O'Clock High* in Vietnam.

After Frank passed, I turned on the TV one night, and went to the Recordings to look for an HG show that I knew would distract me for the moment. When I opened up the Recordings there was a blinking red message that said *Recording is 100% full*. Nothing else could be recorded. I looked down the list, there was one or two HG shows, a *Hell's Kitchen* and then *NCIS*, *NCIS Las Vegas*, *NCIS New Orleans*, *NCIS Los Angeles*, *NCIS Hawaii*, *NCIS Origins*, but also *JAG*; and *CSI Miami*, *CSI Vegas*, *CSI NY*, the new *Hawaii 5-O* as well as the original *Hawaii 5-O*, *Nash Bridges*, *Blue Bloods*, and occasionally, *Perry Mason*. And not just one of each! I had to learn how to delete recordings as I was not allowed to touch the Recordings. For some of these series there were 49 plus episodes. Fortunately, I learned how to bulk delete and then I thought now I can enjoy a few HG shows. Much to my surprise or shock, as I deleted the last of these shows a message came up saying - 97 recordings about to download. I looked at Frank's photo on the mantle and said, "There must be Nash bridges in heaven!" I do not know why I chose Nash Bridges. And I thought that was the end. But then last week when I turned to the Recordings I remembered the new season had begun for many of these shows. And so the Frank recordings continues...

I don't know if there is a Nash bridges or CSI or NCIS or any of these shows in heaven but I do know whenever I come across any of these shows they remind of Frank – and not simply the annoying repeated reruns but the incredible work he did for our life behind the scenes of these reruns.