

Ken still No. 1 in Barbie's plastic heart

The scene: Barbie's opulent 25-room vinyl-coated cardboard mansion.

It is a big day in the life of America's favorite doll; she is 25 years old today. The whole entourage of Barbie's pals is there, hangin' out and smiling those big, empty smiles: Ken, former beach hunk turned househusband, stands in the kitchen in his "My wife is a doll" apron putting the last few candles on the birthday cake; P.J. sits in the living room making



Pat Clark

chatty giggles with the ubiquitous Skipper. P.J. is wearing clothes she has borrowed from Barbie for this August occasion; it gives P.J. no small degree of pleasure to discover that she still has the same figure as the nationally beloved Barbie.

Skipper, for her part, is at the party under minor but nevertheless heartfelt protest. "I really should be at basketball practice," Skipper says quietly to P.J., not so much because she really wants or even needs to be at basketball practice, but to inform P.J. that, unlike the rest of the Barbie entourage, she, Skipper, has done more with her life than bask in the reflected glory of Barbie's 25 years as America's sweetheart.

The crew is assembled, but where is Barbie? Ken, finally lighting that always-tricky last candle on the cake, mulled the possibilities over in his mind.

She's been acting a little tense lately, he thought. Not like that Malibu Barbie he took to the senior prom those — was it 10? 15? — years ago. Maybe she was taking a relaxing drive in their big orange plastic dune buggy. He raced to the kitchen window and looked out, only to see the dune buggy safe and unattended.

Outer space Barbie is right out of the question, Ken reasons. She hasn't been able to even look at her NASA gear ever since Sally Ride got on the cover of *Newsweek*. Nevertheless, he thought he could almost see her up there; not up in outer space, of course, but up there standing on the edge of the balcony as though she intended to throw herself off...

As though he were carried there instantaneously by the hand of an omniscient spectator, Ken appeared in the upstairs bedroom through which he could see Barbie standing on the edge of the balcony.

"Don't try to stop me!" she wailed, the painted smile still on her face.

"Don't be a fool!" Ken screamed. "You have everything to live for."

"Yes, I do have everything," Barbie said, turning to face Ken. "I am famous, I have a black vinyl house with big iron snaps instead of a door, I have all the possessions I could want, and more every year that I don't even ask for, I have eternal youth — I don't

mean aging gracefully, I mean eternal youth. Look at us? Doesn't it seem odd to you that you have been 20 years old for 20 years?"

"Millions of people would die to take your place," Ken said.

"And I would die to take theirs," Barbie said, turning to jump.

"It won't work!" Ken shouted in desperation. The shout halted Barbie. "If you jump off, you know as well as I do the worst that will happen is your legs will twist, Nurse Barbie will tend to you, P.J. and Skipper will come visit you while you recover, and you'll be right as reign soon enough. You can't kill yourself, Barbie. America can kill you, but it won't, because you represent everything Americans have ever strived for, everything they want and know they cannot possibly have."

Ken could see Barbie's resolve weakening. "It's a horrible fate, but it's our fate. Now come back downstairs for the party. After all, P.J. and Skipper and I are the only people who can really sympathize with you."

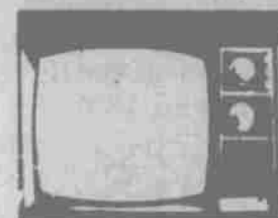
Barbie stepped slowly from the balcony and into Ken's arms. "You sensitive hunk of molded plastic," she murmured, "I'm so glad I have you. Do you think maybe next year, instead of new clothes, we could get... a last name?"

'Night Court' refreshing fare

By Janet Stefanski

The new television series, *Night Court*, focuses on important issues (without being obvious), and blends humor in tactfully.

A typical Wednesday night offering, to cite one example, centered around people's physical "deficiencies." This particular episode attempted to



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make its audience aware of the handicapped person's view. It tried to show that too many times we concentrate on what handicapped people cannot do rather than of what they are capable.

"I used to help people, but they don't ask me too much anymore," said a blind convict.

This episode also tried to make viewers aware that no one is perfect — either we are too tall, too short, overweight or have some type of fault. But after all, who is to say what is perfect? This is what the writers ask, but do not preach.

The main character, Judge Harold (Harry) T. Stone, is not the stereotyped stuffy man of the court. This guy is a joker, plain and simple. He makes fun of everything and everybody, but not in

a cruel way.

Harry does have a goal: to settle cases fairly with the least possible amount of red tape. He brings people together whether they are a fighting married couple or the court guard, Bill, and the blind convict who was released under "too tall" Bull's care. Harry (not usually referred to as Judge Stone) uses his own methods — sending opposing sides out for a cup of coffee to talk over things.

Harry's ways can be unrealistic, but this is not a bad fantasy for a bureaucratic society. However the character of the judge tends to wear an imaginary halo which can be a bit too much.

This comedy utilizes one liners more effectively than those "here today, gone tomorrow" pilots. The endings lean towards being corny, but nice endings are not all bad.

Viewers can enjoy the stabs taken at cutesy sayings which pop up daily in our society:

"If you smile at someone, they're apt to smile right back at you," Harry says.

"Sounds... stupid," replies Bull.

Night Court too often has unrealistic subplots: No court of law would take the time of day to discuss the court guard's personal problems in the middle of hearing a case.

Not every episode is outstanding, but *Night Court* is a refreshing break from typical network fare. It can be seen Wednesdays at 8:30 p.m. on NBC affiliate Channel 3.

Mystery film...

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And now for the inevitable and necessary synopsis: Mr. Herbert, who prizes his house, garden, horse and wife in that order, leaves on a business trip; his wife hires a draughtsman to make 12 drawings of his house and gardens during his absence — ostensibly to recapture his affections through pleasing him, but more likely to obtain the young man's body along with his services. The contract, which includes eight pounds for each drawing, room and board, and Mrs. Herbert's person, is soon supplemented with another which requires the draughtsman, Mr. Neville, to have sex with her daughter.

Mr. Talmann, the son-in-law, who wears a cuckold's horns in his wig, resents the intrusion and points to physical evidence of infidelity in the finished drawings — a ladder left under her window, his wife's dog at the closed door of a trysting place. The drawings are soon analyzed for other evidence as well; for the body of Mr. Herbert has been fished from the moat surrounding his house, and there are plenty of suspects for the murder.

The progress of Mr. Neville's art is extremely interesting. He seeks to capture the purely static quality of things — "his attitude to nature is strictly material," the daughter observes. The conditions under which Mr. Neville works are quite rigid; the family and the staff must follow his rules exactly. "Such animals as are grazing in the fields may continue to do so," he gen-

erously amends one of his edicts.

Inevitably, life intrudes into his grid — and viewers may share his irritation when a servant or the obnoxious Mr. Talmann steps in front of his ebony frame with its taut threads. In response, Mr. Neville simply draws them in, Talmann's profile piggishly dominating the foreground of a vista with the house in the distance.

What Mr. Neville sees, he draws — an unexpected things turn up. Boots, a coat, other articles materialize to give the household suspicion of the patriarch's murder — and there is a splendid scene in which Mrs. Talmann dodges in and out a topiary maze, like the woman of desire in *Last Year at Marienbad*, shedding her clothes, which Mr. Talmann dutifully draws in.

The film itself may be seen as a refutation of Mr. Neville's belief in strict representation, his hold on the solid world. The final judgment of Mr. Neville is not logical, not rational, but primitive and ritualistic. The men of the house gather in black suits and masks and white wigs, render judgment on their artistic scapegoat, put out his eyes and club him to death, the white-faced, red-lipped non-character twins adding a terrifying surrealistic quality to the scene. Then his bloodied, nearly submerged body is shown in the moat, incredible in its alabaster beauty, while his drawings burn and the place's naughty sprite eats the pineapple of hospitality laid out for the draughtsman.

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