

The original documents are located in Box 45, folder “Friends - Wilson, Flip” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

From the Desk of—

PAUL COOPER

F.C.

Flur-wilson

Dear Sheila

Thought you
would like to see
these

Best
Paul

Rusty -
Don't we
have a photo
"Flip"
under "friends"?



"MORE TRAVELS WITH FLIP" - CBS, MARCH 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

Bringing people together is the avowed intention of Flip Wilson and company when they devised the innovative "Travels With Flip" and "More Travels With Flip" television specials, the second of which will air on March 19, 8:30-9:30 on CBS. "I consider my fans my friends," says Flip, "and to me, traveling is just introducing one group of my friends to another."

For the first "Travel" special, the comedian toured the United States, stopping off in such unusual locations as Boley, Oklahoma; for this second special, he goes that one better and seeks out the unique on an international scale. Boarding a balloon in sunny California, Flip is transported to points East and the exotic lands of Hong Kong and Thailand.

Once in Hong Kong, Flip met with the press and explained the genesis of the Special. "I've always considered myself a people star, that being a star is my job. I'm people... and I think an audience responds to me in a very informal way and that's what we capture on film.

"I feel that I've established a friendship with my audience," he continues. "I don't think they meet me as a comic, but as a person, someone they can relate to honestly. I must say, this past year, traveling around as we have, doing these specials, has been the most gratifying year of my life as an artist.

"What makes it so excellent is that everything is off the top ... you shoot from the hip... you have to be totally honest and that's the ultimate challenge for a performer."

more...

Flip more than lives up to the challenge as he greets people in the market place of Hong Kong and at the gardens in Thailand. Closer to home, Flip makes points working out with the San Diego Chargers (he's their quarterback for one riotous day) and learns to shoot baskets with the Los Angeles Lakers. He also indulges in magic tricks at the famed Magic Castle in Hollywood where, as Geraldine, he allows himself to be sawed in half.

A boyhood fantasy comes true in Apple Valley, California, where Flip challenges Roy Rogers to a duel. Not a pistol and sabre duel, needless to say, but a duel nevertheless. The weapons are bowling and pool and Flip and Roy even get to ride off into the sunset.

Since music plays a significant part in Flip's personal life (he is co-founder of Little David Records which features such outstanding artists as George Carlin, Kenny Rankin and Franklyn Ajaye), Flip treats his friends -- his audience -- to the pleasure of hearing Earth, Wind and Fire, live in concert.

There's more music of a totally different sort when Flip visits the Montesorri School in Malibu and listens while five and six year olds serenade him for an afternoon. He then takes to the road again, tearing around in a go-cart race with a young girl. He finally winds up his travels taking a small engine plane through the magnificence of the Grand Canyon.

Says Flip, "We're not trying to be funny in everything. To me, comedy is like music, it has different dimensions, different tones. It can't always be hysterical. I would never try to be as funny as I think I could be because to me there is nothing more painful than hysterics. Laughing is a strain on the heart.

more...

"I think that we should hit different levels. There's outright laughter and there's a smile or a wink or even a little chuckle. And then there's a laugh from the heart and a laugh from the belly. I think you should get all of those, like a fine musical performance. And that's what I think our special has... all those different levels of comedy."

#

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

FLIP WILSON

Biography

Everyone laughed when Flip Wilson trod the boards in a school play at age nine. They weren't supposed to -- but he literally brought the house down as a last-minute replacement for a little girl who had been cast as Nurse Clara Barton.

Flip was never happier in his life than that day when he discovered the sheer pleasure of provoking laughter from people. Sidetracked by a near tragic childhood in which the chuckles were few and far between, he didn't truly pursue the comedy game until he dropped out of school at 16 and dropped into the air force. "I wasn't patriotic," he says now. "Just ashamed of my clothes."

His entertainments for fellow servicemen made them "flip out" and earned him his nickname, banishing his given name Clerow to seldom used status.

After a four year tour of duty, Flip turned to bell-hopping at the Manor Plaza Hotel in San Francisco. It was here he actually caught the showbusiness bug after talking the manager into letting him play a comedy drunk while the main act made a wardrobe change.

A string of one-night stands followed, well laced with popcorn breakfasts and peanut dinners, which paved the way for better dates.

more...

Eventually, Flip met his present manager, Monte Kay: "Great, great, the first guy who didn't promise me anything. I'd been in the business 12 years and was making less than \$700 a year. He said he wouldn't take any money until I was making \$750 a week."

With Kay, Flip taped a 1968 special for NBC that never aired and one the following year with Jonathan Winters that was a success. In 1969, Flip had his own show. Three years later he'd won two Emmys. Now something of a magnate, Flip owns a recording company, Little David, named for his son, Clerow Productions and Street Corner Productions. Flip plans to make his motion picture debut sometime in the near future.

An introspective man, he is also funny, patient and generous. Over the past six years, Flip has spent every weekend making personal appearances for charities and earlier this year, Flip was given the humanitarian award by the American Cancer Association for his outstanding work on their behalf. 1975 also saw him as an honored guest of President and Mrs. Ford at the White House in recognition of his efforts on behalf of various charities.

Flip lives with his four children -- David, Kevin, Tammy and Stacey -- who he describes as his best friends, in a large home at Malibu Beach. An avid golfer, Flip plays at least 27 holes a day, and jogs around courses in a custom built "Rolls Royce" golf cart with its own television set, bar, paneled interior and specialized roof. On weekends, Flip can be found at charity golf tournaments across the country, teeing off with such luminaries as Lee Trevino, Jack Nicklaus and the President of the United States.

During the last two years, Flip has concentrated his professional
more...

energies on producing specials for CBS Television. 1975 netted him four specials which included the innovative TRAVELS WITH FLIP, a semi-documentary approach to entertainment which took Flip across America to meet with people from every walk of life. Explains Flip, "I consider my fans my friends, and TRAVELS was designed so I could introduce one group of my friends to another group." The Special took him to Boley, Oklahoma (as well as San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans and Atlanta), an historical landmark city, formed by blacks at the turn of the century. Flip is the city's unofficial mayor and grand marshal of their annual rodeo.

The first TRAVELS WITH FLIP proved to be such a popular and critical success that the procedure was repeated for MORE TRAVELS WITH FLIP, which took the comedian to the Near East of the Philippines and United States. Flip also stayed nearer to home playing basketball with the Los Angeles Lakers and football with the San Diego Chargers.

This propensity for athletic adventure is something of a new avenue for Flip, who has spent 1975 and part of 1976 "being a good sport." For the specials he has jumped horses, roped cows, surfed in Hawaii, learned the ancient art of Thailand boxing, thrown baseballs with the Atlanta Braves, in addition to those sessions with the Lakers and Chargers. For Flip's upcoming CBS special "FLIP'S SUN VALLEY OLYMPIAD," the fearless comedian will take to winter sports for the first time -- skiing and skating with Olympic champions.

1975 also found Flip venturing into the singing profession for the first time, with a remarkable song called "Berries in Salanis" which received top airplay throughout the Southwest.

more...

What is humor to one of the funniest men this country has ever produced? "Funny is -- there are different kinds of humor, but none can be analysed. First, you laugh; then you think, why did I laugh? It's not the other way around. If you laugh you always feel good.

"When I was young, I watched TV. There were many acts I liked and I always thought I would like those people if I knew them -- Dean Martin, Perry Como, Jackie Gleason, Pearl Bailey, Groucho Marx. They are friends. That's what I wanted to be, a good friend. Many times I do bad jokes in order to establish a rapport with my audience. I've built bad jokes into my act just to let people know I'm not perfect. People don't relate to people who are perfect.

"I think the audience must know you as a person and I think it's nice to be a friend each week. It's not hard to be nice. It's no problem to be truthful. They can wake you up at night and they'll get the truth."

#

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV, March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

LOGISTICS

Putting together a caravan of filmmakers to follow Flip Wilson on travels around the world for his upcoming CBS television special to air March 19, 8:30-9:30, was no small feat in and of itself. More than 50 people had to be transported from Los Angeles, California to Bangkok, Thailand and Hong Kong to San Diego to the Grand Canyon to the desert -- all at the same time, and as a working unit.

Lee Mendelson, a documentary filmmaker who has pioneered television specials which find celebrities in the far flung corners of the world, was the impetus for the CBS "Travels With Flip" specials. "The whole thing came about in a conversation with Lee," says Flip. "I realized that I've always loved traveling and always loved meeting people and I also realized that people respond to me in a very informal way... like a friend. There were hundreds of times when I've met people and I've said, I wish I had a camera with me... and this idea to do just that kept going around in my head for more than five years. And then I finally mentioned it to Lee and he responded immediately."

That initial response resulted in "Travels With Flip, Part I," which took the comedian to Hawaii, Boley, Oklahoma, Atlanta, Georgia and San Francisco. The audience response was so overwhelmingly favorable, that Flip and Lee decided to expand the format to include other parts of the world as well.

"This is another 'Travels With Flip' special, and it involves
more...

me meeting people at random in different places and recording those experiences."

But throughout it all, Flip is no idle observer of the passing scene, indeed not. He gets right in there and becomes the number one participant. A great deal of the 'Travels' special is sheer wish fulfillment: he plays football with the San Diego Chargers, basketball with the Los Angeles Lakers, flies a small plane through the Grand Canyon and plays pool and bowls with Roy Rogers. All the while more than eight cameramen kept the film rolling, recording the entire celebration.

Getting the footage on film, though was only half the battle -- the editing room itself represented a formidable task. More than 24 hours of film had to be edited down into a workable hour and everyone agonized over what sequences to cut and what to leave in.

"So many things had to go," says Flip. "In Hong Kong we went to the Shaw studios where so many excellent films are made and to the race track, but we just didn't have time to include them. Maybe next time."

In some ways "Travels With Flip" and now "More Travels With Flip" have taken on a life of their own. "We tried to keep ourselves open to all experiences and see what would happen. In the beginning I set off in a balloon, rather like Dorothy on her adventure from Oz. That's what this whole thing has been for all of us -- a great, fantasy adventure, and I'm grateful to my fans for making it possible."

#

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV, March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

GERALDINE

If you think the world is barely able to handle one Geraldine Jones wait until you see the new Flip Wilson special "More Travels With Flip" to air March 19, 8:30-9:30 on CBS. In that one hour comedy adventure, we are treated to the rare experience of facing two Geraldines or at least two halves of one Geraldine when the magicians at the famed Magic Castle in Los Angeles saw the superstar in two.

"That really liberated Geraldine," says Flip. "She won't ever be the same again."

"It was difficult fitting her in," explains Flip, "because one of the things these 'Travel' specials do is create a one-to-one situation with the audience, where it becomes almost impossible to hide behind a character.

"I consider my audience my friend and I think people relate to me in a very personal way. I figured they could relate to Geraldine in the same way, but could we all handle it? In the first special, Geraldine sold hats at Saks Fifth Avenue in San Francisco, but the experience was a little too much for both the customers and the store. We figure we're on safer ground with Geraldine in the Magic Castle.

more...

8921 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90069 (213) 659-5501

After all, if she gets too outrageous, too out of hand, some magician can always make her disappear."

Flip is totally devoted to his characters, who he creates himself and who he writes for exclusively. "All my characters are my own creations," he explains. "I have to create myself and judge the thing as a whole.

"Who are my inspirations? Mae West was one dimension, she's immortal... and W.C. Fields was another. I think Mae West influenced Geraldine a great deal and I also evaluated Jerry Lewis to see why he was unique. I love his mobility, his clownishness. And I have a great deal of respect for Bob Hope.

"I think the thing that made these people immortal, was that in any situation they never admitted defeat. They were always in control. So in recognizing the value of each of their qualities, I decided what I could use to create my own characters and my own style."

#

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV, March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

FLIP ON COMEDY

Comedy is serious business as any humorist will admit. It requires not only great insight and compassion into human follies, but also incredible powers of observation. It also requires perfect timing and an absolute faith in what is being said.

Flip Wilson is one of a handful of comedians credited with breaking new ground in the field. A totally unique humorist, Flip was able to eliminate barriers of race, background and culture to become a comedian for all the people, not only in America but around the world. A tireless traveler, Flip has taken his friendly wit and gentle outlook to such far flung corners of the world as Thailand and the Philippines and has been greeted with the same squeals of joy that follow him at home.

Needless to say, this kind of reception has not come without extreme effort on Flip's part. A serious man, and an insightful thinker, Flip insists that humor is not just making people laugh and laugh... and laugh.

"I would never be as outright funny as I think I could be," he explains, "because I don't believe in constant hysterics. That's painful to me... someone said laughing is a strain on the heart and it's true.

"To me, great comedy is like a fine musical performance... it flows, it goes up and down, it has different moods, expresses different feelings. My goal is to hit all of those various levels during a
more...

performance, not just plain laughter.

"There's a smile, for instance, and a wink and even a subtle chuckle. I don't think they should be overlooked. And there are all kinds of laughs -- laughs from the heart and belly laughs too. Just like a fine musical performance. It's important to have all of those elements."

Like all excellent creators, Flip appreciates his peers and learns from the masters. "I've spent years studying all the funny men," Flip confesses. "I always wanted to find out what makes an individual funny... what is the one unique thing they have that no one else has. I studied those qualities.

"Mae West, for instance, she has a dimension to her humor that's totally her own. I borrowed some of it for Geraldine Jones. And I evaluated Jerry Lewis... his antics, his mobility, the facial expressions, the clownin'... that's special. And W.C. Fields. He's someone no one else has duplicated. And I have great respect for Bob Hope, I really do. Bob Hope is not a man who does physical things, but his timing is the best in the business. That's what puts him apart from others, that's what makes him unique. And the attitude of George Burns, that's his claim to immortality.

"When I set out to be a comedian, I looked at all these people and analyzes what they had... and then to make myself a funny man -- which to me was my ideal -- I set about trying to utilize all these qualities, all these different aspects of their characters to create something totally unique. I figured if they used one quality to come across, then my using two or more, should let me slide by."

#

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV, March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

SPORTS

You might not know it to look at him but there's more than a touch of "Walter Mitty" in Flip Wilson. An avid sports afficiando, Flip can rarely pass up a chance to work out with the pros. A novice golfer, Flip has already chalked by hundreds of rounds on the green and for last year's Boley, Oklahoma celebration the comedian had a go at rodeo riding. He even threw a few balls with the Atlanta Braves. Now Flip is entering into another world of sports, featuring football, horse racing, bowling, pool and even basketball. The entire proceedings will be seen on "More Travels With Flip" airing March 19, 8:30-9:30 on CBS.

"This special is letting me be whatever I want to be," says Flip by way of an explanation for all his sports oriented antics. "It's the fulfillment of every boy's dream. There I am playing with the best and learning from the best."

There can be no doubt that Flip is working out with the top pros in the various fields. For starters, Flip tries out for the San Diego Chargers, one of the highest rated football teams in the country. It's all smooth going, until he tells California's finest that he's to be their quarterback -- somehow a novice calling the plays doesn't sit right with the team.

Flip fares a little better when he takes center court with the Los Angeles Lakers. Gale Goodrich and teammates do everything possible to get Flip to basket the ball, but at just under 5'10", the chances

more...

of out shooting the 7 footer's is not very likely.

From the heights of basketball to the five foot one inch dynamo named Willie Shoemakers, one of the greatest jockeys in the history of horse-racing. Flip takes a few lessons track maneuverings from the master, before taking out on his own. Fans at Santa Anita say the turf will never be the same.

Flip is on more familiar ground when he visits Apple Valley and Roy Rogers. The comedian and the king of the cowboys locked heads in a pool game and then take to the lanes for a few rounds at the bowling alleys -- all courtesy of Roger's private abode.

By the time Flip completed his two "Travels" specials for CBS, just about every sport in the world, from ballooning (yes, Flip is on a balloon to the Far East in this special) to surfing in Hawaii has been attempted for the cameras. Has all this sports activity changed his mind about devoting himself solely to golf?

"Absolutely not," says Flip, adamantly, "golf is my game."

#

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV. March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

A LIBERATED GERALDINE

It's even money in some circles if the world is ready for one Geraldine Jones, that most outrageous female, let alone two. But that very test will come about on March 19, 8:30-9:30 on CBS, when Flip Wilson and company present "More Travels With Flip." At that time, Geraldine Jones will put herself in the hands of the world's most accomplished magicians at Hollywood's famed Magic Castle and will -- believe it or not -- be sawed in half.

"That really liberates her," says Flip Wilson who adds, "we couldn't do the special without her. In our first 'Travels' program she was a salesgirl at Saks Fifth Avenue in San Francisco, I can tell you that store will never be the same. We concentrated very long on finding just the right vehicle for Geraldine with this second special and the magic show seemed perfect."

Flip created Geraldine more than six years as one of the original characters in his repertoire that also included Reverend LeRoy. "Part of the inspiration for Geraldine comes from Mae West," explains Flip. "I studied her uniqueness, the dimension she brings to comedy and was I able to use a lot of that for Geraldine."

With her off-beat and more than slightly earthy sense of humor, Geraldine becomes the perfect foil for even the most serious situations. The symbol of womanhood has showed up on a Navy ship and even at the White House. "Not exactly the White House, honey," Geraldine allows,

more...

"but a hospital where the President and Mrs. Ford were present. You should have seen the uniform they gave me to wear."

At the Magic Castle, only one thing is certain: if Geraldine gets too out of hand, there will be plenty of people around with the wherewithall to make her disappear.

#

CONTACT: PAUL COOPER
(213) 659-3870

CREDITS

"More Travels With Flip"
CBS-TV, March 19, 8:30-9:30 P.M.

OPENING TITLES

More
TRAVELS WITH FLIP

STARRING FLIP WILSON

with special guest stars

Roy Rogers

Willie Shoemaker

The Los Angeles Lakers

The San Diego Chargers

Illusionist, Mark Wilson

The Thailand Ensemble

and the
People of America

CLOSING CREDITS

Executive Producer
Monte Kay

Produced and Directed by
Lee Mendelson
Chuck Barbee

Written by
Flip Wilson
Lee Mendelson
Herbert Baker

Photographed by
Chuck Barbee
Terry Morrison
Sheldon Fay, Jr.
Bryan Anderson
Mark Allan
Jan d'Alquen

more...

Editors
Paul Preuss
Frank Cervarich, Jr.

Assistant Director
Production Manager
Luigi Alfana

Musical Director
Ken Lauber

Sound Recordists
John Barbee
Jim Mansen
David Macmillan
Richard Birnbaum

Camera Assistants
Stewart Barbee
Elizabeth King
Donna Morrison
Steve Pinsky
Tomiko Russell

Production Staff
Martha Grace
Pat LaFortune

Sound Re-recordist
Andy Wiskes

Gaffers
Richard Cronn
Bill Maley

Airplane Pilot
Martin Litton

Balloon Pilot
Ray Gallagher

A LEE MENDELSON
FILM PRODUCTION

In association with
CLEROW PRODUCTIONS

(c) 1976 Clerow Productions, Inc.

GERALD R. FORD LIBRARY

The item described below has been transferred from this file to:

- Audiovisual Unit
 Book Collection
 Ford Museum in Grand Rapids

Item: 5 8" x 10" BW photos of Flip Wilson.
Promotional photos for the TV show "More Travels with Flip"

The item was transferred from: Weidenfeld; Box 45; Friends-
Wilson, Flip

Initials/Date Let 6/86