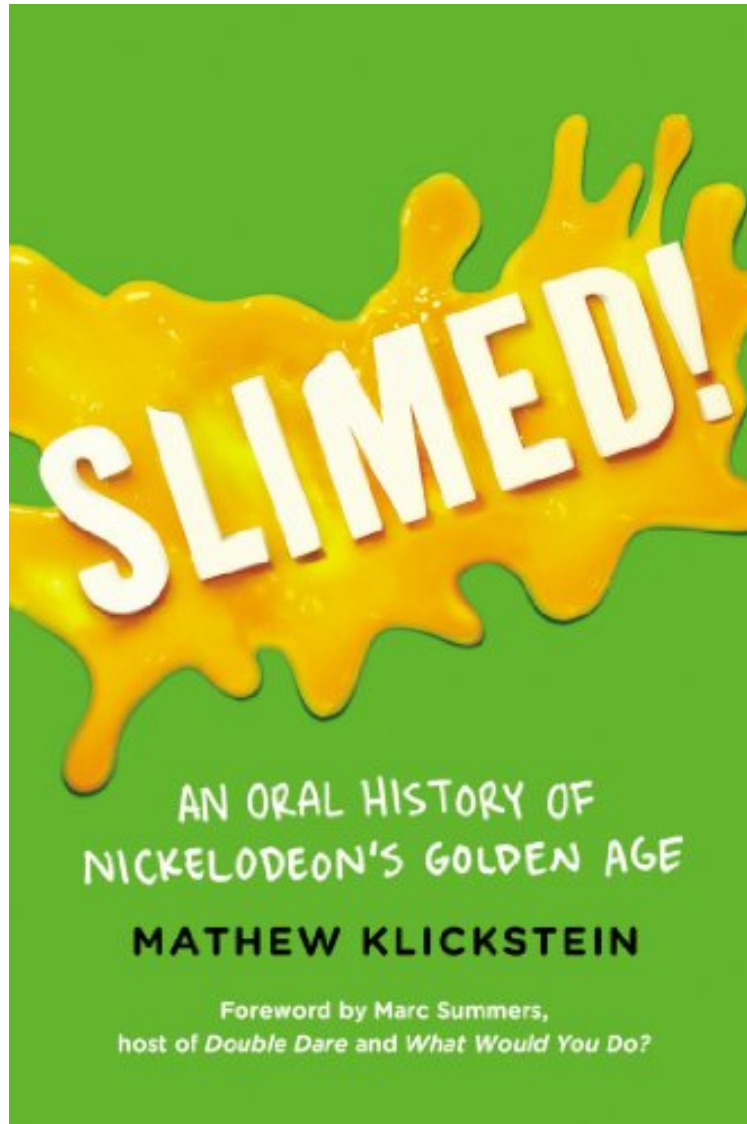


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## Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeons Golden Age

Mathew Klickstein

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**Mathew Klickstein : Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeons Golden Age** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeons Golden Age:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. but to really enjoy this, you should probably be one of those ...By y2kfanBeing nostalgic for the days of youth and maybe one or two of the old Nickelodeon shows is one thing, but to really enjoy this, you should probably be one of those people who browses Youtube for old Nickelodeon ads at 4 in the morning. As someone who is deeply indebted to old Nickelodeon (both in my humor and worldview -- the content

they pushed out mid 80s to mid 90s has forever changed me), this book is super engrossing. For people like us -- of which there might not be a lot, but really, who knows -- the book's somewhat rambling nature (and inability to explain who anyone is) is not only accepted but enjoyable. It feels like a very in depth conversation at a party, except these people are executives, actors, directors, writers, crew members, etc from a certain cable network at a certain point in time. Thankfully, there is a "Cast of Characters" at the end of the book, so you can flip there anytime and scan for the name you don't recognize (of which there will probably be a lot -- I don't exactly know every writer on "You Can't Do That On Television," for instance). It's a bit annoying at times, but the experience as a whole is very enlightening and informative. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Uncomfortably fascinating

By Brandon Pulling toys from the dusty old toy box in the attic is fun at first; you see all your old favorites, and holding them in your hands brings back fond memories...but they feel smaller somehow. The paint has faded, and the imperfections catch your eye. Try as you might, the totems no longer invoke the magic spells they used to. *Slimed!* starts by blowing the dust off the old toy box, and I settled in hoping to hear about how wonderful and beautiful those times were, backstage hijinks, what it felt like to be creating something groundbreaking that fed the imaginations of an entire generation of children - and it delivers, to a degree. But pulling the curtains back to reveal the puppeteer won't strengthen the magic of his performance, especially when he is older, wrinkled, and prone to dwelling on old wounds. Perhaps I am too sentimental, but if I am, Nickelodeon's stellar programming had a hand in making me so. It's the Big Pete in me that feels this book is too much tabloid and too little heart. I can't help but imagine those interviewees who may be forced to re-evaluate their own memories once they've heard a former colleague dismiss them with a casualty that is disappointing to read. There is warmth here, but rarely. Hearing the old names again was a thrill, chapters containing stories about production and naughtiness were a fun read, but Nick always felt like a haven safe from the world as we know it, and it feels dirtier and distinctly less beautiful having seen the pettiness and ugliness that would have been better left buried. I feel as guilty as if I had been reading a tabloid, for indeed that is largely what this work remains. For all its playful irreverence, there is genuine sadness in reading about how some of the people turned out. Given a second chance, I would have left the coffin closed, and just left some flowers instead. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. *Peeling Back the Slime Coating My Childhood* By C. Gaines I'm a little embarrassed to admit this, but I had almost forgotten how much Nickelodeon was a part of my life. I owned all the Ren Stimpy comics and read them religiously during lunch recess. Doug gave me hope that if you were sweet, nice, and tenacious, eventually your crush might express reciprocal feelings. Clarissa inspired my interest in journalism and, as an aside, I spent years asking my uncle who worked in computers to help me design my own computer games. I could never understand why he said it was complicated and Clarissa could create a game in what seemed like minutes. I watched *Hey Dude* and *Salute Your Shorts*, and dreamt of a summer experience that was spent doing things more exciting than my local day camp. I watched *Double Dare* and fantasized about visiting Orlando not because of Disney World, but because of Nickelodeon Studios -- and the potential of getting *SLIMED!* Mathew Klickstein's book is fantastic and fascinating for a number of reasons. The biggest accomplishment is the sheer number of people who contributed to this oral history, making it a very comprehensive collection of occasionally disagreeing comments. The book is organized in a smart way, with each chapter based on a simple question or topic, and then Klickstein as moderator let the interviewees answer and divert mildly from the topic, giving excellent anecdotes throughout their journey. I was most interested in the chapter on Nickelodeon's diversity. Growing up, I didn't notice that so many of the actors on the network's shows were white, and I was equally surprised that the minorities on the network weren't aware of that either. There were some who felt it was a somewhat conscious decision to cater to their audience (who was more likely to be comprised of suburban kids, back in those days, based on where the network was available in the early days of cable). There were some anecdotes that I found mildly curious, but that's to be expected. For example, one of the people who worked on *Rugrats* takes credit in the book for creating a shot looking out from inside one of the babies' mouths, even though a similar shot was done in *Little Shop of Horrors* back in 1986. However, this book is an oral history, and as a result, Klickstein does the right thing throughout this book by not playing fact-keeper, but facilitator. In the wrong hands, segments of the book (like the extended conversation about the factors that led to John K. being fired from *Ren Stimpy*) might have seem slanted, but here, all opinions are welcomed. The book is better for it. What I love the most about *SLIMED!* is how much it reminded me of the little kid I once was who used to watch TV on his bedroom floor, screaming at the TV during the Kids Choice Awards, and singing along loudly with his favorite theme songs. Nickelodeon was special and informed so much of who I am, and I'm glad this book is here to remind me of those great days. "Now we will share a lifetime of the fondest memories..."

An Entertainment Weekly Best Tell-All of 2013!

"While this is a book you can fit in your purse, and while the cover is a happy mixture of the classic Nickelodeon lime green and bright orange, it's filled with a lot more than nostalgia ...And while *SLIMED!* is certainly fun, especially for readers who grew up watching these shows, it also provides a serious lesson on the birth of cable television." --Kirkus

s" *SLIMED!* explores the behind-the-scenes drama of controversial shows like *Ren Stimpy* and the family lives of its

child stars, but it also reveals the network's unconventional programming and knack for recruiting up-and-coming talent (Hunger Games author Suzanne Collins was on the writing staff for *Clarissa Explains It All*)--as well as the secret ingredients to the network's famous green slime."--The Atlantic, Fall Books Preview "Culture isn't all serious business--sometimes it's just good fun."--Publisher's Weekly, Top 10 Social Sciences pick "Reading *SLIMED!* is like taking a trip back to summer camp to see your old friends. Mathew Klickstein has captured the outrageous, inventive, and crazy times of early Nickelodeon, and the stories are sweeter than a mug of bug juice. A nation of Nick fans will salute his shorts."--Steve Slavkin, creator of *Salute Your Shorts* "Somewhere between a tribute, a belated yearbook, and an autopsy, *SLIMED!* attempts to figure out--with the help of nearly 200 performers, writers, producers, and execs who worked at the network between 1985 and 2000--how a fledgling channel with virtually no original programming identified, captured, and entertained the hell out of its preteen demographic.... *SLIMED!* is the best kind of blast from the past: dishy, unwholesome, and thought-provoking enough to make you question your own memories."--The Village Voice "Klickstein provides a bracing oral history of Nickelodeon in the 1990s, the era of shows like *Ren Stimpy* and *Clarissa Explains It All*."--Entertainment Weekly, Top Four Tell-All Books Of Year "Mathew Klickstein's oral history *SLIMED!* does a wonderful job of reliving those times through interviews, photos, and assorted behind-the-scenes details. The book truly defines the joy one felt to be a 'Nick kid' and brings a heaping dose of nostalgia along with it."--Parade Magazine, Top 25 Books About Movies/TV "The book is quite impressive. Mathew Klickstein must have a large multi Gigabyte RAM in his head to remember all those quotes and sort them into a meaningful book. Or at least he must be very well organized. Well done."--Roger Price, creator of *You Can't Do That on Television* and green slime "Mathew Klickstein has written what is quite possibly the first serious pop culture book of our generation."--The Loafer "It's the inside story of the popular kids' channel and is full of fun anecdotes and interesting facts about the network (it coined the word 'tween'), its cast and crew members, plus the aforementioned slime recipe."--The Hollywood Reporter "SLIMED! digs deep into the depths of Nickelodeon's 'Golden Age' with interviews and fun facts."--Huffington Post "To anyone being raised in the 90s, whether as a kid or teenager, the new book *SLIMED! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age* is an excellent nostalgia trip."--*Bi\*\*h Magazine* "SLIMED! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age, by Mathew Klickstein, is an in-depth oral history that includes the genesis of the channel's brand and many of its iconic shows."--OK! Magazine

About the Author MATHEW KLICKSTEIN's writing has appeared in such publications as *Wired*, *New York Daily News* and *Splitsider*. He is the author of such books as *SLIMED! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age*, the screenwriter of Sony Pictures' *Against the Dark* and director/producer of the Marc Summers documentary *On Your Marc*. He currently hosts the podcast *NERTZ*, is developing a new television series and is finishing a book about *The Simpsons* --with lifetime series writer Mike Reiss -- that will be published by Harper Collins, Summer 2018. He aspires to get some sleep some day soon.

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Foreword ON YOUR MARK! GET SET!! STOP!!! Now that I have your attention, let's talk about one of the most amazing channels ever created. One that pretty much changed the landscape of kids TV, not to mention my fledgling showbiz career! My first introduction to Nickelodeon was long before my *Double Dare* audition. It was our night-light, when our babies came home from the hospital and wanted that three-in-the-morning feeding. Cable was young, and we would catch the East Coast feed of a show that looked like something from the fifties: *Pinwheel*. The production, in my opinion, was horrible: the puppets were lackluster, and it seemed they reran the same six shows over and over. Yet I was mesmerized. Fast-forward the tape to 1986. I was doing many things to feed my family. These included warm-ups on TV shows like *Webster*, *Star Search*, and *Whats Happening Now!* . . . and working as a stand-up comic and magician in clubs all over LA. A friend from Indianapolis a ventriloquist decided he was ending his performing career, moving behind the camera, and called to tell me about an audition I should attend instead of him. He said the network was Nickelodeon, and it was a kids game show. Hell, at that point of my life, I would audition for anything. Well, as we all know, it worked out pretty well. The first day at the studio set the tone for what was about to come down. It was a bunch of young guys who were very bright and creative and yet had little experience in the world of game shows. I was the old man of the group at age thirty-four (although focus groups thought I was in my early twenties), with thirteen years of experience as a game show writer. I had crossed paths with some of the greats, including Bob Barker, Jack Barry, and Ralph Edwards. It really did not matter. We all had a sick sense of humor, were nostalgic for early TV references and did I mention, we could do pretty much whatever we wanted? Geraldine Laybourne was running the place and had a great philosophy: Hire people who know what they are doing . . . and then let them do their jobs. I miss her! That is why the joint was successful. We were allowed to be a little off center, think on the spot, and, in my opinion, play up to the audience. We never felt we were doing a kids show. We compared our humor to *Rocky Bullwinkle* and *Soupy Sales*. It was kids TV that parents wanted to watch. It was one of the main reasons *Double Dare* took off. Our success on *Double Dare* opened the floodgates. All of a sudden, kids had their own game shows, talk shows, variety shows, sitcoms, and dramas. They were all a bit raw in production values, but the casting was superb, as was the writing. The people on screen spoke like real kids and were not blue-eyed, blond-haired specimens from the perfect world of Disney. The audience could relate to what they saw on the screen. Finally! Add to this contests that included romps through toy stores; *Nick Takes Over Your School*; arena tours with *Double Dare*, *What Would You*

Do?, and GUTS . . . and the best slogan anywhere: The place where only kids win! It was to kids of a particular generation the golden age of TV. Now, well into their thirties, these viewers look back fondly on the shows, characters, and music associated with these programs. Why did it work? Was it the casting? The writing? The irreverence? Was it just timing? What you are about to read might explain it. Personally, I think it is like trying to dissect a joke. Why is it funny? Who cares? It worked, and we are all glad it did. Soooooo . . . On your mark! Get set!! Go!!!! Happy Reading!

MARC SUMMERS Host, Double Dare and What Would You Do? CHRISTINE TAYLOR: It was sort of us going through the things a lot of kids do . . . but we were doing it on TV. I can go back and see myself growing up before my very own eyes for all the world to see.

DANNY TAMBERELLI: Its part of how I became who I am now. Ive heard the same thing happened to me said by people who grew up watching the show. It was okay to be weird and be a little bit off and not be completely status quo. It sort of molded me. I still burp and stick things up my nose.

ELIZABETH HESS: Of course, both Melissa Joan Hart and Jason Zimbler were going through huge changes. They went through puberty over the course of Clarissa. They both learned how to drive during the course of the shows. Jasons voice changed. Melissas body went from a girl to a young woman. All those sorts of things.

JUDY GRAFE: Something everybody noticed was when Michael Maronnas voice was changing. We were all like, What does that mean? Is he still going to be Pete? Then once he was becoming an early teen idol, all the young girls were coming to the sets all atwitter over him. Thats something we noticed, too.

ALISON FANELLI: Some weeks were horrid because we were going through puberty and I might have this big pimple on my forehead while Im trying to shoot a close-up. I got to a point where every scene they were putting powder on my face, because we were just oily teenagers. After a while, they were more conscious about giving us different dressing spaces instead of trading off in the same space. But mine was near Michaels and Dannys. Oh gosh, yeah. It was super awkward.

VANESSA LINDORES: Growing up isnt easy. Doing it in front of a lot of people doesnt make it any easier.

ALASDAIR GILLIS: This entrance into puberty was being captured on film. For myself, it was kind of jarring.

LARISA OLEYNIK: Its definitely embarrassing when youre literally growing up in front of peoples eyes. Youre doing wardrobe fittings and its like, Oh! I have hips now! Im not just the beanpole I used to be! Its awkward, but no more awkward than it would be otherwise. It would have been more awkward if I had just been going to junior high being like, What do I do?

HEIDI LUCAS: There was something female-related that I went through on Salute Your Shorts, and I felt completely secure with the female crew that was there. I knew I could take a problem or concern to anyone and they would wrap their arms around me physically and figuratively to help me through any problem.

HERB SCANNELL: Things were, by and large, sympathetic. Most of the kids had family structures they were living in, and our job was to let them continue being kids.

JASON ZIMBLER: Those people helped to raise me. They made me funny. They made me a good person.

ALISON FANELLI: But parts of it were really awkward and hard. In the What We Did on Our Summer Vacation special, I was eleven or twelve and working in the photo booth costume. It was a yellow T-shirt and a green jumper that was a skirt. Something went wrong with the microphone, they yelled cut, and one of the crew members came over, got down on his knees, and went right for the microphone, which was wrapped around my waist under the dress. My mom came flying out of nowhere: No! No! No! That was the first time I was conscious to, Oh, maybe I should be more aware that he was grabbing me! It was totally professional, but . . .

JESSICA GAYNES: I was the youngest of all of the hosts on Wild Crazy Kids. And I was a girl. Sometimes its shocking how wed get one crew person who would be clueless. There was one time where they said, Put them in their spaces. One of them thought it would be funny to say, Jessicas in her hole! I heard it. And everybody who heard it, their jaws dropped. One person said, What are you doing? Shes a minor! Do you want to get sued? Those incidents are scarring. Young girls cant handle that.

JUSTIN CAMMY: The crew on You Cant Do That on Television introduced me to pornography. Playboy was always lying around.

ADAM WEISSMAN: Youre going through hormonal changes on your own, youre feeling awkward in your own body, youre trying to figure yourself out . . . and then you thrust that awkwardness in front of the cameras, in front of people, doing scripted TV, which you may or may not have been trained to do. You have to deal with the pressures of a TV show, and two or three hours a day in short increments, you get pulled off the set to go to school. Theres somebody knocking on the door every twenty minutes, saying, Okay, its time to come back to the set!

JUSTIN CAMMY: That is the totally unglamorous nature to making a TV show: The days are long, its really boring, youre inside an overly air-conditioned studio. Most of the time youre waiting for lights to work or cameras to be set. Its a fun job, but nevertheless a job.

MICHAEL MARONNA: I didnt think of it so much as a career. I had my individual pursuits was into my Nintendo, playing outside . . .

LARISA OLEYNIK: I was able to maintain a relatively normal life. We all just got up, went to work, and then did our homework. Then went to bed. And socialized like normal human beings on the weekend.

JOANNA GARCIA: My parents were okay with me doing Are You Afraid of the Dark? because it was conducive to being normal and staying in school in Florida, then going up for a couple weeks to shoot in Montreal. I got the best of both worlds.

JACOB TIERNEY: Those of us in the Midnight Society werent in the stories; we just kinda burned our little bits and played with the fire. They taped all of our stuff at the beginning of each season.

D.J. MACHALE: That was a challenge, because it meant all the stories had to be set up very early on because we couldnt do a campfire scene where the kids would say, This is a story about a really scary . . . thing.

JACOB TIERNEY: We did it the campfire stuff so quickly. If memory serves, wed do a whole season maybe

within two weeks. Maybe four of them a day, and then we were done. Its kind of a black hole in my memory.

**JUDY GRAFE:** Dannys mother made him understand that this was a temporary thing and that a lot of times what happens when kids who are actors grow up is that they find theres nothing there for them.

**DANNY TAMBERELLI:** My parents were really good at keeping me grounded. I worked at a bagel store while working on All That. I played rec soccer and baseball during all the shooting of Pete Pete. They made sure to work really hard so I wouldnt have a Michael Jackson upbringing or anything.

**DANNY COOKSEY:** Its an interesting thing that happens when youre successful and young; it changes everything. I was around a lot of people who were sort of affected by it, and its a weird chip that people carry around. You can either take the negative around with you or take the positive. Nobody comes out unscathed.

**MELISSA JOAN HART:** I was working too hard to get into trouble. I wasnt in Hollywood; I was in Orlando, and other than the two boys on Clarissa, I was the only one around my age. All the people around were like big brothers and sisters keeping an eye on me, telling me whats right and wrong. I didnt have to go drinking or do drugs or go to clubs or any of that, because I was having such fun being a part of this whole thing.

**SEAN ONEAL:** When kids are in the spotlight and they are not given room to breathe and they are sucked into the vortex of what this industry can do to certain people, thats a shame. I went through some transitional periods afterward that took a long time to really get me solid. But man, the show was an amazing experience.

**ADAM REID:** It wasnt a big deal in Ottawa. None of my friends cared that I was doing You Cant Do That on Television. Several times I would do these trips Vanessa, Doug, Les, and I went and rolled Easter eggs on the White House lawn; we met George Bush! and then wed go back to school like nothing happened.

**BLAKE SENNETT:** Any time you bounce back and forth, its weird. Youre the king of the universe and then you go back to school and you have no friends and youre that nerdy theater kid. I felt like a dork in high school. But it was worth it.

**ALISON FANELLI:** I got teased a bunch in elementary school. In high school, they knew that I was gone for four months of the school year and then Id be back. The teachers were even used to it. I had a really tight-knit group of friends who knew what I was doing. When I was off set, I was Ally. I got to be me: go to school, go to homecoming dances, and play the oboe, and sing in the theater show. Growing up, no matter how big a show is and we didnt think Pete Pete was all that popular at the time you just gotta be careful of the friends you pick. I could tell which people wanted to ask about the show and hang out just because I was on a show, as opposed to my friends. Thats a good life lesson.

**HEIDI LUCAS:** When life went back to normal, and the show went on syndication, I found a world of conflict. I had so much praise and support from my family. My true friends thought it was the greatest thing in the world. But then I would go to school . . . I could not escape enough. I had to have lunch in a teachers homeroom with a teacher because it was the safest place for me to go. Everybody wanted to beat me up. I had kick your ass threats all over my locker; I had Heidi ho written on my locker. It got so bad I was pulled out and was homeschooled for my last year and a half. Thats how bad it was.

**MEGAN BERWICK:** A lot of kids who act go through the same thing where everybody hates you. The other thing is that youre not in school enough in a year that you can actually be a part of any of the cliques. One of the things that struck me about junior high was how many lunch breaks Id spend sitting in the bathroom alone. It wasnt until college that I realized I was actually pretty and could date and all that stuff. I definitely never got asked out in high school. Not a single time.

**TREVOR EYSTER:** I certainly would never have thought Megan would have had that trouble. Sure, she had braces, but she was bright, amazingly intelligent, quirky, charming.

**DANNY TAMBERELLI:** For me, it was typical, normal growing up. People made fun of people for different things. I made it out all right. I got a lot of kids on to the show because I lived in Jersey where we shot, so if they needed kid extras, I would invite people to come. Th at helped me make friends.

**CHRISTINE TAYLOR:** The pilot was going to just be this fun thing I never thought would go any further. When we went off to do it, it sort of felt like a dream. I was really new to it at the time. The day we were going to fly to Arizona for Hey Dude was the day they were announcing homecoming in my school, and that was a big deal. I still went to school in the morning before we drove to JFK Airport to get on the flight. I was still really invested in my real life, as I called it.

**DAVE RHODEN:** My parents would pick me up right from high school, drive me to the studios, and wed be there until eight fi ft een or eight thirty at night. Get home around nine to eat dinner and then try to crank out homework until around ten. On top of that, we had lines to memorize. Some teachers wouldnt always collect our homework, but we would be told to do it anyway. So I would literally guess each night which homework assignments would be picked up the next day in class and work on those ones.

**CHRISTINE MCGLADE:** I wouldnt say my grades suffered at all. But I was involved with gymnastics at the time I started You Cant Do That on Television and had to drop that activity. It might seem like an obvious choice, but it was a difficult one for me because I really enjoyed gymnastics.

**ROGER PRICE:** None of the You Cant Do That on Television kids were encouraged to leave school. Most of them kept up with their schoolwork. There was a limit on the hours they might work.

**ALISON FANELLI:** My tutors on set were always very supportive of my academic career. Even if I were to have continued with acting or directing, they still wouldve encouraged me to go to college.

**DAVE RHODEN:** Part of Saturday we would be tutored because we were missing a Monday of school every week. Imagine a bunch of rebellious teenagers in a little trailer with one lady at a time who would be tutoring us on multiple subjects. There was one lady they brought in to teach us foreign language. Shed work with Jocelyn Steiner on Latin, shed work with me on Spanish, and shed work with either Chris Lobban or Rick Galloway on French. On top of that, she was deaf.

**JASON ZIMBLER:**

She was an unbelievably impressive woman. Melissa Joan Hart was taking Spanish and I was taking French with her. Both Melissa and I became friends not only with her but with her family. Dave Martel from Pete Pete is her nephew. DAVE MARTEL: My aunts an amazing woman and has a great way with languages. She could see by reading peoples lips how they were pronouncing the words. DAVE RHODEN: So now lets focus on the fact that she was deaf. Shes one-on-one with somebody, reading their lips, and her back is to somebody else. We would say the raunchiest stuff behind her back and make the weirdest faces we could make just to make the other person bust up. DAVE MARTEL: She would always tell me these stories of kids on set, and it sounded like they were having so much fun. She gave me the acting bug. DAVE RHODEN: She couldnt hear anything. Again, it was horrible. But that was a funny little thing that wed do. Sorry. DAVE MARTEL: She was not completely deaf. Shes just a little hearing-impaired. She wears a hearing aid. Thats a shame that people would take advantage. I dont imagine she was aware of that. KEVIN KUBUSHESKIE: There was some teasing and bullying when I was younger, but mostly friends and family were indifferent. As were most Canadians. CHRISTINE MCGLADE: Canadians are funny. When people here are successful, they often go to the States because they dont get support at home. Sometimes wed get a jealous reaction from kids in the city, but I didnt get any of that from my close friends I associated with. They just thought it was a funny, strange thing that they didnt give a lot of weight to. ROSS HULL: For me, I probably got more recognition for doing Are You Afraid of the Dark? after we were done than when we were actually shooting it. BRENDA MASON: The kids would be amazed when they came into the station and would find bags and bags of fan letters from the U.S. ALASDAIR GILLIS: As a fourteen-year-old, I dont know if I knew what to make of that. In some ways, I thought it would be more interesting to be in the States and sort of revel in that attention. Not that I think thats of great value now. But as a kid, theres an appeal to having some of the affirmation about the shows success, whereas here in Canada, I was just as likely to get picked on or made fun of by older kids: Oh, youre on that stupid show. ROGER PRICE: When they flew down to the States, they were sometimes mobbed. The Americans are a demonstrative people, like the Brits. But Canada is a whole country of Minnesotans. ABBY HAGYARD: Alasdair was horribly self-conscious after that. It took him a while to get over that. That really blindsided him. ADAM REID: It was easier back then. We didnt have the kid actor system that there is today. There werent ten agents and whatever for every actor . . . We had kids who were interested in expressing themselves and had a lot to express. We didnt have kids who were doing things because their parents thought they should. MICHAEL BOWER: Timothy [aka Trevor] Eysters mother was like a stage mom, and that was pretty tough. My kid this, my kid that . . . Oh God, it was annoying! His mother ran his life. MEGAN BERWICK: His mom was really difficult. Really mean. TREVOR EYSTER: I dont mean to sound cold, but Im certainly not concerned about my mothers reputation. DONNIE JEFFCOAT: Omar Goodings mom was always on set and was very much a big part of his career back then. It was nice to have her there, because my parents werent really around and she did take care of us quite a few times! MICHAEL BOWER: There were a lot of mothers on the set, but all of them kind of became part of it. Venus DeMilos mother was a manager and ended up managing one or two of the other actors, getting them parts and cameos in other shows. Megans mother ended up becoming the set photographer because she had a really nice camera and was taking photos of the cast and crew. TREVOR EYSTER: I thought Danny Cookseys mom was cool, because I was envious of the relationship he had with her. I really, really liked Venuss mom a great deal. The few times I met Bowers father, I thought he was a gracious man. FRED KELLER: Christine Taylors mom was a stage mother and insisted that she tow the line. Her mom was very chatty, very polite, very nice, but very much watching over Christine. More so than the other kids parents were. SEAN ONEAL: My mom was pretty much my chauffeur. She got me where I needed to be for years. She was always involved in the business and with my coworkers. GEOFFREY DARBY: Melissa Joan Harts mom was difficult. She was. I only dealt with it when Mitchell Kriegman needed another bad guy to step in. JOE OCONNOR: Melissa loved her mom, but her moms a show mom. DAVE RHODEN: My moms an exceptional person. But a little different, I guess you could say. They had called to invite me back to season threethis was told to me by my dadand at the time I guess my mom thought I was getting a little too big for my britches. My moms also borderline bipolar. Very emotional roller coastertype person. Shed gotten a call one day from Nickelodeon: Hey, we want to talk with you about Daves contract for season three. And she answered the phone and just went off and was like, I DONT CARE IF HE EVER COMES BACK TO NICKELODEON! Screaming at the top of her lungs and slamming the phone down. That was the end of the negotiations. VANESSA LINDORES: Roger would not have tolerated stage parents. That would have driven him nuts. Im sure if there were any, they got nipped in the bud very quickly. ROGER PRICE: When we started looking for new kids, we always arranged it so that at the final call the parents were entertained with refreshments in the boardroom by some of the kids who were already on the show. Ostensibly, this was so the new parents could ask any questions they wanted to of the established kids. In fact, it was so the kids already on the show could screen the new parents. Even the best kid in the world would have been passed over if their parents had lamentably failed their part of the audition. GEOFFREY DARBY: A lot of kids wanted to be on You Cant Do That on Television. It wasnt particularly difficult to find them. We had one diva parent who thought her kid was a star. And that kid was fired. ROGER PRICE: I did not much care what parents thought. Their job was to be good, supportive parents to their kids. My job was to make TV shows. Kids were not allowed to take scripts home. Kids do not talk to parents much

anyway. ADAM REID: That was one thing Roger insisted on: We were never to read over the sketches with our parents. It wasn't that the scripts were secretive. He just didn't want anyone to influence what was actually happening. VANESSA LINDORES: I don't remember my parents ever being in the studio. They dropped me off and picked me up. That was it. Later, I took the bus to work. Funny, now that I think about it. MARJORIE SILCOFF: Our parents weren't allowed on the set. Today, AFTRA requires a parent or parental figure for each kid to be on set. There was something about that that gave my mother pause. BRENDA MASON: It was a huge leap of faith, considering the bizarre things the kids were required to do. ALASDAIR GILLIS: Most of our parents, in retrospect, seemed relatively comfortable with us doing it. If they had any doubts or concerns, it wasn't really brought up. It wouldn't have been brought up with us. We were eleven, twelve, thirteen . . . ABBY HAGYARD: Roger made sure there was always a female chaperone on set. She was a trained therapist and a lovely woman. She happened to be the mother of two of the boys who had already gotten cast on the show. And if Les Lye wasn't around, I was around. We had the makeup woman, Carole Hay, Geoff Darby . . . There was no situation to my knowledge where the kids might have been taken advantage of. ADAM REID: I had one sketch that dug at me. It was Mom and me on the back porch, and I said, Mom, there's no way I'm going to school wearing this shirt. This shirt makes me look like a girl. And I take off the shirt. What are you doing, Adam? And these pants! They're too tight, and there's no way I'm going to go to school in these pants. So I'm standing basically in my underwear, and she says, Adam, you can't go to school with nothing on. Fine. I can't go to school. And I go inside, shut the door, and lock her out. But to strip down to your underwear as a prepubescent boy and doing it four, five times . . . Everyone's very respectful and it's a kids show and everyone's having fun, but there's still a part of me . . . I felt pretty vulnerable. Brenda Mason came up to me afterward and put her arm around me and said, That was really good. Are you okay? And I was sucking back tears: Yeah, I'm okay, I'm okay. You did a great job, buddy. It felt like a bit of an initiation. If you watch the sketch, you'd have no idea that I'm actually kind of upset or embarrassed. MARJORIE SILCOFF: We were all kids, but I know myself to be an above-average sensitive person and the thought of being ridiculed really horrified me. BOB BLACK: Marjorie was a relative outsider amongst the kids. I would say Marjorie was more on the edge than in the middle. In any group of kids, you're going to have someone who's more in the center of the social action and others who aren't. JESSICA GAYNES: Omar Gooding would sometimes turn and walk away from me because his mother had said at the start of the season, Don't make her upset! She has a job to do, and she is sensitive! ALASDAIR GILLIS: Dressing up like a girl or being half-naked or stuff like that? At fifteen, these are not the things I want to stand out for! It was enough to make things uncomfortable. Especially the older I got. JOSH MORRIS: Roger loved seeing little boys in dresses. He thought that was hilarious. But the boys didn't like it so much. He'd pick the boy who least wanted to be in a dress and make him wear it. ADAM REID: Five or six of us went down to LA with Roger as kind of a field trip. Roger found out Doug and Matthew had gotten in a fight; it was just Doug being Doug, a bit of a bully and instead of punishing Doug, Roger said, Let's go to a women's department store. We all walked in, and Roger said, Doug, pick your dress. Matthew, pick your dress. And they spent the rest of the afternoon in dresses as a joint punishment. Through that, Matthew and Doug bonded to an extent. They made it through the rest of the trip together . . . and got along. ALASDAIR GILLIS: It was probably 84, 85. It was nothing serious. I wasn't really involved. I wouldn't have worn a dress. ROGER PRICE: People do horrible things to kids and make them wear dresses in real life, too. I went to a German school for boys in Switzerland. It was a nice school. Our dienstmutter or service duty mom used to tell us what to wear, brush our hair, bathe us, scrub us three times a day in a tub, make sure we did our homework, and pull down our pants and smack our butts occasionally. She kept a dress, a sort of hideous Heidi outfit for bad boys to wear. If she was displeased with you, you found it on your bed. I found it on my bed a couple of times, but I never wore it. You always promised to be good in the future and she always relented. BOB BLACK: Roger's worldview is that kids and old people are the two most discriminated against. That's very Roger. ALISON FANELLI: What shocked my parents most was when I decided to stop doing it and go to medical school. They expected me to go, be there for three weeks, freak out, and go back to liberal arts. It was harder on them for me to make the change to become a doctor than it was for me to go into show business. What parents say that now? MICHAEL MARONNA: I'm so grateful when I see kid actors having stage moms that my parents didn't try to force me into it.