

# What Would Barney Think?

by Kevin Gordon

Those that know me know that I am a Barney Fife fan. I have several collectables of Barney in my home; an autographed picture, an Andy and Barney cookie jar, a ceramic model of the Mayberry Courthouse, a 1960's Barney lunch box etc. A few things, not a lot. I'm not a true collector in that I don't really have anything of value, just stuff I like. Okay, I admit it; I may be a Barney Fife fanatic. But more than a fan of Barney, I am a fan of the amazing effect Barney Fife, Andy Griffith and the entire Andy Griffith Show had on American and International culture. Even folks who claim they are not Barney fans, regardless of age, from youngsters to senior citizens, from points around the world, know what "nip it in the bud" means. After all "nip it" is listed as one of the 100 greatest quotes of television history! They know how many bullets Barney had and where he kept it. They know "you got a uvula, I got a uvula, all God's children got a uvula!"

And what police officer doesn't appreciate Barney's belief that a "well maintained bullet shows a lawman's got pride in his status as a keeper of the law". And what officer doesn't know the two rules of the Rock....."Rule number one: obey all rules. Rule number two: don't write on the walls as they are hard to clean". And if you want to describe your town as quiet, peaceful and generally crime free, we claim it's a Mayberry or Mayberry like.

We all know Barney was a traveler, after all he told us "I'm a man of the world, why, I've even been to Raleigh!" But who could imagine that a TV show that ran from 1960-1968, a short 8 years (and only five of those with Barney) would be so popular around the world, more than 40 years after it ended! Those who know claim that at least one of the 249 episodes is on television somewhere in the world, every minute of every day. I don't know if that claim is true but since I can find it on some cable station just about any time of day or night, I suspect it is.

True fans often belong to a chapter of The Andy Griffith Show Rerun Watchers Club, known to fans as TAGSRWC, whose official online home is [www.mayberry.com](http://www.mayberry.com). There are fan clubs around the world and every state usually has dozens. My state of IL has 44 such clubs! No I've never been to a meeting but I bet snacks would be a pork chop sandwich and if there was a pass phrase and signal for entrance to the meeting, it would be "fly away buzzard, fly away crow, way down south where the winds don't blow" while you rub your nose and give two winks.

TAGSRWC groups are in the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Mexico, France, England, Brazil, Austria, Japan, Italy, Israel, Ireland and the Isle of Crete! Fans around the world who know Barney is a man of action and know "a man of action can't be worried about how his hair is combed". Fans who understand you shouldn't wear Barney's hat because he "can't stand to wear a hat when it's been on somebody else's head".

The fictitious town of Mayberry, NC, according to cartographer fans lies about halfway between Raleigh and

Greensboro. North Carolina. But for most of us, it lies somewhere in our memory, a memory of a simpler time, whether real or imagined. Maybe the directions are in the realm of Peter Pan, "second star to the right, then straight on 'til morning". Sometimes those illusions are shaken when you realize the same set was used for *Gone with the Wind* in 1939, the Atlanta Scene. Even more recent were two episodes of *Star Trek*, "Miri" and "The City on the Edge of Forever". If you look close you can see Floyd's Barber Shop, and the courthouse as the trekkies run around the streets. The illusion can be further shaken when you realize the wonderful Mayberry NC fishing hole was 15 minutes from Hollywood at Franklin Canyon Reservoir. But that's trivia and in Barney's words "I ain't got time for them trivial trivialities..."

I have found myself many times in life wondering, "What would Barney think". Not that Barney had all the answers but because regardless of how high life's creek was at that minute or how many alligators were present, just a few moments of reflection on Barney could bring a smile to my face and a better perspective of the matter at hand.

But the "reality" of Mayberry, if there is such a thing, exists on another level. I think it reminds us of friendship. It reminds us of the important things in life. In Barney's words, "it ain't only the materialistic things in this world that makes a person rich. There's love and friendship.....that can make a person rich..." Maybe it's the cop in me that makes me appreciate the importance of friendship and other non-tangible things. Or maybe it's the loss of family and friends whether line of duty or natural, over the years, that enhances my appreciation. Or maybe it's just me getting older. Probably a combination of all. In any case, friends and family seem more important



to me now.

Barney once said, "Heaven to Barney Fife will be a place like a big front porch where I can sit, rock and talk to friends". That sounds pretty good, Barney. I hope that porch is a big one. A gathering place for all our fellow officers who have gone before us. I hope they keep a spot open for us where we can sit, think, talk (yes and gripe) and maybe walk downtown for a pop. But until then, we'll continue to look ahead while we remember the past. We'll make sure we don't mess with the bulletin board and we'll never forget "Dogs is dogs and people is people. One sticks his nose in a woodchuck hole and one don't. One you'd kiss on the mouth and the other you wouldn't." That pretty much says it all. Thanks Barney.

## *In memory of Don Knotts, 1924- 2006*

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