

# 'CANCEL CULTURE' OF 1971

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

You think so-called “cancel culture” is bad now? In fact, it’s nothing new. One of the biggest examples came on March 16, 1971 — 55 years ago — when CBS announced its schedule for that fall.



In an effort to appeal to younger viewers and to seem more socially aware, the network axed shows that had been among its most popular of the 1960s but were deemed appealing to older, rural viewers — not the audience the network or its advertisers most desired.

It can be said that CBS’ motives were respectable: Its programming lacked diversity and didn’t appeal to younger viewers nearly as much as “The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour” or “Laugh-In” or even CBS’ own socially aware “All in the Family” that had debuted in January 1971 did.

In addition, the Federal Communications Commission was changing its rules: Starting in 1971, TV networks would be allowed to offer fewer hours of programming to their local affiliates. So something had to go. It would be the mostly white, rural-oriented shows — never mind how highly rated some of those had been over the years. “CBS canceled everything with a tree,” lamented “Green Acres” co-star Pat Buttram. “Including ‘Lassie.’”

To give CBS credit, its rural purge would eventually free up time slots for newer, sharp-witted urban-oriented fare such as “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” “The Bob Newhart Show,” “Maude” “Sanford and Son,” “M\*A\*S\*H” and — buckle your irony seatbelts — “The Waltons.”

## THE FIVE MOST NOTABLE VICTIMS OF THE GREAT CBS ‘RURAL PURGE’ OF 1971:

### “MAYBERRY R.F.D.”

TIME SLOT:  
**Monday  
9 p.m.**

DEBUTED:  
**Sept. 23,  
1968**



CBS TELEVISION

After Sheriff Andy Taylor gets remarried and leaves his hometown of Mayberry, N.C. for Raleigh, Aunt Bee decides to move in with another widower and son who need her help. Many of the characters from “The Andy Griffith Show” stay on for this reboot of the beloved series.

**THE STARS:**

Ken Berry as Sam Jones, Frances Bavier as Aunt Bee and Alice Ghostley as Alice Cooper.

**THE RATINGS:**

“Mayberry R.F.D.” was the No. 4-ranked show on TV its first two seasons and then No. 15 its third season.

**REPLACED BY:**

“Here’s Lucy” moved into the “Mayberry R.F.D.” time slot on Monday nights.

**POSTSCRIPT:** Berry would bounce around in guest roles on various TV shows until finally landing a six-season gig on “The Carol Burnett Show” spin-off “Mama’s Family.” George Lindsey would move his character of Goober Pyle to the variety series “Hee Haw.” The rest of the Mayberry folks would turn up in various “The Andy Griffith Show” revivals and reunions — most notably in 1986.

### “THE BEVERLY HILLBILLIES”

TIME SLOT:  
**Tuesday  
7:30 p.m.**

DEBUTED:  
**Sept. 26,  
1962**



FILMWAYS TV PRODUCTIONS

While shooting at a rabbit, a poor country man discovers oil on his property. After he’s paid millions for drilling rights, he moves his entire extended family to swanky Beverly Hills, where the Clampett/Bodine folks find — Surprise! — they don’t always fit in.

**THE STARS:**

Buddy Ebsen as Jed, Irene Ryan as Granny, Donna Douglas as Elly May and Max Baer Jr. as Jethro.

**THE RATINGS:**

“The Beverly Hillbillies” was the No. 1-ranked show its first two seasons and in the Top 10 five of its first seven seasons.

**REPLACED BY:**

“The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour” moved up an hour on the 1971-72 CBS prime-time schedule.

**POSTSCRIPT:** Following a truly disastrous “Return of the Beverly Hillbillies” 1981 TV film, a feature film reboot was made in 1993 featuring Jim Varney as Jed Clampett and Diedrich Bader as Jethro Bodine. At one point, the Clampett clan hires a private detective — Ebsen, in his post-“Hillbillies” “Barnaby Jones” role — to help find a missing Granny.

### “GREEN ACRES”

TIME SLOT:  
**Tuesday  
8 p.m.**

DEBUTED:  
**Sept. 15,  
1965**



FILMWAYS TV PRODUCTIONS

A successful Manhattan attorney chucks everything to fulfill his dream of owning a farm. His socialite Hungarian wife reluctantly follows him to a ramshackle old farmhouse near the tiny town of Hooterville, where even the locals can’t believe someone is going to try to make the place productive again.

**THE STARS:**

Eddie Albert as Oliver, Eva Gabor as Lisa, Pat Buttram as Mr. Haney and Frank Cady as Sam Drucker.

**THE RATINGS:**

The show had spent its first four seasons in the Top 20 highest-rated shows on television

**REPLACED BY:**

“The Glen Campbell Goodtime Hour” moved up an hour on the 1971-72 CBS prime-time schedule.

**POSTSCRIPT:** Albert would go on to star as a crooked prison warden in the 1974 Burt Reynolds movie “The Longest Yard.” Gabor and Buttram would voice key roles in the animated Disney movies “Aristocats,” “The Rescuers,” “The Rescuers Down Under,” “Robin Hood” and “The Fox and the Hound.” A 1990 reunion TV movie showed Oliver and Lisa’s trouble-plagued return to New York.

### “HEE HAW”

TIME SLOT:  
**Tuesday  
8:30 p.m.**

DEBUTED:  
**June 15,  
1969**



CBS TELEVISION

This was a variety series featuring country music and rural-themed comedy sketches, set in fictional “Kornfield County.” Highlights included recurring comedy bits, outtakes in which actors blew their lines, huge country music guest stars and “Hee Haw Honeys” dressed in revealing country-themed outfits.

**THE STARS:**

Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Archie Campbell, Grandpa Jones, Junior Samples, Lulu Roman and Minnie Pearl.

**THE RATINGS:**

“Hee Haw” scored Top-20 ratings in both its second and third seasons.

**REPLACED BY:**

“Hawaii Five-O” became TV’s 12th-highest rated show after moving into the vacant slot.

**POSTSCRIPT:** Producers simply shifted to the growing market for first-run syndicated programs. “Hee Haw” would flourish in local markets, often competing with “The Lawrence Welk Show” which was also canceled that year — by ABC-TV. “Hee Haw” would last another 23 seasons in syndication. Reruns can still be found on the cable network Circle.

### “LASSIE”

TIME SLOT:  
**Sunday  
7 p.m.**

DEBUTED:  
**Sept. 12,  
1954**



CBS TELEVISION

Lassie had started out as the dog of a young farm boy. The now-legendary Timmy became Lassie’s owner in 1957. In 1964, Lassie took up with a forest ranger. For Season 17, Lassie was portrayed as a stray, wandering through the countryside and lending a helping hand to humans and animals alike.

**THE STARS:**

Dozens of actors had cycled in and out of the show but when it ended, the dog was the only recurring star.

**THE RATINGS:**

“Lassie” had spent nine of its 17 seasons among the 30 top-rated shows on TV.

**REPLACED BY:**

An FCC ruling forced CBS to give its 7 p.m. Sunday time slot back to local affiliates to fill as they saw fit.

**POSTSCRIPT:** Like “Hee Haw,” “Lassie” proved too valuable to die at the hands of network executives. The show moved to first-run syndication and morphed again as Lassie took up residence on a ranch for orphaned boys. The syndicated series would end in 1973, a revival series would launch in 1989 and another would debut on Animal Planet in 1997.