

THIS MONTH IN THE HISTORY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN PBS - JANUARY

Researched & presented by Laura Sampson, Founder of Station's Archived Memories (SAM)



HAPPY NEW YEAR

This Month In The History of Rocky Mountain PBS is a reminder that January will forever be a month of celebration for RMPBS because it was the month when Denver's educational television station was born. Yes, KRMA-TV, Channel 6, was Denver's first and only "Educational Television Station" that began broadcasting on Monday, January 30, 1956.

Fun facts about KRMA's inaugural telecast:

- KRMA's inaugural telecast of January 30, 1956, was 2 hours in length, 6:45 pm-8:45 pm.
- In 1956, KRMA was licensed to Denver Public Schools.
- Channel 6 had only ten fulltime employees.
- KRMA's first station manager was Mr. Henry Mamet.
- The first telecast included SIX programs: 4 live, 1 film and 1 kinescope
 1. 6:45 pm *Thimble Theatre* hosted by Dr. Earl Reum (a Denver school principal) with his puppet burro (Columbine) and an Indian boy named Watahea. The 15-minute program included magic tricks and story telling.
 2. 7:00 pm *Magic of the Atom* – a discussion of peaceful uses of atomic energy.
 3. 7:15 pm *Colorado Panorama* - by Colorado A & M College, the program was a 15-minute program on dog training
 4. 7:30 *Religions of Man* – featuring Dr. Huston Smith, associate professor of Philosophy at Washington University in St. Louis. It was a kinescope program.
 5. 8:00 pm *Denver Yesterdays* hosted by Mrs. Louisa Ward Arps, talked about Cheesman Park and its progress from cemetery to park.
 6. 8:15 pm *Redman's America* hosted by Dr. Ruth Underhill, University of Denver, was the "cream of the evening". The Rocky Mountain News said, "The famed anthropologist gave a half-hour example of what educational television should be."
- KRMA telecasting was done from the Emily Griffith Opportunity School on Glenarm. Actually, it was broadcast from the small automobile repair shop because it had the brightest lights! When recalling the early days of live KRMA-TV television, Jim Case, program director, said, "To say we were cramped is a major understatement!"



Dr. Earl Reum, 1956



Dr. Ruth Underhill on the set of *Redman's America*

- That first telecast had a few notable wobbles
 - Someone forgot to turn on the sound on the first kinescope program.
 - Some viewers complained that the camera focused unwaveringly on the one person onstage, finding mild relief with only an occasional shot to a map or book or object d'art.
 - After the first broadcast, some viewers complained that the word “temperament” had been misspelled on a chart, that the word “indigene” was mispronounced and that a villain was “hung to a cottonwood tree.”
 - The February 2, 1956, a Rocky Mountain News article said “Channel 6 made a satisfactory start, not a polished, stirring inaugural, but one with its own bounds of attainment.” Further comments said, “Channel 6 competes with other channels and shows in the sense that if you're tired of Milton Berle or Climax, you might dial to an informative topic such as Harrison Salisbury's view on Russia.” The article's author notes, “This is not a schoolroom audience at Emily Griffith Opportunity School. The performers should see themselves in a mirror often – if they haven't – before facing the challenge of an unseen critical audience.”
- The proposed operating budget for KRMA for its first year was \$125,000.
- The KRMA-TV Program Policy proposed by the Council For Educational Television, Channel 6, Inc. in January 1956:

“We believe that KRMA-TV should be used to serve the educational and cultural needs of the community. It should be an important adjunct to existing educational and cultural agencies and supplement the contributions of commercial broadcasting. We should attempt to stimulate in the viewer increased knowledge, better understanding, improved attitudes, better skills, greater interests, and an appreciation of sensitivities and values. Material to be presented should be educationally sound and should not reflect improper bias or the exclusive interest of any one group or individual. It should achieve interest and a quality of entertainment through skillful presentation.”

To research or learn more about the RMPBS archives, please contact Station's Archived Memories of Rocky Mountain PBS: 303-620-5734 or SAM@rmpbs.org.