

My father bought us a new 16-inch RCA TV in 1949. The cost was \$500, a lot of money in those days. It was the largest size screen available. TV was in its early stages. Shows ran from early morning till the end of the 11 o'clock news, and then each channel went off the year. (Those without news shows went off earlier.) After that, what you saw was either what we called snow (intermingled black and white dots along with a grating buzz) or a test pattern, together with a dull ringing sound. The remote control hadn't been invented yet, so every time we had to change the channel, we got the physical exercise of getting up from our chairs and walking to the set and turning a knob. A tube would occasionally burn out and then we would call the TV repairman to come to our homes or apartments to replace the bulb – but when the picture tube went out, which rarely happened, the set was gone. (Ours never burned out.) The TV antenna – a metallic maze of multidirectional “sticks” – was on the roof for each family' TV (if you lived in an apartment building, as I did, and when we would lose our picture, we'd have to go on the roof and “fix” the antenna.

With all of that (and more) we had a total of seven channels in New York: 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13 --- and yet we had great shows to watch and hardly ever (unlike today, with its short seasons and hundreds of channels) said that there was nothing on. Studio One, The Lone Ranger, Guiding Light, The Milton Berle Show, Your Show of Shows, The Ozzie and Harriet Show --- there were shows for everyone. Some of them can still be seen today (in reruns, obviously) on channels such as TVLand. I also had my sports: the Yankees (white pin-striped home uniforms and gray away uniforms (I never saw the gray unless I was visiting my sister in Norfolk, Virginia; they broadcast only home games); the Knicks, playing their games before the 24-second clock, 3-second violations and 3-point shots; the Rangers and even the minor league Rovers in hockey.

I miss those times, just as I miss my family members, who are no longer with me.