

# On 'The Bob Newhart Show' the normals are loony too

By Pete Mason  
Entertainment Editor

Well, another first-rate comedy show has bitten the dust. This one, however, is not a victim of poor ratings or a callous network vice president.

## television review

Bob Newhart simply got tired. He had tried to quit last year but the producers convinced him to do another season, evidently by offering him big bucks. He stuck around, but reportedly his heart just wasn't in it and last week the last first-run *Bob Newhart Show* bid a fond farewell.

The *Bob Newhart Show* was not just another situation comedy, it was an exercise in controlled insanity. Bob Hartley, a psychologist, played the role of father confessor, guidance counselor and babysitter to some of the most neurotic characters ever assembled on one set. A neat trick

considering that Hartley was as neurotic as the rest of them. It was often a case of the blind leading the blind.

All of the fruitcakes weren't Dr. Hartley's patients. Consider if you will, Howard Borden, one of the most bizarre characters ever written into a script.

If the world of Bob Hartley and his motley crew was the real world, Howard Borden would be a frighteningly dangerous person. Fortunately for anyone who ever flew the friendly skies, Hartley's world was a sort of Never-Never Land and Howard Borden was only one of its elves.

Borden was an airline navigator. Navigators have the responsibility for guiding their craft and its 200 or so passengers through the darkness to a safe landing. Howard Borden couldn't navigate his body to the bathroom. How in the name of all things holy could he navigate an airplane?

In the five years the show was on, that question was only asked once — on the final show. Jerry, Bob's dentist pal (played superbly by Peter Bonerz) asked the question after a particularly stupid statement by Howard.

"Howard, how do you manage to navigate an airplane?"

"Oh no, you got to go to school and learn, just like I did."

Howard Borden was a babe in the woods, a naive innocent somehow managing to survive in a worldly, cynical environment. God watches over drunks, little children — and Howard Borden.

If there was a point or theme to the *Newhart Show* it was that we're all crazy. The only difference between one nut and another is that one goes to a shrink and knows he's out of his gourd and the other thinks he's normal. On the *Bob Newhart Show* the normals were loonier than the crazies. And the only person who knew the distinction was Hartley himself.

Hartley wasn't a great psychologist in the traditional sense. He never cured anyone of their neuroses and psychoses. His words of wisdom were limited to cliches like "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." His patients were quick to point out that kind of advice didn't help. But Hartley knew that. He was just going through the motions.

Hartley knew that his presence, his availability to his patients, was the only way to help them cope. He had no means of delivering them from their suffering. His job was that of punching bag for his patients. They took their frustrations out on him, thus enabling them to survive one more day.

Hartley, who had as many frustrations as his patients, had no punching bag but managed to cope anyway. He was a heroic character, one of the thousands of unknown heroes who get no recognition, no medals of honor, no purple hearts.

It was a rather sad final show. In his final session with his patients, Hartley introduced another psychologist, who, in the course of a quick few moments, managed to take over, proving Hartley's expendability. Hartley took one last look at the people with whom he had shared a love-hate relationship for years and left forever.

So, after the reruns are over, there'll be no more *Bob Newhart Show*. I'm sure I can cope. Well, at least I think I can. As Bob Hartley would say, "Good, now would you like to go with that?"

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**NEBRASKA UNION BOARD Proposed Bylaw Change**  
Union Board proposes the following two bylaw changes to allow the Union Program Councils compliance with the Regents' February 18th decision on Student Fee funding.  
Section 11(B)(2) of the bylaws of the Nebraska Union Board be amended to read:  
The Program Councils shall act as the executive bodies responsible for both the implementation or program activities and the allocation to qualifying student organizations of seed money for qualifying programs and activities.  
and Section 11(B)(8) be added and read:  
The Program Councils, by inclusion in their bylaws, shall adopt a set of procedures and criteria for allocation of seed money pursuant to Section 11(B)(2) of these bylaws. In the case that the Associated Students of the University of Nebraska choose to define qualifying programs and activities or organizations, such definitions shall be adopted by the Program Councils as their own.  
Any comments on the above bylaw changes can be directed to the Nebraska Union Board, Suite 220 Nebraska Union in care of John Kreuzer. The proposed changes will be formally voted on by Union Board at the April 26 meeting.