

## Judy Marie Price

In little more than 10 years, network executives responsible for Saturday morning programming have seen their roles change drastically. The executives, who at one time were responsible mainly for trying to identify the next big hit among young viewers, now are faced with the daunting task of navigating through waters filled with hazards from both inside and outside the industry.

As dean of network television children's programming executives, CBS's Judy Price has seen all of these changes and expects the seascape to remain rocky. Price has led the network's Saturday morning activities for more than 11 years; however, she might just as easily have ended up programming to a slightly older audience.

As a 19-year-old newlywed, Price joined KHJ(AM) Los Angeles as assistant to the music librarian. Soon after, she moved to KHJ-TV as assistant to the executive producer. After taking time off to have two children, Price began a succession of moves up the ladder that led to her being named a producer. But the climb wasn't always easy, she says.

"When I finally became a producer, it was just me. I didn't have an associate producer or really any other staff. As I would move up, the station would eliminate the position that I had moved up from. Even as a producer, I had to type my own script. Of course, the man who had the job before me didn't have to type. It was especially tough for women."

After nearly eight years in local television, Price got a taste of national exposure as a producer of *American Bandstand*. Producing on a national level and working with Dick Clark gave her a new education in the television business, she says. "Working for Dick Clark was an important part of my future experience. 'Workaholic' has a negative sound to it, but he was very driven." Clark was "an incredible role model. I was probably too wide-eyed and bushy-tailed when I came in. But he had a great grasp of prioritizing, especially about production.... He also was a real team player. When you work with him, everyone rolls up their sleeves and dives in."



After six years with *American Bandstand*, Price decided a change was needed. She accepted an offer from ABC in its children's programming department.

However, the move to the network wasn't nearly what she expected. "I was miserable there for about two years. It was a much different experience than I was used to. I had come from the production side, and this was a much smaller pond. Dick Clark was a company that was very visionary. Networks are very layered, and there is so much paperwork. It's a whole different situation operationally."

But she ended up acclimating to the job "and loving the daypart and the department. It gets into your blood."

During her six years at ABC, Price rose to the rank of vice president, children's programming, a post she held for two years. When CBS came knocking in 1983, she initially turned down the offer. "I wasn't ready to leave ABC when I was first approached," she says. She changed her mind after she began to feel like a "caretaker" at ABC. Eventually, more autonomy and the opportunity to tack-

le different subjects in children's programming influenced her to take CBS's offer.

One of the first actions she undertook at CBS was to establish the *CBS Schoolbreak Specials*. "ABC was doing a lot of the softer subjects in its *After School Specials*. I wanted to do more topical issues that face children and teens," she says.

Rather than tiptoe into those waters, Price set as the first special the true story of a convicted murderer who, days before his execution, made a videotape that attempted to persuade children away from a life of crime. The special used portions of the tape intertwined with footage shot with actors. Price's daring paid off the following year when the special, the first in a long line of award-winning *CBS Schoolbreak Specials*, won an Emmy.

In the past 10 years, perhaps the biggest challenge faced by Price and other children's programmers has come from outside the industry in the form of legislation. Since the Children's Act of

1990 was passed, "educational programming has improved dramatically," Price says. However, more regulation appears to be on the way, with some calling for stations to air an hour of educational programming a day.

In addition to the logistical and financial ramifications of such a mandate, Price says, "If the FCC passes this, commercial broadcasters will go in direct competition with public television." If stations are forced to program

an hour a day of educational programming between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m., the logical audience will be preschool children, who are more likely to be home. "Preschool programming allows greater scheduling flexibility. And public television already does a pretty good job of programming for preschoolers," Price says.

**VP, children's programs and daytime specials, CBS Entertainment, Los Angeles; b. Muncie, Ind., Nov. 27, 1943; assistant to music librarian, KHJ(AM) Los Angeles, 1962-64; KHJ-TV Los Angeles: assistant to executive producer, 1964-65; production assistant, 1966; talent coordinator, 1966-67; associate producer, 1967-68; producer, 1968-70; producer, American Bandstand, 1970-76; ABC Entertainment: West Coast manager, children's programs, 1976-79; director, children's programs and early-morning programs, West Coast, 1979-81; VP, children's programs, 1981-83; current position since 1983; children from previous marriage: Kristina, 29 and Kimberly, 28.**

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