

FURTHER REVIEW

SURVEYSAYS

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

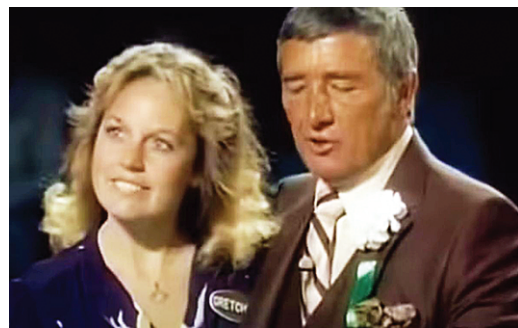
A half-century ago — July 12, 1976 — the TV game show “Family Feud” debuted on ABC.

Within six months, it had become the No. 1 rated daytime television show.

Within nine months, it had won a Daytime Emmy Award for outstanding game/audience participation show.

‘LET’S PLAY THE FEUD!’

In 1974, TV game show producer Mark Goodson pitched a new quiz show he called “Odd Ball” and then “Fast Company.” He changed the name again when he decided to have families play against each other. He originally wanted actor William Shatner to host but was also considering seasoned game show hosts Geoff Edwards and Jack Narz.



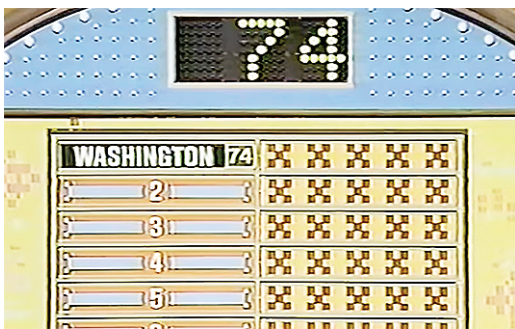
In May 1981, Dawson kissed a contestant — a member of the Johnson family named Gretchen. After the show, he asked her out. They began a romance, had a daughter in 1990 and got married in 1991. When Dawson returned to the show in 1994, he said he had promised his daughter he'd kiss no one but his wife. Dawson died in 2012 at age 79.

British comedian Richard Dawson had appeared on “Hogan’s Heroes” from 1965 to 1971 and was then a regular on the Goodson-Todman show “Match Game.” His contract specified he would be permitted to audition to be host of any new Goodson-Todman game shows. He heard about Goodson’s new concept, exercised the clause in his contract and won the hosting job.



At the close of early shows, “Family Feud” asked viewers if they’d like to fill out surveys to be used on the show. More than 30,000 viewers volunteered. Writers would then shape the surveys into usable questions. One writer who worked on the show’s early years: Markie Post, who’d later go on to star on the sitcom “Night Court.”

The show debuted on ABC eight days after the U.S. bicentennial. The first question Dawson posed to the contestants: “Name a famous George.” “Family Feud” won an Emmy Award in 1977 and then Dawson won an Emmy for hosting the next year. The show won another Emmy in 2019. Current host Steve Harvey won hosting Emmys in 2014, 2017 and 2022.



After ratings dropped, the show was canceled and then brought back four years later. In 2002, Tribune Entertainment bought the show’s syndication rights, fired host Louie Armstrong and brought in Richard Karn, who had co-starred on the sitcom “Home Improvement.” The next host, John O’Hurley, left after complaining surveys had become too racy.

Dawson spontaneously kissed all the female contestants in that first episode and then made it a tradition. After viewers protested, Dawson asked, at the end of one episode, to write with their opinion. 95.4% of those writing were in favor of kisses. A grandmother from Rhode Island, appearing on the next show, said, “Thank goodness!” Dawson kissed her 14 times.



Production of the show moved to the Atlanta area when Harvey, a comedian who also hosted an Atlanta radio show, took over as host in 2010. “Family Feud” is now filmed in Trilith studios in Fayetteville, Georgia. Since Harvey became host, ratings have increased, placing “Family Feud” among the top three syndicated shows in the U.S.

THE HOSTS OF ‘FAMILY FEUD’



Richard Dawson
1976-1985



Ray Combs
1988-1994



Richard Dawson
1994-1995



Louie Anderson
1999-2002



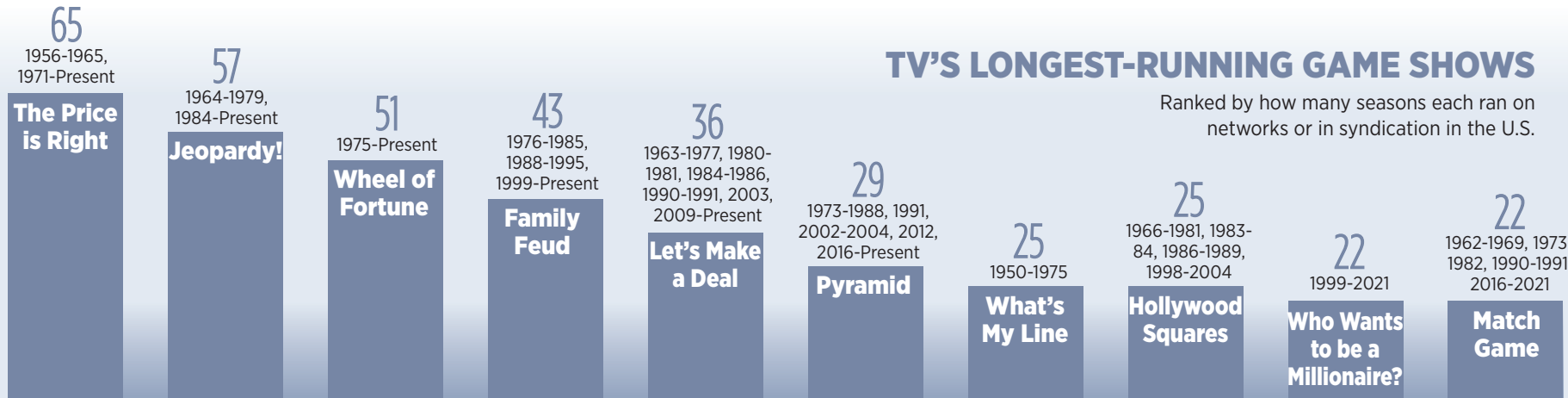
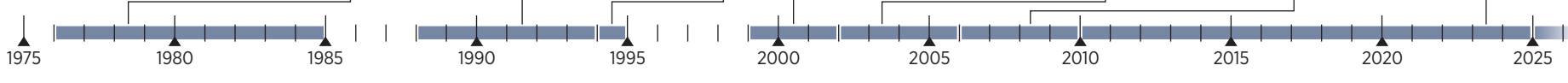
Richard Karn
2002-2006



John O’Hurley
2006-2010



Steve Harvey
2010-Present



Sources: “TV Game Shows!” by Maxene Fabe, “The Encyclopedia of TV Game Shows” by David Schwartz, Steve Ryan and Fred Wostbrock, Internet Movie Database, FamilyFeud.com, Screen Rant, How Stuff Works, Loooper.com, IGameTv.com

ALL PHOTOS FROM MARK GOODSON PRODUCTIONS, LIONSGATE TELEVISION AND FREMANTLE