

member of M.E.N.Z.A. and Joseph Bonaduce went on to become a successful writer in Hollywood and his son became famous as well - he was Danny Partridge on the 60's TV show, The Partridge Family.

Besides being a technical wizard and soundman, Jack Sky wrote and recorded the theme song for the show. Jack explained how this came about. "It came to the point where the first three (episodes) were going to be shown to the 'powers that be' who had the syndication for this. And it's Monday or Tuesday and Lou says, 'Is this thing going to be ready for Friday? We have to show the first three'. I said, 'Lou, I don't have any theme, New York never sent us the theme.' Lou says, 'I'll see what I can do.' Tuesday goes by, Wednesday goes by, and I said, 'Lou, I got no theme. Where is it?' He says, 'Oh, I don't know. They didn't send it, did they?' So I said, 'You need a theme for Friday? You'll have one tomorrow morning!' So I got a hold of the director, Leon Rhodes, and I said, 'Leon, I want you to write me an iambic pentameter - the ballad of Diver Dan. Tell me what he does. *He wrote: Below in the deep there's adventure and danger, that's where you'll find Diver Dan. The sights that he sees are surprising and stranger than any you'll see on the land. And then there were four more lines like that. Then the last lines were - He protects and he saves his friends under the waves. That's where you'll find Diver Dan.*"

"He wrote this thing out in about ten minutes!", Sky recalls. "So I took it home and called up my brother-in-law. I said, 'Nick, bring up Ralph' - that's his bassman and Nick played guitar and I had ten years of fiddle. I got them in the basement studio and I took in the theme. I said 'theme's here, Lou! Here it is.' " The theme from New York never arrived so Jack Sky and Leon Rhodes' little ditty became the title song.

This was a unique time in television, when the cast and crew wore many hats - and did whatever was needed to get the job done. Everyone involved was multi-talented and all were seasoned professionals. "I doubt if there's ever been a show since then," Frank Freda said, "certainly with the advent of the union strength, where their talents and improvisation abilities were relied upon so much. They were either banging something or shaking something, or blowing smoke or wriggling something. And everybody contributed ideas to it. Today, a set man is a set man. He stands there holding a light or a prop - but in those days, they were called on to really contribute artistically."

Frank Freda

The Man Inside The Helmet

Frank Freda may be remembered by a generation of kids as "Diver Dan," but to theater goers in his hometown of Philadelphia, he's known as a playwright. His play, "Lunchtime," won him the Waldo Bellow Memorial Award (beating out 135 other plays for the honor), and his other efforts, "Momma Look At Bang Bang," "Philadelphia Ladies" and "A Cancer In The Wilderness", earned him rave reviews by Philadelphia critics. His one-act play "The Corner" was aired on CBS's Repertory Workshop.

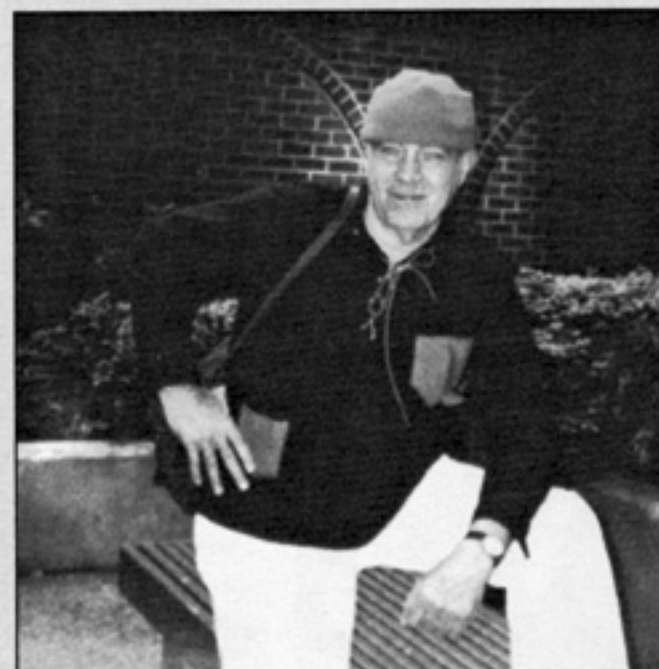


Christmas 1960. Frank Freda (left), Suzanne Turner (center), Louis Kellman (right).

Mr. Freda's first acting jobs were in TV commercials, and he spoke with PLANET X about his experiences. "I had a variety of jobs," he said, "and I think one of the big lores to showbiz was back in the days when you could advertise cigarette smoking on the air. So I remember being in a line of twenty actors, and I was a puffer, an experienced puffer even then, and the director came walking down the line as if he were an army sargent and he said 'Okay boys light up!' and his job at that moment was to weed out who really was not a cigarette smoker. But I was up to a pack and a half day even at that time so I won hands down - so I got a Pall Mall commercial. If you remember way back, the campaign was "I'm particular - and you bet I prefer Pall Mall!" and that's what I said at the time. Somebody commented 'Boy, those residuals made you able to be particular for some time,' and it sort of spoiled you."

Frank has great respect and fond memories of everyone involved with Diver Dan. "Well, I heard about the casting," he said, "and I was dealing with very gruff but very charismatic people . . . because Lou Kellman was certainly a character. And I could talk forever about his production manager, (Ben Burke) whose an 'old school' guy, looked like Triggerfish - which was the running gag - and he always had a butt in his mouth." Frank continued, "There's a tie-in [to making Diver Dan] with smoking and everybody says 'How did you film that? It looked like you were underwater!' Just to couple this in with the nonsmoking situation today, the fog under the sea was created by setmen blowing smoke through hoses! So it was very interesting, with everybody so paranoid about second hand smoke. If they were filming Diver Dan today, what that would have done, especially to the mermaid, I mean, she was popping vitamins and very health concious even then."

These days, Frank Freda has a strong desire to get back to his roots as a writer. "I have a pretty good track record as a playwright," he told us, "and it's something I wish life would give me time to pursue."



Today Frank Freda lives and works for a communications firm in New York City.