

Q: What did you think of the Democratic National Telethon?

D: I will be very honest with you. I can't stand watching a telethon more than 10 minutes. I don't mean to cut them down by saying that. If you do a telethon for 20 years, you get sick and tired of hearing yourself anyhow. Now if I watch somebody else do a telethon, I say to myself, do I sound like that? Is my appeal anything like that? Then I lose something in my appeal. Because I think it has to be a genuine, sincere feeling every time you say something, and a lot of people I hear on there are not very genuine and sincere.

Q: You did the first commercial for Wedgewood. What other companies have you been a spokesman for?

D: Well, that is another interesting thing. People always like to think of me in terms of being a commercial announcer, but I never really was a commercial announcer. I was a commercial spokesman for Lorillard-Old Gold cigarettes and Kelloggs. You will never see me in a film commercial on the air. I never made commercials for anybody else. I starred in a show like *Chance of a Lifetime* and I did the commercials live for Bromo Seltzer as the star but never as an announcer.

Q: What was the most money you made in a year?

D: About \$850,000. I worked for P. Lorillard for a tremendous amount of money—\$350,000. With Kelloggs it was \$250,000 a year.

Q: How many game shows have you done?

D: About 55 or 51. I don't know. I am not very good at statistics.

Q: Which game show do you feel best about?

D: Well, there are a couple of shows I really enjoyed doing. I don't know whether you would call it a game show, but we did a show called *First Impressions*, and I wasn't the MC—I was a panelist. I enjoyed doing that show because I am a frustrated psychologist anyhow, and this involved three panelists trying to guess who the guest star was in a sound proof booth behind us, and I got a kick out of that. I guess my record was pretty high. Another show I enjoyed was called *Club 60* from Chicago. It wasn't a game show. It was in color everyday with a three-piece orchestra on NBC at 1 p.m. I loved it.

Q: How did you start giving away your tie on *Okay Mother*?

D: Someone said, gee I love that tie, and I said, look, if you love it, you can have it. Then I gave it to her. So a little secretary devised a bow tie that said "Okay Mother" on it and I used to keep an extra in my pocket. The first one who thought to ask me for a tie, I gave it to her. I guess I gave away 15,000 ties, which was expensive—especially in the beginning. But then a tie manufacturer came along and said we can make these ties for you, special for Dennis James. I did that for seven years.

Q: How did you come to California?

D: Monty Hall asked me to come out here to do

First Impressions in 1961, and I said okay for 13 weeks. So we came out here and I fell in love with it. I had never been to California before and being a golf nut, this was for me.

Q: You have been a target for television critics because you have been tied up in many areas that those people think are not important. What is your reaction to this?

D: My answer to whether they are important is look at the resurgence of game shows right now. And CBS who never wanted game shows just put three game shows on the air. So they know they had better join the fight or lose out. Because game shows have a tremendous appeal. The critics will always look down their noses, but you can't have the *Bell Telephone Hour* on and still stay in competition. That is going to have to be left to educational TV. That is the answer for the critics. They can sit around and talk about the great wasteland and everything else. If you want to read books, read books. My own housekeeper does not watch *The New Price Is Right*. She is in a meditation class on Monday night.

Q: Do you watch TV?

D: I am a TV nut. I have three sets upstairs that I watch at the same time.

Q: What is your favorite program?

D: I like action stuff.

Q: Are all of your sets color?

D: No, one is a little black and white by the bed.

Q: What time do you watch TV? Do you watch during the day?

D: Very rarely. My parents are nuts for game shows. They will watch all day long.

Q: Does your mother think you are the greatest?

D: I think she thinks Monty Hall is the greatest, and Monty's mother thinks I am the greatest.

Q: How much recognition do you get in public?

D: Years ago I was in 13 shows a week. I guess I was the most recognizable guy in the business because I did not just do a show on Tuesday night. I did a show every day and night.

Q: When were you doing that?

D: In the early Fifties. I was doing five *Okay Mothers* a week. I was doing *Chance of a Lifetime* at night and I was doing *Two for the Money* with Herb Shriner. I was doing three sports events at night—wrestling and two boxing. And I was doing the *Amateur Hour* with Ted Mack. In those days there was no way they could miss me.

Q: Do you get much fan mail these days?

D: No, it will start now. It started already with *The New Price Is Right*. But you have got to be actively on the scene. When you are out of TV for two years, popularity drops completely.

Q: You did *Chance of a Lifetime*, *Amateur Hour*, and *All-American College Show*. What stars did you introduce for the first time?

D: There were a lot of those, like Jonathan Winters, Dianne Carroll, Roger Williams, Dick Van Dyke, Barbara McNair and The Carpenters.