



After seven years, those who loved "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" refuse to believe that Mary and her friends from the WJM newsroom are not alive and well in Minneapolis. Some of them, in fact, have had visions of what has befallen America's most popular young career woman since she stopped visiting us on Saturday nights

BY BETTE-JANE RAPHAEL

There's always been an eerie parallel between our lives, Mary's and mine. Not only in the circumstances surrounding us, but in the skins we each inhabit. I suspect that the canny producers of "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" knew that this would be the case, that a lot of us would recognize some parts of ourselves in Mary Richards. But for me it's often been pretty close to the bone. There was the outer stuff, of course—both of us being in our 30s, single, working at jobs we loved, living alone and liking it most of the time. And there was the inner stuff, the striving to make a semi-raised consciousness dovetail with a yearning to please, a reliance more on the friends we worked with than the men we loved, a coupling and a seesawing of courage and timidity, assurance and perplexity. Of course she was thinner than I was, but I consoled myself with the thought that I was a bit younger.

So when Mary's work world fell apart—when she and most of her beloved cronies were summarily fired—I should have seen the handwriting on the wall. And, sure enough, only weeks later my own secure, well-loved job was snatched from me, by circumstances beyond my control. Listen, I'm well into my 30s, with a hungry cat to support, a governor who threatens to decontrol my rent, and a body and soul that need to be nourished. I live in a tough town, the toughest, where people congratulate themselves not on a good day, but a survived one. What was I going to do?

If Mary Richards were in my situation, I thought, she would probably know what to do. Wait a minute: Mary Richards was in my situation. I suddenly wondered what and how she was doing. Had she spiraled down into a deep depression (something I had once done after the loss of a job, and a terrifying prospect to go through again)? Did she find inner strengths and resources once she was forced out of the supportive cocoon of the WJM newsroom?

It suddenly seemed very important to find out.

I realized why that was when I began to talk to some of Mary's colleagues, creators and head-over-heels fans about what they thought she was doing these days. Mary Richards, I soon came to realize, was for a lot of people not simply a comic invention, something given life only by writers, cameras and a gifted actress. She was a real person, someone who lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Minneapolis, talked on the phone to her friend in New York and bought one lamp chop in the supermarket, whether the cameras were rolling or not. And I learned something very lovely. Everybody I spoke with was rooting for Mary. She seemed to have become a sort of touchstone for their own ambitions, for the hopes and fears they harbored toward their own futures—even when their predictions for her seemed on the surface simply funny or wildly fantastic.

All of this makes Mary Richards something very special, a portrayal of what we hope is the best and brightest in each of us. Women want to be the person Mary is striving to become; men want to be the person she finally compromises (in the larger sense) herself for. She is, truly, America's sweetheart.

A few people I talked to were so affected by the loss of Mary that they couldn't bring themselves to think of her living a changed life. Writer Nora Ephron, a proven fan who has spared no encomiums when it came to "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," confessed that she "went completely blank" when she tried to picture Mary outside of the newsroom. TV Anchorman John Chancellor could go no further than to say, sadly, "I'm sorry she's gone..." And even Jeane Dixon, whose business is, after all, predicting the future, balked at the idea of predicting Mary's, feeling it was "...far better to let her and her colleagues remain as they left us.... That image of them is too precious to be altered by our own dabbling."

Others showed the kind of worry and concern about Mary's future that is usually reserved for a valued friend. "I can't picture her without the emotional support of the newsroom," said Treva Silverman, winner of an Emmy Award for her writing on the show.

"I'm afraid she's going to be very insecure. All her crises, loyalties, friendships and feelings were tied up with those people. I'm really worried about her." / turn to page 22

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I was able to allay Treva's fears somewhat with the thoughts of Dr. Helen A. De Rosis, who has done a great deal of research into the subject of women and depression and is co-author of *The Book of Hope*. "I wouldn't think there'd be much of a pathological response from Mary over the loss of her job," said a cheerful Dr. De Rosis. "She's such a responsible, resourceful, competent woman, not the sort of woman who is prone to depression. I think she would, quite naturally, have a grieving period. She had such a happy attachment to her job; anybody would go through some mourning for the end of it. But that would be an ordinary, normal, even common thing—and in Mary's case she would probably get over it in fairly short order, bounce back, and find herself something else. I wouldn't worry about Mary Richards one bit. I wish there were more people like her—and like Mary Tyler Moore."

So it looked as if Mary was going to be okay. I just wanted one more opinion to be sure, so I asked a woman whose job is very much akin to what Mary's was. Phyllis Bosworth is a documentary producer for CBS News. (Remember Mary's documentaries and news spots? The one on an embarrassingly deserted singles' bar? The one on chimps, which threatened her boss/underling relationship with Lou Grant? And the one for which she won an award, accepted after a disastrous day, with her damp hair clinging to her head, her dress misshapen, the heel of her shoe gone, so that she had to limp to the microphone to make her acceptance speech? Did we ever love her more?) Anyway, Phyllis sees her own struggle up the network ladder as having a great deal in common with Mary's and has a clear idea of what Mary did after she left the newsroom: "I would hope, of course, that she suddenly inherits lots of money from a rich aunt and doesn't have to worry for a while about what she should do next—but I doubt it. What I really think she does is—feeling somewhat panicky, but certain that she's ready to make some changes in her life—accept a job offer from the news director of a Chicago television station to become executive producer of the local news program. Soon after her arrival she meets and becomes 'close to' the political writer for a Chicago daily. He is the first man to realize, in a romantic sense, what a treasure Mary is. With his support and encouragement, she succeeds in bringing the show up to number-one rating—even though, I'm sorry to say, the news director turns out to be a terrible chauvinist."

Marcia Wallace, like Mary an MTM Productions working woman (she's Bob Newhart's unabashable receptionist), sees a more flamboyant future in store for Mary. According to Marcia, "after her rude firing, Mary takes a vacation and is catapulted to national fame when she is held hostage, along with some Moonie missionaries, at the Yemen airport and actually manages to talk her captors not only into letting her and the others go but also into giving themselves up. As the terrorists are led away, one of them is heard to say, 'What a good sport.'

From that, she is offered her own public-interest TV show."

Gloria Steinem also places Mary before the television cameras, but after a more surefooted, less meteoric rise: "Mary starts a cable TV show," says Ms. Steinem, "and does the news with such accuracy and humor that she gets national coverage and is given a major news show in Chicago, which she not only produces but appears in. She becomes so popular that the other, entrenched anchormen get concerned and try to have her fired from her job. But the Women's Liberation TV Union demonstrates against this, and she is kept on, her popularity enhanced by the episode . . ." What about her personal life, I asked Gloria. Does Mary ever cleave unto one man? "Well, one at a time, anyway," came the reply. "Actually, Mary continues to live a happy life of serial monogamy and becomes yet another item of statistical proof that single women have more satisfying sex lives than married ones."

Like Gloria Steinem, Sybil Adelman, who wrote an episode for the MTM Show, foresees an upswing in Mary's libidinous activity. I asked Sybil if she thought that, after she left the newsroom, Mary would get religion, or get a man, or what. "Maybe she'll finally get some sex," said Miss Adelman, "now that nobody's watching any more. And I hope she'll get out of Minneapolis. It would be really dumb of her to stay there. My guess is she'll go to New York and hook up with Rhoda and get a job with one of the networks. She'll do fine there, except she'll never get a seat on the subway. She'll probably pick up a lot of litter, though."

Comedy writer Dale Burg also envisions Mary coming to the Big Apple: "Mary gets on a plane to New York, and when she arrives her luggage is stolen, her pocket is picked and her hair frizzes up from the humidity, all in very short order. For the first time she finds herself knowing what it's really like to be a single girl. She's somewhere in the city now, struggling like the rest of us. I can't really predict what's going to happen to her, because I can't really predict what's going to happen to any of us, but I'm sure she'll cope beautifully and find out where to shop."

Gloria Emerson, who did a long interview with Mary Tyler Moore for *McCALL'S* and may know something we don't, disagrees that Mary will leave Minneapolis. "I think that she probably found a job on the women's page of a Minneapolis newspaper, where she's now writing those deadly little stories on how to organize your closets and arrange dried flowers. It makes me sad, but I hope she still sees Mr. Grant. No one will ever persuade me that his feelings for her weren't romantic."

A more illustrious future is pictured for Mary by editor/writer Charlotte Curtis and columnist John Leonard, both of the *New York Times*. According to Miss Curtis, "Mary actually turned down several offers while she was still with the WJM team. They just weren't

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interesting enough to tempt her to leave her friends. But after they were all canned, she found a job in New York as a television producer. She was soon snapped up by '60 Minutes,' who knew, as everyone knows, how marvelous she was from watching her on television. At the time this magazine goes to print," according to Miss Curtis, "Mary is in Moscow arranging an interview for Mike Wallace with Leonid Brezhnev. As Brezhnev explains to her that he is not a dictator, that his election as President while being Chairman of the Party is really a very democratic thing, she nods her head emphatically up and down, saying 'right, right' at more or less ten-second intervals. Nevertheless, she can see through him. She could always see through Lou Grant, couldn't she?"

John Leonard feels that Mary will end up as the Jody Powell of a very good presidential candidate, which will allow her her purity and wholesomeness and instinct for good deeds and still satisfy the requirements of her television personality, which are that she is not allowed to be a boss and that the boss is never allowed to be smarter than she is. It will also afford her the opportunity to have lots of mystically unconsummated relationships with a variety of men: newspaper columnists, presidential aids and Supreme Court Justices, all played by Ed Asner."

A more theatrical supposition about

Mary's future came from Truman Capote, who speculated that "Mary decides to try musical comedy and joins a road company of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*." Wait a minute, I asked, wasn't Mary Tyler Moore herself a disaster in the Broadway tryouts of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*? Did Mr. Capote think Mary Richards might do better? "Well," was the answer, "let's hope so."

Perhaps the most ambitious view of things to come for Mary Richards emanated from that most ambitious, funny lady who helped create Mary Hartman and who wrote one of the



episodes for "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." According to Gail Parent, Mary's future accomplishments make Superwoman look like a ball of fluff. "In total disgust at the mass firing of the newsroom staff," says Gail, "Mary takes a ship to Cherbourg. Although she means to take a train to Paris, by mistake she gets on one going to Russia, where she meets the czarina's son, and together they overthrow the government and put an end to oppression forever. On her honeymoon not only does she see to the quick deaths of several war criminals she happens to run into but she gets a great tan. As if that isn't enough, she stumbles on a place where she can buy Louis

Vuitton luggage wholesale. While there, she meets the Queen of England and persuades her to take a cut in salary. On her way back to America, despite the fact that it is a short flight, she is able not only to put an end to racism, but to sit on an armed hijacker for an hour so that nobody gets upset. Settled in Minneapolis with her husband and four children, she frequently visits the television station where she once spent the happiest years of her life. Her future plans include pulling out Anita Bryant's hair."

Probably the loftiest and loveliest thoughts for Mary came from Georgia Engel, who played Georgette, Mary's best friend during the show's last years. In her sweet, childlike voice, Georgia painted a glowing future for Mary, one I'd very much like to believe in. "After being fired," Georgia confided with delight, "Mary takes a renewed interest in her home and, without planning to, becomes drawn into the fight for consumer rights and finds herself heading a local consumer-affairs committee, in which position she challenges the young, powerful, male elite of the business community. After several impressive victories, Mary's talents are recognized by the new, attractive, single governor of Minnesota, who selects her to head the State Department of Consumer Affairs. Mary wins national attention for her superlative efforts on behalf of the consumer, and becomes the logical choice to be appointed the first Secretary of the Department for Consumer Affairs. Although unhappy about leaving Minne-

sota and the Governor, Mary accepts the challenge and leaves for Washington. That summer the Governor himself earns nationwide attention when, as the dark-horse candidate, he wins his party's nomination for President. Spending much of his time in Washington before the campaign, he sees Mary quite frequently. He proposes, Mary accepts, and the wedding takes place on the first day of the campaign. Working together as one, they rejoice when the Governor is elected by a slim margin and the once first lady of the WJM newsroom becomes the First Lady of the Land. Mary is able to invite Lou, who always put down her parties, to the biggest and best party he has ever attended—the Inaugural Ball!"

All the evidence was in. Healthy, tempered, unencumbered, Mary seemed to have endless possibilities (like me, I began to suspect). It was time to confront my own hopes for her.

Well, I believe that she sits down and writes a novel about a silly, loving, courageous woman in her mid-30's. All of her awkwardnesses fade in front of the typewriter, where she finally feels—she can hardly believe it—relaxed, comfortable and confident. And when the novel appears, it is hailed by critics as "funny, moving and brilliant." For the first time in her life Mary begins to really respect and like herself—which, being The One True Secret, makes her a very happy woman.

Yes, that's what I want—for Mary, of course. ■