

TV SERVICEMAN



GEORGE DUNN

Q: When were you born?
G: September 22, 1929.
Q: What is your occupation?
G: TV Service.
Q: What does TV Service mean?
G: It entails the service of TVs, adjustments and doing all it takes to keep a TV set going—installations, hook-up, whatever.
Q: Do you have a shop?
G: Yes I do. I am self-employed.
Q: When did you decide to become a TV man?
G: Oh, about 1946, the first day TV started. I was interested in radio before television. Then when TV came out I stepped in. I knew it was going to be a great business.
Q: It has been stated that people spend between \$50 and \$150 a year to have their sets fixed.
G: I would say that is right.
Q: And that between 1946 and 1969 three billion dollars was spent on maintenance of sets. What is the most common problem with TV sets?
G: It seems that most people do not know how to adjust the set. Normally people will not maintain a set as they would, for instance, a car. If it fails they

have it serviced. Generally you will find the set in poor operating condition even after you have fixed a failure. If there are kids in the house the life expectancy is much less than it would be if there were just adults.

Q: What kind of hours do you work?
G: Of course, working for myself, I don't start at any particular hour or end at any.
Q: Do you take calls?
G: Yes.
Q: Are there more calls at night?
G: I don't work at night. There was a period when I did work at night. But I felt that if customers insisted on having sets repaired at night they were not the type of customers I wanted. If they couldn't wait until the next day, they weren't going to give you anything but trouble.
Q: It is like being a doctor.
G: Yes.
Q: Do you get any kind of pressures from people about their sets?
G: Yes. Sometimes they are more concerned about their televisions than they are about their relatives. Especially for older people, it is a lifeline for them, their window on the world so to speak. They are lost without it.
Q: Have you had any really crazy experiences with people?
G: Yes. I have known of cases where servicemen had guns drawn on them. I've never had that happen, but pretty close.
Q: When did you see your first TV?
G: It was in 1946.
Q: Do you watch TV a lot?
G: No.
Q: You don't like to watch television?
G: I'm interested in watching specific programs—documentaries and such. I find situation comedies very boring.
Q: So when you are fixing sets you don't think of it as a bit of entertainment?
G: No. I do watch quiz shows in the afternoon though. I love quiz programs.
Q: Do you have a favorite?
G: *Jeopardy* is my favorite.
Q: There were a number of myths I learned about TV when I was a kid. You should not watch TV with all of the lights out. You should not sit too close because of radiation. Are these true? Do you know any more?

G: As far as watching with the lights out, I really tried to find out if it is really bad for you. It is easier to watch with the lights on because it is too bright otherwise. Sitting too close in fear that you would pick up radiation, well, ah. I have been hanging around TV more than most people. I have worked on high-energy type TVs and projection screens when they first came out, and they were not shielded as they are now. They were running around 30,000 volts. I know they say that the areas pertaining to the ability to have children are affected by radiation. My wife had a child when I was 37, so I feel it did not affect me.

Q: Do you know any other myths?

G: There was a myth about people who used to unplug their sets. Their TV's seemed to start burning when on. It was built with a feature in which the sets burned on a lower level allowing it to come on very quickly. It was not exactly a myth.

Q: Do you know very many people who are really TV addicts?

G: Yes. Most older people. I have quite a few senior citizens who are really fanatics.

Q: Do you find that in most homes there is more than one TV?

G: Yes, most homes do have more than one TV. I have found that the importance of TV is not as great as it used to be. I think that the orientation has gotten away from being a spectator in the world to doing more things. All things are based on cycles, and the cycle of TV is not at the most popular point that it has been.

Q: Also, don't you think it is because of the content?

G: Yes, and the attention span, and people just get bored with it. It is not new anymore. From my observations, I think that with the advent of cable television, with the choice of information, people will develop new special interests apart from the limited spectrum of commercial television.

Q: Do you participate in the new TV services this development dictates?

G: Yes. I felt that with the handwriting on the wall, service is not going to be as lucrative as it used to be. What I have tried to do is go into cable type of work in systems and apartment houses. The service is also changing because of the advent of solid state TV, and the diversity of brands of sets which one man could not possibly service.

Q: Did you go to school?

G: I served an apprenticeship in radio before I went into my own business. I did not go to a formal TV school.

Q: What are most servicemen doing?

G: They are going into big corporations.

Q: What do you think about that?

G: It has to be. The cost of overhead is so tremendous it does not pay for a small man to be in business. It is almost impossible to start up a business now.

Q: It must be great going into so many people's

homes. Did you ever service a TV set someone kicked in?

G: Oh yes. With a baseball bat and broke the screen. They got mad at it. From my experience, in the past people would turn on the TV when they got up and turn it off when they went to bed. Now people are more selective in their programming. They do not watch TV just to watch TV. They watch certain shows that interest them.

Q: Do you like *All in the Family*?

G: I don't particularly care for it. It is overdrawn. I am not saying that families could not be involved in that type of setting. It is just exaggerated.

Q: Do you know people who take incredible care of their sets?

G: Well it used to be that people had giant consoles. Big pieces of furniture and the TV was a piece of furniture. You don't have that impact now. You have portable sets..

Q: Did you have a TV set right away?

G: Yes. As soon as I could. I used to watch it all the time. I would come home and watch it. But again, I got bored with it.

Q: Do you enjoy this business?

G: Yes. Over and above fixing the set, I love getting out and meeting the people. It sure is better than hanging around the office all day.

Q: So if you had to do it again?

G: I would. I have had a lot of fun with it. I think that I was instrumental in making people happy.

Q: You fixed their sets.

G: Yes. It was a great charge fixing someone's set and bringing it back to them.

Q: Do people ever call you and thank you.

G: Oh yeah, and they send cards. I have made many friends.

Q: Do you have any last words to say about how people treat their sets?

G: They are going to do exactly what they are going to do. They treat their cars much better. They take them in for lubrication. Televisions require periodic tuning up, especially readjustments for color sets. Sets should be maintained on a regular basis like a medical check-up. The trouble is that the quality degrades so slowly that most people do not realize that the picture is going bad.

Q: What are the most common sets?

G: RCA and Zenith. Magnavox has gone down the tubes. Sony is a fine TV.

Q: Have you always worked in Los Angeles?

G: Yes. Eventually I want to go into cable. I want to go out into the smaller communities into the mountains where the bigger companies don't want to bother to go.

Q: I wonder how many TVs you have serviced?

G: Thousands and thousands, all over the place.