

Jules Power, a Producer of 'Mr. Wizard' & 'Over Easy' Dies at 87

By Dennis Hevesi, *The New York Times*

Jules Power (*Silver Circle Class of 1990*), who helped break the mold of cartoonish children's shows in the early days of television by producing programs that entranced youngsters with basic science and allowed them to roam the world from their living rooms, died on October 10 in Baltimore. He was 87.

The cause was complications of Alzheimer's disease, his son, Bob, said.

Mr. Power was a co-producer of the long-running *Mr. Wizard* on NBC, and then executive producer of *Discovery* on ABC.

His mission was "to expand young minds and fill a void in afternoon children's programming," **George W. Woolery** wrote in his 1983 book, *Children's Television: The First 35 Years, 1946-1981*. Children's shows had been dismissed as little more than "time wasters" in 1961 by **Newton N. Minow**, then chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, the book noted.

No time was wasted during the Saturday-morning broadcasts of *Mr. Wizard* (first broadcast as *Watch Mr. Wizard* in 1951), with **Don Herbert**, Mr. Power's co-producer, in the title role. Mr. Wizard would already be setting up some experiment in his home when a child from the neighborhood would stop by to join the fun.

The experiments were usually simple enough to be recreated by viewers, and by 1954 there were hundreds of Mr. Wizard Science Clubs around North America. The program, which ran through 1965, was cited by the National Science Foundation and earned a Peabody Award.

Mr. Power left *Mr. Wizard* in 1961 to become director of children's programming for ABC. There he created *Discovery*, a children's show that examined science, history, art, music, current events, travel and hobbies. In 1963 the show explained the birth process to children — a breakthrough in sex education.



In its nine-year run, mostly on Sunday mornings, *Discovery* visited more than a dozen countries, including the Soviet Union, Kenya, Israel, Japan, Germany and Australia. American viewers were exposed to historic sites, chess clubs and an elementary school in Moscow, where their counterparts were learning English.

Youngsters, Mr. Power told *The New York Times* in 1965, are unfamiliar with the world. "They know that the world today is small," he said, "but they also feel that it's strictly for adults. This is something we'd like to change." The show won an Emmy®

award for children's programming and three Thomas Alva Edison Awards.

Born Jules Pewowar in Chicago on Oct. 19, 1921, Mr. Power was one of three children of **Paul** and **Mary Pewowar**. He graduated from Northwestern University in 1944. Three years later he and several friends started an FM radio station in Chicago. By 1951 he was working for a television production company and co-producing *Watch Mr. Wizard*. Besides his son, **Bob**, of **Manhattan**, Mr. Power is survived by his wife of 63 years, the former **Dorothy Kutchinsky**; and a daughter, **Robin Power** of Baltimore.

Later in his career Mr. Power turned his attention to a more mature audience as a co-producer — with **Hugh Downs** and **Richard Rector** (*Silver Circle Class of 1986*)— of *Over Easy*, a daily, half-hour program on PBS for people 55 and older. The program, which ran from 1977 to 1983, mixed profiles of people savoring their later years with advice from experts on medicine, psychology, nutrition, finance and law.

"What we're talking about is getting older, not getting old; so we'll do a lot of intergenerational stories and cover younger older persons," Mr. Power said before the first broadcast. *Over Easy* won a Peabody and two Emmy® awards, one for direction and one for its host, Mr. Downs.

39th Northern California Area
Emmy® Awards
CALL FOR ENTRIES
Entry Deadline January 15, 2010
For distribution during 2009
www.emmysf.tv



Television Industry Data Base



JOB BANK www.emmysf.tv