Mr. Wizard Encyclopedia Article

Mr. Wizard

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For nearly 50 years, Mr. Wizard taught science on television the way most science teachers wished they could. Mr. Wizard was the creation of Don Herbert (1917—), a radio writer and performer who wanted to make science interesting to children. Herbert's first live television program, *Watch Mr. Wizard,* aired in 1951, and featured Herbert using household items to teach the wonders of science. Over the next 14 years, Herbert performed over 4,500 science demonstrations and became an American institution. According to Stuart Fischer, the author of *Kids' TV: The First Twenty-Five Years,* "this show proved to be one of television's most successful educational programs." It won numerous honors, including two Emmy Award nominations.

Though *Watch Mr. Wizard* left the air in 1965, Mr. Wizard lived on. Herbert returned to the airwaves in 1973 with a series of 30-second science lessons called *Mr. Wizard Close-Ups.* In 1979, Herbert and his wife, Norma, helped create touring science assemblies that visited schools across the United States. And beginning in 1983—amidst the boom in nostalgia for 1950s and 1960s culture—*Mr. Wizard's World* —an update of the original program—began to appear on the Nickelodeon cable network. The Nickelodeon programs were used widely in American schools to help hook yet another generation of children on science. In addition to his television work, Herbert has written several *Mr. Wizard* books, including *Mr. Wizard's Science Secrets* (Popular Mechanics Press, 1952) and *Mr. Wizard's Supermarket Science* (Random House, 1980).

Further Reading:

Fischer, Stuart. *Kids' TV: The First Twenty-Five Years.* New York, Facts on File, 1983.

McCray, Nancy. "Teacher to Teacher." *Booklist.* Vol. 92, No.11, 1996.

"Mr. Wizard Home Page." http:/www.mrwizard.org. April 1999.