

## Interviews: Classic TV Stars Hugh O’Brian, Sherry Jackson

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on February 5, 2012 - 3:53pm

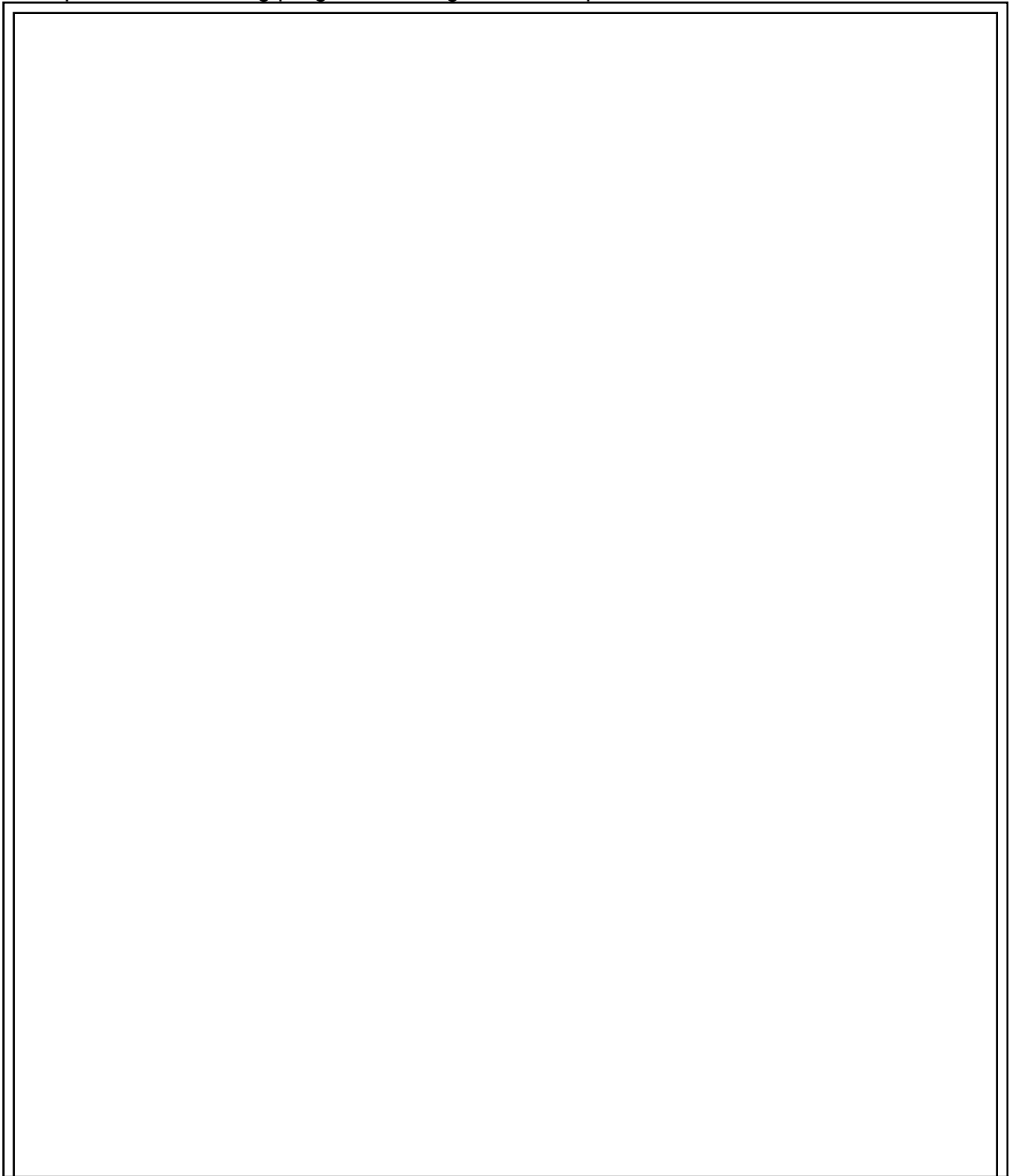
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CHICAGO – In the days when there were only three networks and less remote controls, TV stars were fewer and fame was rarer. Both Hugh O’Brian on “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp” (1955) and Sherry Jackson on “Make Room for Daddy“ (1953) achieved some notoriety in those early days of television.

O’Brian and Jackson appeared at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show (now called “The Hollywood Show”) in 2011, and HollywoodChicago.com was there to interview them, along with photographer Joe Arce, who captured both stars in Exclusive Portraits.

### **Hugh O’Brian, “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp”**

Hugh O’Brian, next to James Arness of “Gunsmoke,” was one of the biggest western TV stars in an era when the networks were flooded with horse operas. “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp” debuted in 1955 on ABC-TV, and ran for seven seasons as a top rated show. O’Brian also made movies, including “There’s No Business Like Show Business” (1954) and “Come Fly with Me” (1963). He also holds the distinction of portraying the last man to be killed by John Wayne, in the film “The Shootist” (1976). O’Brian is also a notable philanthropist. Inspired by the works of humanitarian Albert Schweitzer, he originated the Hugh O’Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) in 1958, which is a non-profit organization that sponsors mentoring programs for high school sophomores.





Hugh O'Brian at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show, Chicago, March 2011  
*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How did you come to that very original look for the Wyatt Earp character, when in most of the other shows the lawmen looked like regular cowboys?

**Hugh O'Brian:** I chose the wardrobe for the Wyatt Earp show. They sent me to Western Costume to check out what the network had picked out, but it was so corny, for example they didn't wear polka dot shirts in those days. [laughs] So basically I started from scratch. I had some pictures of Wyatt himself, and the law marshal in those days wore what the mayor, judges and shop owners wore, what we'd call suits. That's how I came to the black coat, vest and string tie.

I met several people who knew Wyatt Earp. He died in Los Angeles in 1929. When he died, his wife Josie buried him in a Jewish cemetery in Colma, California, because that's where she was from. When I visited his grave, the whole town showed up to see Wyatt Earp visit Wyatt Earp's tombstone. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Have you talked to Delores Hart since you co-starred with her in the final picture, 'Come Fly with Me,' that she made before she famously became a nun?

**O'Brian:** I did talk to her several times, the last time in London. Several people have said the reason she joined the nunnery was because of that movie 'Come Fly with Me.' [laughs] I remember her very fondly. she was very real and a lot of fun.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You have the true honor of being the last man killed by John Wayne in a film ['The Shootist']. What was was your friendship like with him?

**O'Brian:** We actually go way back. Here's another story about me and John Wayne. He refereed one of my first boxing matches in the Marine

Corp. Back when I was Hugh Campe, [O’Brian’s real name] I was the youngest Drill Instructor in Marine Corp history at 17 years old.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You given so much to others, inspired by a visit to humanitarian Dr. Albert Schweitzer in 1958. How fulfilled has your own life been through your Youth Leadership work? What is the story of that historic visit with Dr. Schweitzer?

**O’Brian:** Reverence for life was his credo. Albert Schweitzer was a minister that gave up everything to work in a clinic for the people of Africa. When I went down to meet him he was in Lambaréné on the Ogooué River, and the last part of the trip was in this little biplane that landed on a dirt airstrip, with its nose touching the jungle. I went down the river in a 30-ft. cutout canoe, rowed by six natives. They had a terrific chant, and I started chanting with them. When I looked closely, I realized they were lepers and rowing was their way of repaying Schweitzer’s care.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How long were you there?



Hugh O’Brian as the Famous Lawman  
Photo credit: Wyatt Earp Enterprises

**O’Brian:** I was there nine days. I talked with him a couple hours every night. When he was seeing me off, he asked me ‘Hugh, what are you going to do with this?’ I had no answer. The last sight of him I had was when he was watching me go, in his white Pith helmet, walrus mustache, white shirt and pants. He stood there until we rowed out of sight, he was gone but not my memory of him. It took me 46 hours to get home, which gave me time to think. It was then that I came up with the HOBY program.

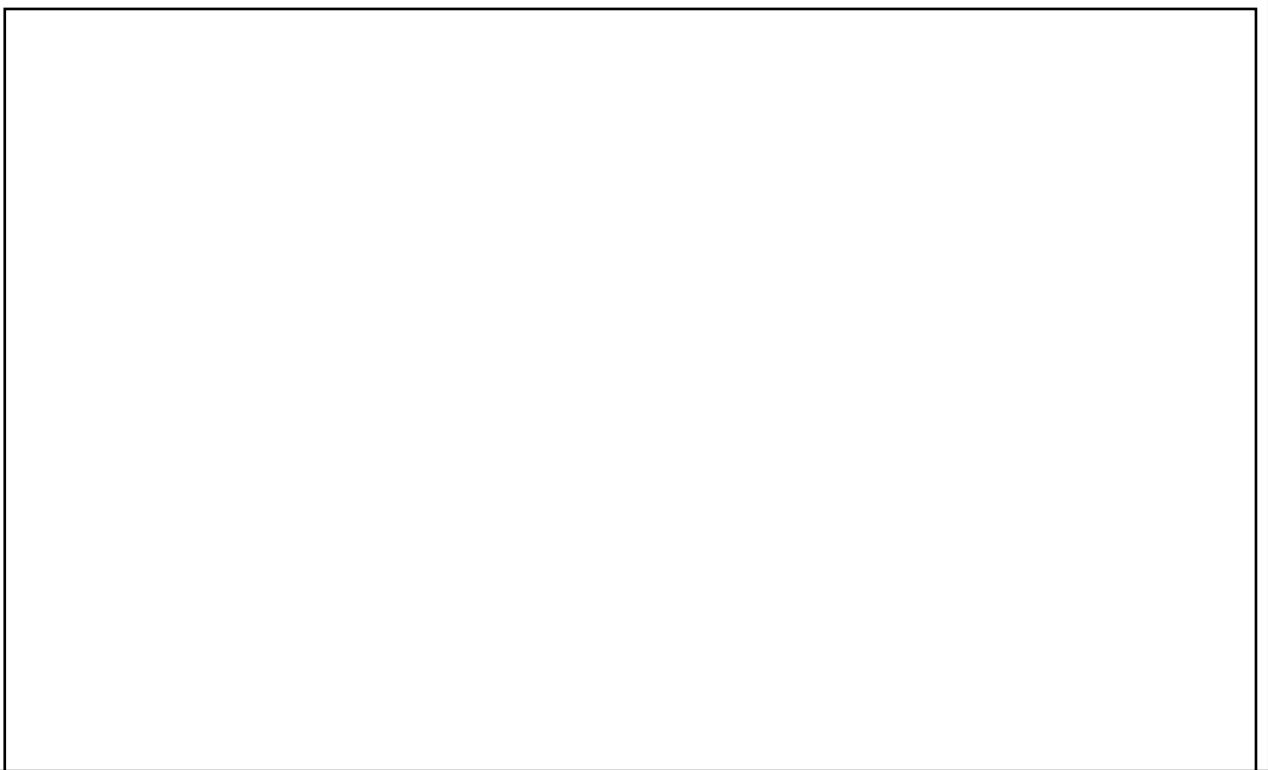
**HollywoodChicago.com:** Why does the program focus on sophomores in high school?

**O’Brian:** Because when I was in 10th grade, that’s when I figured I had to fish or cut bait. The games would be over in two years, that’s the best time to think about the next move. It’s turned out to be a very productive program, every year we have the participation of 98% of private and public high schools in the country. The first to go through the program are now 66 and 67 years of age. We have 145 alumni on Capitol Hill, 150 in the State Department, always average about 10 in the White House staff and always about 5-10 executives in Fortune 500 companies. It is truly my way of putting arms around tomorrow.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Dr. Schweitzer would be very proud of you, sir.

★ Sherry Jackson, “Make Room for Daddy,” “Wild on the Beach”

Sherry Jackson grew up on a sitcom, playing Terry Williams from 1953-58 on “Make Room for Daddy,” starring Danny Thomas. Before that, she had a career as a child actress, most notably playing John Wayne’s daughter in “Trouble Along the Way” (1953). After she left the Thomas TV show, she began a series of supporting parts on classic television series of the 1960s, including an epic appearance on the original “Star Trek” series in 1966, modeling space wear in the episode, “What are Little Girls Made Of?” She briefly returned to a remake of her original show in 1970, this time entitled “Make Room for Granddaddy,” and did more TV guest shots throughout the 1970s.







Sherry Jackson at the Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show, Chicago, March 2011  
*Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Which movie stars that you met along the way in your childhood career impressed you the most?

**Sherry Jackson:** I truly enjoyed doing 'Trouble Along the Way' with John Wayne and Charles Coburn, and the director was Michael Curtiz, who directed 'Casablanca' and many other films. I made three films with him.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Curtiz had a heavy accent, didn't he?

**Jackson:** I'll tell you a funny story about that. I was doing the film 'The Breaking Point' with John Garfield, and around midday he shouted in his thick Hungarian accent, 'Okay, everybody go to the launch.' He meant the boat set, but everyone there broke for lunch. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since you were a child star, can you pinpoint what role allowed you to make the transition from teenage parts to more adult roles?

**Jackson:** I did a few guest shots on TV shows like 'Maverick' and '77 Sunset Strip.' But it was that 'Star Trek' episode that catapulted me from pig tailed moppet Sherry Jackson to femme fatale or whatever. [laughs]

**HollywoodChicago.com:** That was a memorable costume. What was your reaction when they wanted you to wear it?

**Jackson:** I helped design it, it was engineered in a way. [Costumer] Bill Tice did the design, but I put the split in the front to make my legs look longer. Hip huggers hadn't come along yet, the costume was the first hip hugger. It was made out of ski material, and it kept stretching after every wear. We had a censor on the set, they allowed for the cleavage in the front, but nothing on the side. We used William Shatner's toupee tape to keep it in place.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** [Laughs] What happened in your career from that episode, did it lead to better things?



Sherry Jackson Models the Famous Space Wear  
Photo credit: Paramount Home Video

**Jackson:** Yes, it was that same Star Trek episode. They didn't want me outside in that costume, so I had to wear a bathrobe. It was really hot outside, and I didn't want to wear it, so a friend told me just to go from the Desilu lot to the Paramount commissary without the bathrobe. Now I can't see, I'm extremely nearsighted, so all I could hear was the lunchroom sounds coming from the commissary, the clinking of glasses and silverware, and talking. When I walked in, the noise just got softer and softer until I couldn't hear anything. I asked my friend what was going on, and he told me everyone was staring at me.

I was very shy, and told him to get me out of there. So he took me to the director's part of the lunchroom, and Blake Edwards was sitting there. He kept pointing at me and saying to a colleague, 'this is Samantha, for Gunn.' 'Gunn' was the new film he was working on. I thought what is going on? The costume led right to that Samantha role in that film, and I got a three picture deal from Paramount after that.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Were there any prominent roles that you auditioned and didn't get that you feel might have changed your career at the time?

**Jackson:** 'Valley of the Dolls' was one of them, they wanted a blonde instead of a brunette. What can you do?

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What can you tell us about Marjorie Lord that the rest of the world doesn't know?

**Jackson:** All I can say about Marjorie is that she was the sweetest lady on the planet. Just a really lovely lady. But my first favorite was Jean Hagen, who was my mother on the show for the first three years. I adored Jean, she was my best buddy. When her contract ran out after three years, she didn't renew it, and I didn't want to do the show without Jean. That's when I rewrote my contract, and left the show two years later.

The "Hollywood Celebrities & Memorabilia Show" is now "The Hollywood Show" and will be in Chicago on March 24th and 25th, 2012. [Click here for details.](#) [13]



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