

Married...With Journalists:

How *Married... With Children* Exposes the Dark Side of the Broadcast Media

By Jonathan Horn

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Abstract:

Married...With Children was an equal opportunity offender. That is, it gave the same unflattering treatment to the news media as it did to the Bundys. Journalism is shown as sensationalist, shallow and only concerned about ratings. Stories of triumph and honor are passed over for those of sexual abuse, failure and human tragedy. Journalists themselves are portrayed as pawns in a larger scheme of making money in spite of the public interest. Female journalists are viewed as either token women or those who sleep their way to the top. Those who are both women and a minority are only given the trivial, puffy stories. All the while, their less intelligent but better-looking colleagues get the glory at the anchor desk.

Bud Bundy (on his living room couch, surrounded by a pack of news reporters). They are asking him about his parents, who are lost at sea:

BUD BUNDY

What is the matter with you people? What ever happened to the noble image of the fourth estate, with Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite?¹

THE REPORTERS IN UNISON

WHO?²

One would hope only in a world of extremes would professional journalists not know the pioneers of their field. But that was reality in *Married...With Children*, where Al Bundy and his family were the ultimate losers with the worst luck. Al is a former jock who peaked in high school, with his claim to fame being that he scored four touchdowns in one football game.³ He now makes a living as a women's shoe salesman.

His Wife, Peggy Bundy, is the ultimate lazy housewife. She refuses to get a job, sits in front of the TV all day eating bon-bons, and uses the money Al earns to buy whatever she wants off the shopping channels. Their son, Bud, is the epitome of nerd. Very smart, but cannot get a date. The entire family and neighbors throw a party the first time he finally has a girl sleep over, and his sister, Kelly, the ultimate "dumb blonde," checks the back of the girl's neck to see if there is a blow-up valve.⁴

The field of journalism in *Married...With Children* is given the same extreme treatment as its human characters. The show's cast of reporters is guilty of pack

journalism, distorting the facts for sensationalism, and covering only what they feel will generate ratings. Despite its comedic nature, evidence from academic journals suggests much of the show's media portrayal actually resembles much in real-life newsrooms.

Raingirl

Kelly Bundy is the ultimate bimbo. Stereotypical blonde, easy, unintelligent and brings home a new low-life man seemingly every episode. Of course, she also is the one who becomes a weather anchor on a local Chicago TV station.⁵ Once she gets to the anchor desk and it is discovered that she is illiterate, she hikes up her skirt in one last attempt to save her job.⁶ Doesn't work, she's fired.

Before she makes her on-air debut, however, one of the veteran anchorman says he will quit if they do not fire her.⁷ She recounts the conflict to neighbor Marcy:

KELLY BUNDY

You know, they're not as nice as they seem on television. Like today, when I, like the rest of the nation, was wondering where East Dakota was, the weatherman told the manager that either I went or he went.

MARCY DARCY

Oh well, losing your first job isn't so bad.

KELLY BUNDY

Me? They canned him like a tuna.

Kelly is ultimately fired, but as a last gasp effort to stay at the station, she gets on top of the anchor desk, smiles wide and lifts her skirt a little higher.⁸ When a news

producer calls her an idiot, she replies “I’m not an idiot, I’m a meteorologist....Dork.”⁹ That she is dismissed says looks can only get you so far. Literacy must come in at some point. Not the highest standard for one of America’s most glamorous professions.¹⁰

Another famous weatherman stereotype appeared in *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*. Brick Tamland, who cannot put a sentence together, is the forecaster for the Channel 4 news team.¹¹ Actor Steve Carrel, who played Tamland, said of his part: “He is dumber than anyone could possibly understand, but very nice, very happy.”¹² Yet he is still qualified to be an anchor in a large TV market. History is on Kelly Bundy’s side since being blonde with an attractive figure can be vital in finding success.¹³

If anything, allowing Kelly on the air portrays the stereotype that looks are more important than the ability to predict weather. There are web pages devoted solely to the best-looking female meteorologist. One site, which allows users to vote on their favorite, has tallied roughly 50 thousand responses.¹⁴ Bundy was not one of the meteorologists up for the award, nor is it easy to find a poll on the most handsome male weather anchor.

The Token Reporter

So *Married...With Children* pokes fun not only at the good-looking news anchor, but also at tokenism in the media. That is where Miranda Veracruz De La Hoya Cardinal comes in. She is beautiful and speaks English with no accent, except when she says her name.

Not much is ever divulged about Cardinal’s past, except that she is from a country that rhymes with equator.¹⁵ She makes snide remarks on the air about how she has to

cover the Bundys when other, more newsworthy events are going on.¹⁶ This is her live shot when covering Al's protest of public breast-feeding:

“Well, in this past week, there have been two fires, a flood, and a mass murder, unfortunately none of them here at Gary's Shoes, where I, Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal, have been since this breast-feeding protest began.”¹⁷

Cardinal wants to cover hard news, but cannot get the right assignments. She thinks it is because of her ethnicity:

“Now let's see, it's 40 degrees below zero with 20 mile an hour winds. Who do we send out today? One of our many Aryan anchormen, or the woman from a country named after the equator?”

Hispanic American journalists have complained of lowered job satisfaction, morale, and inability to cover issues they find valuable to expose.¹⁸ Howard Good cites L.D. Reddick's stereotype of the “unhappy non-white”¹⁹ as one that appears in mid-20th century journalism films.²⁰ Cardinal is South American, and not content with her assignments, so it can apply here nearly fifty years later on a television sitcom.

A minority reporter has little power or control in situations of story assignment.²¹ Cardinal has no choice but to report on the assignment she is given. It is that or risk getting fired. A pop-culture example of reporter powerlessness came in an episode of *Murphy Brown*, when Executive Producer Miles Silverberg told his reporter:

“Let me remind you about something, Murphy. This is a job, not make believe, we’re not doing The Mary Tyler Moore Show here. There’s no audience laughing at every cute little thing you say. This is the real world. So when I tell you you’re doing a story, you just don’t say, ‘Oh Mr. Grant, I don’t want to.’ You do it.”²²

TV sitcoms such as *Family Guy* and *South Park* also show this side of the broadcast media. *South Park* goes the extra mile and refuses to give each reporter a name, calling them a “34-year-old Asian man who looks strikingly similar to Richard Montalban”²³ or a “Hispanic man with gravy stains on his lapel.”²⁴

Ollie Williams, the weather anchor in *Family Guy*, is another example of tokenism. He may be a very articulate man, but instead is reduced to one-second segments. His famous weather segment generally consists of three words: “It’s Gon’ Rain.”²⁵ It is not exactly hard-hitting scientific journalism. In fact, his segment is called the “blackie weather forecast.”²⁶

Sex and Sensationalism in Reporting

Bundy family members sometimes find themselves surrounded by a pack of journalists. A barrage of reporters breaks down the front door for access to Bud and Kelly, whose parents are lost at sea.²⁷

The fact that two adolescent children may be left without parents is not the story to these reporters. It is merely the start of it. The questions do not concern Bud and

Kelly's well being, but prod for sexual abuse and other sensationalist topics. This is Cardinal's live-shot:

“Hello this is Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal, live at the home of Kelly and Bud Bundy who are anxiously awaiting news of whether their parents will be found alive. Or if their decomposing corpses will be found a week later in a South Florida bog, oooh.”²⁸

Cardinal, dressed in a pink blazer with a beaming smile on her face, in a stereotypical broadcast voice, paints the grim picture with the unnecessary but highly sensationalist last line. Her huge smile adds to the fact that she does not care about the sad tone of the story, but more about looking good in front of the camera. Like fictional character Ron Burgundy does many times, Cardinal makes the story about her. In the scene, she turns to Kelly and Bud, sitting on their couch.

MIRANDA VERACRUZ DE LA JOLLA CARDINAL

Can you tell me how you're feeling? And please be as graphic as possible.²⁹

BUD BUNDY

We refuse to answer this kind of questioning until we found out if they're alive.

MIRANDA VERACRUZ DE LA JOLLA CARDINAL

Well I apologize if I seemed insensitive (pauses, smiles wide), so tell me, did your parents ever abuse you?

MALE REPORTER (turning to Kelly)

Surely your father must have seen your heinie.

KELLY BUNDY

Well yeah, when I was a baby.

The reporters all around her gasp in horror. It is obvious to the viewer that Kelly just means Al was taking care of her, but the journalists do not care. They are looking for the big story, the ratings boost. They eventually offer Bud and Kelly a large sum of money for their story. Eventually then she tells them all what they want to hear: that Mike Tyson and her dad each abused her.³⁰

When Al Bundy finally walks in after being rescued by a pack of dolphins that saved him from sharks, Cardinal can only ask if they abused him. It is again not about the heroism or uniqueness of this story, but whether there was any sex involved. When he says no, she tells her cameraman to pack up, and turns to Al: “It’s sweeps guys; unless that dolphin was Michael Jackson’s lovechild, we’ve got nothing.”

Again, television journalism is shown to be all about ratings and making money. A blonde weather girl who is easy on the eyes but cannot read, a token minority reporter who is beautiful but gets the worst assignments, and a nose for stories that are not in the public interest but likely to interest many of the public: sex, violence, drugs, alcohol, death. Television news is not about raising awareness, but about entertaining.³¹

This “Ship Happens” episode is by far the most damaging to the image of the journalist. There are great human-interest stories available to them on the surface: Two kids who could lose their parents in a tragic accident, and eventually how the two parents managed to get back home. Peggy arrives first, and after Cardinal asks her how she feels, she puts her hand over the microphone and says, “Cry, if you can.”³²

Further, Al is saved by a pack of dolphins that defended him from sharks. It does not get any more golden than that. Yet the journalists still prod for the same old things: molestation, child abuse, and other racy topics. When Al denies all of them, they just leave.

The people who watch the newscasts miss out on some very unique and memorable stories, sacrificed for the same old ratings-boost. Ironically, these stories make a great newscast themselves, and the reporters do not have to add anything. As Henry writes, “Objective presentation of facts and in-depth analysis of issues and trends have been largely replaced by an emphasis on fast-paced, decontextualized mini-dramas.”³³

Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal, Investigative Reporter

In one episode, to have more beer money for his friends, Al tries to pass himself off as the leader of an evangelical-like movement.³⁴ But his neighbor Marcy soon discovers him and informs the news media. Cardinal sabotages Al Bundy’s plan to commit tax evasion for his misogynistic “No Ma’am” church. A small person with a beard emerges from the back of a No Ma’am meeting in Al’s garage. After walking to the front of the room, she rips off her fake beard, revealing herself as Cardinal. Her cameraman runs in with Marcy, who also wears fake facial hair.

Cardinal begins her live shot, in which she exposes Al’s tax-evasion plan by saying:

“This is Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal. As you’ve just witnessed, chauvinist and religious quackery are alive and well, right here in Al Bundy’s garage.”³⁵

The actual news portion of this is played in a package later that evening, with Al in front of the TV, and only Cardinal’s voice is heard: “Calling themselves the church of No Ma’am in a shameless and clearly illegal attempt to avoid paying taxes.”³⁶

This is actually real investigative journalism, just delivered in a comedic way. But the method of how it was obtained blurred some ethical lines. Yet sleazy investigative reporting appears in comedies. In Adam Sandler’s *Mr. Deeds*, the entire premise of the story falls around Sandler’s character falling in love with an undercover reporter posing as a school nurse.³⁷ Although the reporter is clearly a villainous character, in most fiction, an investigative reporter is a hero.³⁸

A well-known and historical example comes from *All the President’s Men*, which chronicles Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein’s efforts to expose the Watergate scandal.³⁹ Another more recent portrayal would be Woody Allen’s *Scoop*, where Scarlett Johansen portrays a student reporter going undercover to solve a murder mystery.⁴⁰

Regardless of the methods used to gather the information, if the work exposes an evil plan, a journalist is viewed as a hero. Joe Saltzman, director of the *Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture*, writes a “journalist can get away with anything as long as the end result is in the public interest.”⁴¹ So dressing up as a man with a fake beard is acceptable because it foiled Al Bundy’s tax-evasion plan. Al Bundy certainly was not evil, just stupid, but avoiding taxes is still a crime. At the end of the episode, the IRS arrests Bundy.⁴²

Cardinal has a big smile on her face when breaking the story, conveying a sense of accomplishment that an investigative reporter might have after exposing wrongdoings. It is the one of the only times in the entire series where journalism is portrayed as heroic.

The female journalist in *Married...With Children*

“So once again it seems the joke’s on me. This is Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, saying I’d have that anchor job by now if I’d just slept with Peter Jennings instead of Andy Rooney.”⁴³

-- Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, stand-up.

Cardinal says this on camera while covering Al Bundy’s protest of the cancellation of his favorite TV show.⁴⁴ Not to mention it was 40 degrees below with 20 mile-an-hour winds.⁴⁵ But whatever the weather, the stereotype of the female journalist as someone who sleeps her way to the top is addressed in this monologue.

Cardinal admits to the transgression, but in the movie *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, Veronica Corningstone fights it.⁴⁶ This label plagues female reporters in real life,⁴⁷ even if the vast majority of them are completely professional.

ESPN reporter Erin Andrews has been criticized for being too friendly with players, something she may not have been called out on if she were unattractive.⁴⁸ But it does happen. Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Derek Lowe had an affair with a Fox Sports net reporter,⁴⁹ as did L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa with a TV journalist who was covering him.⁵⁰ She was quickly demoted to Riverside, and then quit soon after.⁵¹

This only fuels the stereotype, although sleeping with the source is different from sleeping with a boss to advance a career. Still, having an affair with an interview subject can be an effective way to get the inside information to break a big story and ultimately a big promotion. This was the case in the movie *Thank You for Smoking*, where a beautiful New York print reporter slept with the smoking lobbyist to get inside information.⁵²

Conclusion

Just as Al, Peg, Kelly, and Bud Bundy were extreme examples of stereotypical Americans, the journalists in *Married...With Children* were caricatures as well. There was Miranda Veracruz de la Jolla Cardinal, the beautiful, token minority reporter given the worst assignments; the pack of journalists not interested in the facts of the story but only in search of the sensationalist aspects that would help improve ratings; the snide references to sleeping to the top; having beautiful people as anchors; and the investigative reporter in disguise surprising Al with a camera.

Although journalists did not appear in many episodes of *Married...With Children*, those who did tackled the profession the same way the characters lived their lives. They took the stereotypes to the extreme, part of the formula that made it one of the most successful shows in television history. Yet despite the comedic nature of the portrayal, evidence from academic journals suggests the *Married...With Children* jokes about the media epitomize situations that commonly occur in newsrooms throughout America.

Endnotes

¹ Season 9, Episode 20: “Ship Happens (2),” *Married... With Children*. First aired 26 February 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Katherine Green.

² *Ibid.*

³ Season 10, Episode 26: “Torch Song Duet,” *Married... With Children*. First aired 19 May 1996 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen, and written by Donelle Q. Buck.

⁴ Season 10, Episode 23: “Bud Hits the Books,” *Married... With Children*. First aired 28 April 1996 by Fox. Directed by Sam W. Orender and written by Stacie Lipp.

⁵ Season 4, Episode 21: “Raingirl,” *Married... With Children*. First aired 29 April 1990 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen and written by Kevin Curran.

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ David Brinkley, “On Being an Anchorman.” *The New York Times*. June 14, 2003, Opinion section.

¹¹ *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, Directed by Adam McKay, Universal City, CA: Dreamworks SKG, 2004.

¹² *E! Behind the Scenes with Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, (00:04:07)

¹³ Good, Howard, *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism, and the Movies*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1998. Good writes of Glenda Farrell, whose rise to the silver screen during the depression was the embodiment of rags to riches. But at the end of this chapter 7, he quips it didn’t hurt her to be blonde and attractive.

¹⁴ Laysner, Anthony. “Hot Weather Girls – Vote for Your Favorite.” Asylum.com. April 18, 2008. <http://www.asylum.com/2008/04/18/the-worlds-sexiest-weather-girls-vote-for-your-favorite>.

¹⁵ Season 8, Episode 12: “I Want My Psycho Dad,” *Married...With Children*. First aired 11 December 1994 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Barry Gold.

¹⁶ Season 9, Episode 6: “Business Still Sucks,” *Married...With Children*. First aired 9 October 1994 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen and Robert A. Bowen, and written by Stacie Lipp.

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ Shafer, Richard. “What minority journalists identify as constraints to full newsroom equality,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1993), pp. 195-208. <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a909128739~db=all>. Shafer, in his abstract, writes: “All forms of discrimination identified were said to lower job satisfaction and morale, and to inhibit minority journalists from effectively manipulating the newsgate to further racial and ethnic equality in their communities.”

¹⁹ Maynard, Richard A. “Editor’s Introduction: Birth of a Stereotype,” *The Black Man on Film: Racial Stereotyping*, ed. Maynard (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden, 1975), p. vi. This is where Reddick’s list of stereotypes appears. Good referenced this article to get to the list of 19 stereotypes.

²⁰ Good, Howard, *Girl Reporter: Gender, Journalism, and the Movies*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1998. Good is citing L.D. Reddick’s list of 19 African American stereotypes in the *Journal of Negro Education* in 1944.

²¹ Jackson, Pamela B., Peggy A. Thoits, and Howard F. Taylor. “Composition of the Workplace and Psychological Well-Being: The Effects of Tokenism on America’s Black Elite,” *Social Forces* 74, no. 2 (Dec., 1995), pp. 543-557. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2580491>

²² 1988-1989 season, *Murphy Brown*, Section F Resources, Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, “Sob Sisters: The Image of The Female Journalist In Popular Culture 1929-2007.” <http://www.ijpc.org/sobsistervideo.htm>

²³ Episode 24: “Roger Ebert Should Lay Off the Fatty Foods,” *South Park*. First aired September 2, 1998 by Comedy Central. Directed by Trey Parker. Written by Trey Parker and David Goodman.

²⁴ Episode 21: “Summer Sucks,” *South Park*. First aired June 24 1998 by Comedy Central. Directed by Trey Parker. Written by Trey Parker and Nancy Pimental.

²⁵ Episode 37: “Mr. Saturday Night,” *Family Guy*. First aired 5 September 2001 by Fox. Directed by Michael Dante DiMartino. Written by Steve Callaghan.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Episode 9-20: “Ship Happens (2),” *Married... With Children*. First aired 26 February 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Katherine Green.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Postman, N. “Amusing ourselves to death: Public discourse in the age of show business.” (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). Postman wrote: Because of both fierce competition and the limitations of the medium itself, television news has shifted away from an emphasis on public discourse and toward one on entertainment.”

³² Season 9, Episode 20: “Ship Happens (2),” *Married... With Children*. First aired 26 February 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Katherine Green.

³³ Henry, W. A. III. “News as entertainment: The search for dramatic unity.” In E. Abel (Ed.), *What's news: The media in American society*. (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981).

³⁴ Season 10, Episode 4: “Reverend Al,” *Married... With Children*. First aired 8 October 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Kim Wieskopf.

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ *Mr. Deeds*, Directed by Steven Brill, Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2002.

³⁸ Saltzman, Joe. “Celluloid Heroes.” Brook Gladstone. NPR On the Media. 15 August 2008, <http://www.onthemedial.org/transcripts/2008/08/15/05>. Saltzman said: “Investigative reporters are the perfect hero in the movies because they really are surrogates for the moviegoer. They ask the questions the moviegoer wants to know about. They get the information the moviegoer wants to find out. They give you great narrative. They give you great exposition. They're the perfect movie hero, and that's why I think we've had so many films featuring investigative reporters.”

³⁹ *All the President's Men*, Directed by Alan J. Pakula, Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers, 1976.

⁴⁰ *Scoop*, Directed by Woody Allen, Universal City, CA: Focus Features, 2006.

⁴¹ Saltzman, Joe, Frank Capra and the Image of the Journalist in American Film (Los Angeles: An Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture Publication, 2002), p. 146.

⁴² Season 10, Episode 4: "Reverend Al," *Married... With Children*. First aired 8 October 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Kim Wieskopf.

⁴³ Season 9, Episode 12: "I Want My Psycho Dad," *Married... With Children*. First aired 11 December 1994 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Barry Gold.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ Nerland, Emily. "The Image of the Local Television News Anchor in Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy." *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture*. <http://www.ijpc.org/IJPC%20Journal%20-%20Image%20of%20the%20Local%20Television%20News%20Anchor%20in%20Anchorman%20The%20Legend%20of%20Ron%20Burgundy.pdf>

⁴⁷ Hill, Jamele, "Female reporters still fighting to earn proper respect." ESPN.com. 7 August 2008. <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=hill/080806>

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ ABC News, "Love in the Locker Room?" abcnews.go.com. 5 Aug 2005. <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=1011031>.

⁵⁰ Helfand, Duke and Steve Hyman, "Mayor reveals romantic link with newscaster." LATimes.com. 4 July 2007. <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-mayor4jul04,0,5576323.story?coll=la-home-local>

⁵¹ James, Meg and Duke Helfand. "Salinas' tenure with Telemundo is over – Reporter who has a romantic relationship with L.A's mayor fails to show up for work." LATimes.com 2 October 2007. <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/02/local/me-salinas2>.

⁵² *Thank You for Smoking*, Directed by Jason Reitman, Century City, CA: Fox Searchlight, 2006.

Appendix: Images of journalism in *Married...With Children*

Season 4, Episode 21: “Raingirl,” *Married...With Children*. First aired 29 April 1990 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen and written by Kevin Curran.

Kelly becomes the weather anchor for a local station, is unable to read off the teleprompter, and in a last-gasp attempt to keep her job, hikes up her skirt on live television. When she asks where East Dakota is, the current weather anchor gets so upset he threatens to quit. Marcy assumes Kelly got fired, but she replies she is the one with the skirt, “they canned him like a tuna.”

Kelly does eventually get fired when it is discovered she is illiterate. She reads the word “storm” as “strom,” for example, and leans in closer to the teleprompter squinting. The news director calls her an idiot, she replies “I’m not an idiot, I’m a meteorologist... Dork!”

Season 9, Episode 7: “Business Sucks,” *Married...With Children*. First aired 2 October 1994 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen and Robert A. Bowen, and written by Stacie Lipp.

Al insults a woman for breast-feeding publicly in Gary’s Shoestore. She leaves angrily, and Marcy returns with several women who all do the same thing in the store. Al

organizes a protest against public breast-feeding, which is covered by reporter Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal. She interviews Bundy about the protest. Later, the 4 a.m. (yes, four in the morning) news is on, and they show video of fat men dancing in the store as part of the protest.

Season 9, Episode 6: “Business Still Sucks,” Married...With Children. First aired 9 October 1994 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen and Robert A. Bowen, and written by Stacie Lipp.

The episodes begin with a live shot from Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal, saying there have been two fires, a flood, and a mass murder, but she has to cover the breast-feeding protest. She interviews Al Bundy, and he speaks of what he is trying to prove. Cardinal sarcastically calls his protest a Mensa meeting.

She has a second live-shot in the episode, in which she calls the controversy “sucklegate,” and compares it to her career, which she says has come to an end.

Season 9, Episode 12: “I Want My Psycho Dad,” Married...With Children. First aired 11 December 1994 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Barry Gold.

Al is excited for his favorite TV show, *Psycho Dad*, to air, but Marcy’s women’s group got it cancelled because it was misogynistic. Al and his friends organize a demonstration outside the local TV station.

Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal covers the protest live, saying it is 40-below with 20 mile-per-hour winds. She complains they send the woman from a country that rhymes with the equator as opposed to one of her “Aryan” colleagues. She calls the protest pro-violence, but the only evidence she finds is a crumpled copy of *Penthouse* magazine. She ends by lamenting that she slept with Andy Rooney instead of Peter Jennings, and the fact that her career has suffered for that decision.

Season 9, Episode 20: “Ship Happens (2),” *Married...With Children*. First aired 26 February 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Gerry Cohen, and written by Katherine Green.

This is by far the most damning portrayal of journalism. Al and Peggy are lost at sea, and a barrage of journalists, including Cardinal, barge into their home to interview Bud and Kelly. They ask him several times if their parents ever sexually abused them, ignoring the fact that two adolescents are fearful they may be about to lose their parents.

Bud is upset and asks them whatever happened to the ethics of journalism, and the pioneers like Cronkite and Murrow. The reporters seem dumbfounded and have no clue who the two icons are.

A reporter offers a million dollars for their exclusive story, to which Bud tells Kelly to get them a Snapple.

When Peggy gets back, the reporters ask her what happened, and Cardinal whispers for her to “cry if she can.” A male reporter tells Peggy if Al turns up dead, they will pay her a fortune for her story.

But Al does come home, and tells a remarkable story of how he was rescued by dolphins that guided him to shore and protected him from sharks. Still, the reporters do not care unless Bud was sexually abused. The episode ends with Cardinal's most telling monologue: "It's sweeps guys; unless that dolphin was Michael Jackson's lovechild, we've got nothing."

Season 10, Episode 6: "The Weaker Sex," *Married... With Children*. First aired 22 October 1995 by Fox. Directed by Robert A. Bowen and Amanda Bearse, and written by Dvora Inwood.

Peggy takes a self-defense class, and knocks out a pickpocket while in line with Al for the premiere of *The Bridges of Madison County*. Cardinal is there covering the premiere, and sees Peggy's heroics. She interviews her and Peggy is a hero overnight. Newspaper headlines call Al a "wussy."

Embarrassed, Al tries to stage fights in front of cameras, but each time, Peggy protects him. Newspaper headlines speaking of the heroic Peg follow each episode. However, at the end, with a cameraman present, he knocks out Kelly's new boyfriend.

Season 10, Episode 23: "Bud Hits the Books," *Married... With Children*. First aired 28 April 1996 by Fox. Directed by Sam W. Orender and written by Stacie Lipp.

Bud is caught masturbating in the university library, and is put on a school trial. Al and his group, No Ma'am, stage a protest outside the trial to defend Bud's "normal"

activity, now known as “The Bundy.” Cardinal covers the protest, calling Bud’s right to “touch himself” inalienable. The camera then moves to the protest, and the floating microphone is at the bottom of the screen.

Season 10, Episode 26: “Torch Song Duet,” *Married...With Children*. First aired 19 May 1996 by Fox. Directed by Gerry Cohen, and written by Donelle Q. Buck.

Al, banned from calling in a sports radio show, helps Griff win the right to carry the Olympic torch in Atlanta. Griff originally planned to bring Al along, but when a beautiful woman approaches, he chooses to take her instead. Bundy gets very jealous that Griff is now a local icon. T-shirts are made in his honor and Griff enjoys a lot of press. A TV reporter even offers him a free car.

When Griff runs by with the torch, Al snaps and knocks him out. He is now hated because the torch has to be returned to Athens and the run must begin again. Cardinal covers this story. She gives a play-by-play of Al knocking the torch from his hand and into the mall fountain. She calls him a local hooligan, and later that night on the news, calls him a national hooligan for being the first in 3,000 years to extinguish the flame.

Appendix: Major Characters in *Married...With Children*.**Al Bundy**

The protagonist of *Married...With Children*. The ultimate loser down on his luck. Bundy peaked in high school, scoring four touchdowns in a football game. He is now a women's shoe salesman who loves sports and often attends a local strip club called The Jiggly Room. He can't stand his wife and is ashamed of his kids.

Peggy Bundy

Al's wife, his girlfriend in high school. Peggy is the ultimate lazy housewife. She refuses to work or cook, watches soap operas all day, eats bon-bons, and orders from the TV shopping networks with Al's money.

Bud Bundy

Al and Peggy's son, a very smart kid but a socially awkward nerd who cannot get a date. Often shown romancing blow-up dolls and getting rejected by beautiful girls. The stereotypical nerd.

Kelly Bundy

Al and Peggy's daughter. A stereotypical "dumb blonde." Unintelligent, an easy lay, brings home biker guys and the like. Beautiful, and through an internship becomes

weather anchor for a local TV station. Fired when it turns out she's illiterate and can't read off the Teleprompter.

Marcy Darcy

Al's neighbor and arch-enemy. A feminist. The antithesis of Al, successful, smart. Works at a local bank, and always foils Al's plans by stabbing him in the back. When Al tried to register the No Ma'am church, Marcy tipped off journalist Cardinal to go undercover and ruin that idea.

Jefferson Darcy

Marcy's completely whipped husband, at her beck and call. Secretly with Al plots behind her back, but once Marcy comes in, he is submissive to her. He is Al's partner in crime. Bundy, however, knows Jefferson is weak when it comes to Marcy.

Miranda Veracruz De La Jolla Cardinal

A TV news reporter who often complains because she has to cover the Bundys. Not much is divulged about her background, but off the cuff she says she is from a country that rhymes with equator. She speaks English with no accent except when saying her name, in which she speaks with a stereotypically thick accent. Says she slept with Andy Rooney, but wishes it were Peter Jennings. That may have helped her on her career path. Admits that she is the token minority reporter and accepts the fact she is given the less-newsworthy assignments.