

# "Tracey Takes On..." Season 1 Episode Guide, Review and Commentary

## Part 2: Episodes 6 through 10, the "Best Of" special Compiled by Roger Reini ([roger@rreini.com](mailto:roger@rreini.com))

This is a detailed episode guide to, review of, and commentary on episodes 6 through 10, plus the "best of" special, of the award-winning first season of TRACEY TAKES ON ..., the HBO series starring Tracey Ullman. Sprinkled throughout the guide are my commentaries and reviews of the various episodes, sketches and bits.

### OTHER EPISODE GUIDES

Episode guides to other seasons can be found at <http://www.rreini.com/tracey/>, as can a concise episode guide for all seasons (no commentary, one-line descriptions of sketches).

Episodes are listed in the order of their original airdate on HBO.

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[Commentary on TTO Season 1, episodes 1-5](#)

### 6. Law (Feb 28 1996)

*OPENING BED SEQUENCE:* "Law - order - sheriff - "High Noon" - judge - jury - "12 Angry Men" - sequestered --appeal -- constitution -- Murphy's Law -- Burke's Law -- above the law -- outside the law -- the law according to ... me."

*COMMENT:* That last one got a smile from me <g>.

#### *SHORT BITS:*

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (donut shop owner): She tells us about a legal problem they faced when they sold a donut to a customer -- a finger donut, the finger coming from a clumsy nephew. But the case couldn't go forward -- no evidence (it had been eaten)....

Hope Finch (college student): She tells us about some girls who were into shoplifting for the thrill of it, not because they were short on funds. They were eventually caught, but they might be back at it. Seems a professor's hairpiece has gone missing....

#### *LONGER SKETCHES:*

The scene is a California courtroom. An exotic dancer is suing the owner of a vending machine for \$1 million after she sat on a container of soup, which left a mark on her rear, which ruined her ability to dance exotically. Her lawyer is Sydney Cross. She has her client show the jury the

mark on her rear. She calls the owner of the vending machine to the stand. The temperature of the soup was raised because customers prefer hotter soup, he says. After a rocky start, she proceeds to question him about a vending machine that was in the cafeteria at his college -- a machine that was completely screwed up, never giving you what you asked for. Did he kick the machine? Yes, he did. Why? Sydney proposes that the machine was a parental surrogate, and by kicking the machine, and increasing the temperature of the soup, he's getting back at his parents for any mistreatment at their hands. Yes, he tearfully admits, that's true. As his testimony concludes, one juror (an older man) asks to see the evidence again....

**COMMENT:** This was a pretty decent sketch. I got a kick out of the old man who was too busy cleaning his glasses to see the "evidence" the first time around and wanted to see it again <g>.

We see a commercial for a law firm; a satisfied client is giving a testimonial. Also watching this commercial are Ruby Romaine and her son, a veteran to whom life has not been kind. She suggests that he arrange an "accident" at the grocery store so he can collect big bucks (slip on some vegetable oil, writhe around in pain, the works). Scams like this have worked for some friends of hers -- and some relatives, too.

**COMMENT:** Usually we blame the lawyers for the problems with our legal system, but there are some unscrupulous "victims", too.

The Rosenthals are enjoying their new apartment in Boca Raton. That is, until the power company started working on the grounds, subjecting them to constant noise. Add to that the occasional low-flying helicopter, and you've got some disgruntled people. Harry (Michael Tucker) talks to the work crew, but they are uncooperative and continue with their work. Fern starts a petition drive in the apartment building to force the work to stop. One tenant signs it without asking what it's for. He does not fit the profile of the average tenant (elderly, Jewish). Later on, Harry checks with the light company. They don't have a crew working in that location. What's going on? Still later, Harry and Fern are approached on the golf course by the police. Something \*is\* going on. The work crew is actually part of an undercover police operation. Seems the tenant below the Rosenthals (the tenant mentioned above) is suspected of being a major drug dealer. The police ask them to allow them to use their apartment as the staging point for a raid on Saturday. Fern is reluctant, but Harry agrees. It's the right thing to do, he says. This will require them to cancel their entertainment plans that evening, which they do. Saturday night arrives, and so do the Rosenthals' "guests". It's mostly sit-around-and-wait time. Then the raid begins. Agents rappel from the balcony down to the suspect's apartment and smash through the window. We hear gunfire. Fern and Harry are scared, but they're out of harm's way. The next day, all is quiet. Harry's calmly watching TV (the exotic dancer in the first sketch won her lawsuit), but Fern is still upset. What if the guy makes bail and comes looking for us? There's a knock at the door. It's one of the police officers. Fern makes him slide his badge under the door, then she lets him in. Turns out that the bust went bust. The suspect was actually a Drug Enforcement Agency agent who was undercover -- very deeply undercover. This is too much for Fern, who shows the officer the door. But even after what happened, Harry doesn't regret anything. At the end, he picks up the officer's badge (which he left behind) and imagines himself as "Rosenthal -- Homicide."

**COMMENTS:** Not a bad sketch. While the general subject wasn't particularly humorous, the details that fleshed it out did give me a chuckle or two. Cases in point: Fern's observation that

she can't get good customer service from the light company, yet Neil Diamond is still getting paid for the songs of his playing while she's on hold; Harry's irritation at the helicopter interrupting an imminent romantic interlude; and Fern's fears about the Witness Protection Program ("they'll send us to a place with snow and no Jews").

*CLOSING SHOT:*

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (again): Lawyers are like bagels -- you don't want nothin' to do with them!

*CREDITS:* No sketch, just the expanded version of the theme.

*OVERALL COMMENTS:* Pretty darn good, as usual.

## **7. Vanity (Mar 06 1996)**

*OPENING SEQUENCE:* "Vanity (hm) -- facelifts -- toupees -- hair plugs -- collagen shots -- penile implants (hmph!) -- diet, thin, trim -- lean -- mirror, mirror, on the wall -- vanity"

*COMMENT:* Nice touch, that little "hmph!"

*SHORT BITS:*

Chic (cab driver): Because he's a self-proclaimed "chick magnet", he wants to look good for the ladies (mousse in the beard, a little aftershave, very clean fingernails) -- and, he plucks his eyebrows (don't you dare tell anyone).

The Rosenthals: Harry got Fern a surprise: vanity license plates for her Lincoln. They say "4N". Say it fast -- say it really fast. Does it say "Fern" (like Harry thinks) or "foreign" (like Fern thinks)? She doesn't want the plates anymore ...

Virginia Bugge (politician's wife): You Americans are so vain -- you probably think this show is about you - - don't you? DON'T YOU?

*COMMENT:* Thank you, Carly Simon <g>! For those who didn't get that, this is almost a direct quote from her hit "You're So Vain".

*LONGER SKETCH:*

Kay's going to be a bridesmaid in a wedding, so she's going to have her dress fitted. As she gets ready to leave, she makes sure that Mother's all set (knows what medicines to take when, how to get in touch, that sort of thing). We see her hop on her trusty moped (what happened to the car?) and head to the salon. When she tries the dress on, it needs some work -- and frankly, so does she. So the makeover begins. The dress is taken in here and there, her hair is restyled, her lashes are trimmed -- and voila! Meet the new Kay! She looks -- kinda nice. As the fitting continues, her beeper goes off. It's Mother with an emergency. Kay dashes out of the salon, still wearing her dress, and speeds back home on the moped (what a sight!). As she arrives home, the rooftop siren is wailing. It must be important. Actually, it wasn't. Mother calls Kay (who's still wearing the bridesmaid dress) a trollop, which she denies. Then Mother pulls out her feeding tube (this is offscreen; we never see Mother, just hear her buzzing), which causes nasty gastric juices to splash on Kay's dress. But she missed the hat ...

**COMMENTS:** I'm always glad whenever Kay appears 'cause she's one of my favorite characters. In this sketch, she had a few things to say about breasts. Her mother told her once that if God had intended for breasts to be seen, He wouldn't have created large woolen pullovers. Then she describes her own as "rather shy, like bats hanging quietly in the dark, happy to be out of the limelight."

**SHORT BITS:**

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (donut shop owner): Vanity is like a donut -- more specifically, it's like the little colored sprinkles you put on donuts: good show, no taste. But she still puts them on ....

**COMMENT:** I like Mrs. Noh in these short bits, 'cause she always has a pungent insight into the human condition. Plus, she almost always can find a way to relate whatever she's talking about to a donut. Notable exception: comparing lawyers to bagels -- "you don't want nothin' to do with them!"

Ruby Romaine (makeup artist): As a makeup artist, she's in a good position to know about vanity. She says the men she's worked with are twice as vain as the women.

**LONGER SKETCH:**

Attorney Sydney Cross and co-counsel are heading to court to continue with the trial of her client, who's accused of cutting out her husband's pancreas. But what's foremost on her mind today is her new hairdo. Does it look OK, she continually asks, or does it look like Brillo?. Her new 'do is the big story of the day on the Justice Channel coverage of the trial. In court, she asks a key prosecution witness if her hair looks all right. Naturally, the prosecution objects; this is irrelevant, they say. But is it? In her closing argument, she show the jury her old 'do, then her new one. The key witness didn't notice any difference. So how can his testimony about the defendant be believed? It works; her client is acquitted. But Sydney's still not happy; that evening, as she watches the TV coverage, she notices several shots of her with lipstick on her teeth.

**COMMENT:** The California legal system is ripe for satire and parody, especially after The Trial (of O.J. Simpson). The focus on Sydney's 'do came straight from The Trial and Marcia Clark's 'dos. And I didn't even mention the discussion about the lipstick and lip gloss. Sydney is becoming one of my favorite characters, too.

**SHORT BIT:**

Trevor Ayliss (flight attendant): He tells us about the time he met a plastic surgeon, who told him about the "boob job table", a device used to check how well the breast implants have been, well, implanted (he went into the details, but I won't). He also tells us about the time one of Linda Granger's implants burst at altitude.

**LONGER SKETCH:**

The scene is war-torn Bosnia. Why are we here? Because there's a fashion shoot, and Janie Pillsworth is in charge. One of the models has a hard time grasping the subtleties of the conflict, so Janie explains it to her in terms of rent-controlled Manhattan apartments. This does the trick.

A bomb explodes. Quick, let's do the shoot now while the dust is still in the air. The combatants could care less about the fashion shoot; they have their own shooting to do, and they continue to do it. During one shoot, there's an explosion and a man goes flying through the air. Did you get it, Janie asks the photographer (no, he didn't). Unfortunately, that man had stepped on a grenade and was killed. On to the next idea: have the UN troops put flowers down the barrels of the prop guns the models are carrying. They're not very good at this. They're not very good at keeping the peace, either; another round of sniper fire erupts. This time, Janie is hit in the leg. There goes her last pair of Donna Karan hose ....

**COMMENT:** What an absurd situation! It's completely over the top. Here they are, in the middle of a life and death struggle, and all they can think about are their normal trivial thoughts. What a comment on the ultimate vanity of vanity.

**SHORT BITS:**

Rayleen Gibson (stuntwoman): She's about to fall down a flight of stairs. She's complaining about the breast pads she has to wear to make her look more like the star, who also uses pads (only hers are on the inside). She tells us there's a certain knack to falling down stairs properly; you have to keep your legs together to avoid overexposure....

Linda Granger (Actress/singer/author): She's had a lot of work done, but she likes to think of it as a restoration process.

**CREDITS:** The theme song plays underneath, in its longest version to date (we hear most of the guitar solo).

**COMMENT:** Will we ever hear the complete theme, from start to finish? (yes, we will; see number 11, the "Best Of" special)

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** This was a great episode. There have been better sketches in other episodes, but the quality of all the sketches in this episode was very high. This is a candidate for best episode of the series, IMHO.

## **8. Death (Mar 13 1996)**

**OPENING SEQUENCE:** Death -- black -- widows -- coffins -- cremation -- grief -- relief -- "Death of a Salesman" -- Grateful Dead -- critics -- vultures -- carcass -- tie-dyed -- "the day the music died" -- death.

**SHORT BITS:**

Trevor Ayliss (flight attendant): What do you do when a passenger dies in flight? You can't move the body anywhere. So you do what you can -- put a mask over the eyes, make sure the seat belts are very tight, etc. One thing about dead passengers: they are *\*very\** well-behaved.

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (donut shop owner): Death is like (you guessed it) a donut: they're both big circles. When you're born, you are small, shriveled up, have no teeth, and have little control of your bodily functions. When you're old (as an elderly uncle demonstrates), you are small, shriveled up, have no teeth, and have little control of your bodily functions.

**COMMENT:** Insightful as always. **SELF-REFERENCE:** Notice the two pictures on the wall of the shop? The lower one is a picture of Garry Shandling as Larry Sanders; the upper one happens to be a recent picture of Tracey. There was at least one promo clip for the series where Mrs. Noh pointed out the pictures and had some comments.

**LONGER SKETCHES:**

The scene is the home of the Bugges, MP (and new Cabinet member) Timmy (Hugh Laurie) and dutiful wife Virginia (Tracey). They are reading the paper and talking about a developing scandal involving an MP (member of Parliament) and sausages. While they're talking about it, we see a growing crowd of reporters outside. Apparently, this scandal involves Timmy. It seems that when he attended a recent reunion of Winstonians (alums of Winston College) at the club, they engaged in a bizarre ritual where they took the porky boy (the new boy), made him remove most of his clothes, thrash him with sausages, then made him exhibit his "sausage." Timmy, as the newest member of the Cabinet, was the porky boy. Apparently, a Polaroid fell into the hands of the press. And there also was a bobbing competition (no details given). Timmy plans to resign, but Virginia says that's no good, there's only one thing for him to do: fall on his own sword, i.e., take his own life. Later, they go to the garage. Everything's all set; the children have been told that Daddy will be going away for a very long time. There are several methods from which Timmy can choose (eat your heart out, Dr. Kevorkian). Virginia says goodbye and leaves. Several hours later, Timmy has his head in the noose, still very much alive. Suddenly, Virginia returns. There's been a new and more serious scandal (involving a parrot), so Timmy's has been forgotten. No need to kill himself. Just one thing: did the parrot name any names?

**COMMENT:** There's nothing like a good British sex scandal <g>.

Makeup artist Ruby Romaine is enjoying a quiet time at home when there's a knock at the door. It's the chauffeur (Udo Kier) for movie great Vivian Biltmore, who's asked to have Ruby brought to her home. Seems Ruby did a wonderful makeup job on her several years ago in a picture for which she won an Oscar. Ruby is reluctant to go, as she wasn't on good terms with Vivian. But an offering of cash changes her mind. She gets into the limo, and they drive away. When they arrive, Ruby learns what's really going on: Vivian has passed away, and her body needs a final makeup job. She needs a mortician, not a beautician, says Ruby. The chauffeur leaves to get Ruby a cocktail, so she's alone with the body. When he returns much later, the job is complete. Vivian now looks as she did when she was alive, as he loved her.

**COMMENT:** This is mostly a Ruby Romaine monologue, as the only person with whom she speaks is the chauffeur (the body doesn't count). She is a complex character. There are definitely some things that are distasteful about her (like her bigotry towards Mexican-Americans and her tendency to be a gossip), but there are also some redeeming qualities (witness her doing the makeup job). Ruby may not be my favorite character, but she is portrayed very well. There may be some hope for her....

Kay is on another trip to the store for things for Mother. She puts on a scarf -- a very long scarf -- and her helmet and hops on the moped. As she remembers what to get at the store, the scarf becomes tangled in the moped chain. It draws tight around Kay's neck, causing her to lose control and crash. The wheel continues to turn, drawing the scarf ever tighter. Suddenly, everything turns white, and Kay awakens. But she's not on earth anymore; she's in heaven. Yes,

it seems that she was strangled by the scarf. One of the first persons she meets is her long-dead father. He talks about why he left her and her mother to run off with someone else. He tells her that now that she's in heaven, she can do anything and everything she wants, especially those things she was unable to do on earth. Take, for instance, ballroom dancing. Apparently, Kay was good at it once and was going to participate in a big competition -- unfortunately, Mother's illness intervened and Kay had to miss it. That was a long time ago, but you never forget how to do it, as we see Kay and Father dancing away. All this time, Kay's wanted to go back to earth, 'cause who would take care of Mother? But she's starting to change her mind. She wants a peach; she's got a peach. She wants a tiara; she's got a tiara. She wants to lose her virginity; she gets Titus ("tight ass", perhaps?), a man in excellent shape (with some very strategically placed grapes) who's been doing this since Roman days. Just before they touch, Kay is pulled away. It's not her time yet, it seems. Looks like Titus will have to wait for another time. We return to earth, where paramedics succeed in reviving Kay. She's all right, she insists, and refuses further treatment. Back on the moped, back to the store, back to reviewing the list of things to get. There's a new item on the list: grapes.

**COMMENT:** Vintage Kay. But notice what she said the first time she went through her list for the store: rat poison. Do I detect a hint of resentment towards Mother for continuing to hang on ... and on?

**UNDER THE CREDITS:** Stuntwoman Rayleen Gibson is in a noose, about to simulate being hanged and feigning death for the camera. She tells us about the instructions stunt people receive when something goes wrong: don't do anything to mess up the shot, if at all possible. Then -- action! She drops her head and does her job. It's a very convincing job -- and as the shot continues, it becomes even more convincing. Has something gone wrong? We'll never know -- we fade out.

**COMMENT:** Don't worry, Rayleen's in next week's episode.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** This was \*not\* an upbeat episode. Offbeat, possibly downbeat -- maybe more offbeat. Well, it \*is\* hard to be funny with a subject like death. But it did improve on its second viewing.

## **9. Health (Mar 20 1996)**

**OPENING SEQUENCE:** "Health -- an apple a day -- healthy mind, healthy body -- feeling blue -- turning green -- sugar free, fat free, salt free ... taste free -- at least you have your -- health."

**SHORT BITS:**

Kay Clark (caregiver): She never gets sick. Why, she's not missed a day of work in over 15 years. And why is that? Because Mother is a hypochondriac and makes Kay take all sorts of nasty potions and what not. They seem to be doing the job, but the cure is worse than the disease. "I'm the only one in this house who's earned the right to be sick," says her mother.

**COMMENT:** She's right -- the cures she mentioned (which I won't mention here) DO sound worse than the diseases they're meant to stave off!

Chic (cab driver): Why waste your time pumping iron when you could be pumping chicks? After all, he's got the body of a 35 year old, but the dick of a teenager (so he says). He then proceeds to

show us how he can steer the cab with it....

**COMMENT:** Very confident in himself, isn't he?

**LONGER SKETCH:**

We're in the conference room of Sydney Cross's law firm, reviewing the cases of the day. Sydney's latest case involves a man who jumped in front of a speeding train, killing himself. No, she's not representing the dead man's estate against the train company (the company is immune from liability); she's suing the estate! Yes, her new client is a woman who was on that train, and as a result of it being delayed lost her chance at a high-paying job. The other attorneys think this lawsuit is ill-advised. The senior partner tells Sydney she needs a vacation (her last one was when she was 12 -- a family trip into the wilderness, which she describes as punishment). So she checks into a health spa. She complains about the food in the minibar ("healthy crap") and the view outside her window (a breathtaking landscape, with mountains in the distance -- but she'd rather see a building or a carpark). While in the steam room, she encounters stuntwoman Rayleen Gibson, who's clearly in pain. Not from any stunts, mind you; she slipped on some soap in the shower. The massage at the health spa aggravated her problem. Ever mindful of an opportunity, Sydney gives Rayleen her card. Later, Sydney's having a mud bath. So is publisher Janie Pillsworth. Sydney happens to mention that mud can harbor germs and microbes; a woman sued a spa because an infection she received from the mud left her unable to bear children. Janie is disturbed by this news. As for Sydney, she's protected herself by wearing plastic pants, which nothing can penetrate (ask her ex-husband). Still later, there's a scene in the lobby. It seems entertainer Linda Granger has fallen off the wagon and is drunk. Sydney sees this scene and offers to represent Linda in a lawsuit against the spa for all sorts of distress and sexual harassment. Then Rayleen says she's suing the spa for her injuries, and guess who her lawyer is? Sydney Cross. Then Janie Pillsworth says she's having a sample of mud analyzed, and if there's anything wrong with it, the spa will hear from her attorney -- Sydney Cross. Guess this vacation turned out to be worthwhile after all....

**COMMENTS:** This was a pretty decent sketch. I especially enjoyed the throwaway lines, like this one (when Sydney was talking to Rayleen): "I'm a lawyer - you name it, I'll sue it." Or this one: "In the beginning was the word. And the word was - damages." Or how about building a golf course in a lightning-prone area being grounds for a lawsuit? And this motto for American society: "Everything is someone else's fault." Sydney's a very useful character; I hope she's around next season.

**SHORT BIT:**

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (donut shop owner): She demonstrates her meditative techniques -- facing the dragon, embracing the tiger, etc. Then she eats four donuts and go to work.

**COMMENT:** The day after this aired, I read in the paper that an Asian- American advocacy group has called Mrs. Noh offensive and want her off the air. I respectfully disagree; I personally don't find her offensive at all.

**LONGER SKETCH:**

Fern Rosenthal is having a snack with two neighbors. She's just learned from neighbor Jovie (Julie Kavner) (she reads, you know) that Boca Raton is Spanish for "mouth of the rat." She



doesn't care for that. She also doesn't care for her nose being continually stuffed up; the last thing she smelled was Newark. Jovie says it's probably pollen. Perhaps it would improve if Fern were to go mallwalking with the ladies. Just then, Harry (Michael Tucker) arrives home from a round of golf, complaining about a backache. Jovie says it's not golf, it's repressed rage. Harry doesn't buy it. But they do go mallwalking. But Fern would rather stop and admire the merchandise in the stores. Meanwhile, Harry is complaining about the mall's drugstore. He'd never arrange the merchandise like that, he tells Fern. One day, Fern's nose is stuffed worse than ever. And Harry's mad at the drugstore because they didn't like his advice on product placement. Guess they both have some pent-up rage. Fern lets hers out by beating on everything with Harry's lumbar pillow. She hates Boca Raton! But now she can breathe again. And Harry misses his drugstores and hates retirement and mallwalking -- and wouldn't you know it, his backache improves. Boca's not home, but there are some benefits, like nice sunsets. Some neighbors call out to them. Have they settled in? Yes. How do they like Boca? They love it (sniff -- ouch!)

*SHORT BIT:*

Ruby Romaine (makeup artist): Her new insurance company is telling her to go for a mammogram or lose her coverage, so she's going. She's not concerned about breast cancer at her age. After all, by the time any spot on the Matterhorn makes its way to base camp, she'll be 105! But she's ready for her closeups, Dr. DeMille.

*CLOSING BIT:* No sketch, just the theme.

*OVERALL COMMENTS* (Mar. 21, 1996): Another pretty decent episode. I especially liked the Sydney Cross sketch.

## **10. Fame (Mar 27 1996)**

*OPENING SEQUENCE:* Fame -- Nobel Prize -- cover of Time -- prima donna - - 15 minutes -- Andy Warhol -- David Bowie -- I'm gonna live forever -- turning into a monster -- where are they now -- fame.

*SHORT BITS:*

Chic (New York cab driver): He tells us about the time he drove Andrew Lloyd Webber, who was telling him about a new musical he was working on -- "The Invisible Man", with no actors. Chic said that was a bad idea; why not do the Phantom of the Opera? And look what happened. But what thanks did he get? Nothing, not even a Michael Crawford CD. He warned Faye Dunaway about Webber, you know.

*COMMENT:* Of course he did ...

Sydney Cross (defense attorney): Used to be that lawyers stayed out of the limelight. But ever since "The Trial" (meaning the O.J. Simpson criminal trial), that's not been true. Lawyers are now celebrities. But lawyers do have an advantage over everyone else: they can bill for their 15 minutes of fame.

*COMMENT:* I think I've said this before, but I'll say it again: Sydney Cross is one of my favorite characters. She can always be useful for social commentary.

Kay Clark (care giver): She tells us about the time she cashed a check for fugitive drug lord Pablo Escobar. He wasn't hiding out in the jungle; no, he was living over a donut shop somewhere in L.A. After she cashed the check, he told her that if she ever wanted anyone killed, look him up. She never took him up on that offer (didn't leave his card); a pity, for if he had, Mother might not be alive today (don't say such things, she says to herself).

**COMMENT:** Kay certainly has mixed feelings about Mother -- a true love- hate relationship!

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning (donut shop owner): Many famous people have stopped in her donut shop, including Marty Ingels, Arte Johnson, and Linda Granger, whose autographed picture is on the wall. Quoting Mrs. Noh: "She took stuff from her ass and injected it into her lips."

This provides a good lead-in to ...

### *LONG SKETCH:*

Linda Granger and Alex Karras (himself) are on the road in Poughkeepsie, doing "Love Letters" to small audiences at a dinner theater. The rewards are mainly artistic; they certainly aren't financial (Alex asks Linda, "Did you get paid?" "No"). Later, Linda's on a plane (in coach) heading back to L.A., reading a script. Flight attendant Trevor comes back from first class to meet her, as he's been a fan of hers for a long time, ever since her series "VIP Lounge". Linda explains she's heading back to L.A. for pilot season ("For me, every day is pilot season" responds Trevor). As he leaves, Linda observes that she still has a strong homosexual fan base. Back in L.A., Linda goes to the studio to read for a part in a pilot (the script of which she was reading on the plane). The production staff, a bunch of 20- and 30-somethings, is underwhelmed (the producer is playing solitaire on his Powerbook).

Brief aside: as Linda leaves the studio, we see a director who's looking for a stuntperson to do a very dangerous stunt. All of the stuntpeople are reluctant to volunteer -- all, that is, except one: Rayleen Gibson. She volunteers. A very gutsy lady, that Rayleen.

Back to the story: Linda did not get the part; Marion Ross did. Granted, it would have been a bit unbelievable for Linda to play John Stamos' mother. She's in the office of her manager, Charles "Candy" Casino, asking what is available. The sad truth? Nothing is available. She's no longer in demand. How to get back into the public eye ... start drinking again? No, been there, done that. How about stalking? Linda could be stalked by an obsessive fan. That's brilliant, says "Candy", and he starts to set everything up. He'll arrange for a guy to act as a stalker. Of course, since this is a set-up, Linda won't be in any danger.

The next day, Linda is home (where her TV just happens to be showing an old tape of "VIP Lounge"). It's 11 o'clock and no stalker, so she calls "Candy". While she's talking to him, a vaguely menacing guy in a blue car drives up. It must be the "stalker". As she leaves for her errands, she motions him to follow her, which he does. After they leave, a guy in a red car pulls up. He's the guy who "Candy" sent to "stalk" Linda. So who's the guy in the blue car? A \*real\* stalker, that's who! But Linda doesn't know this, so she continues to play along. At the shopping mall, she "complains" to a clerk that she thinks she's being stalked. But don't call security just yet. He follows her into the parking garage. He approaches her as she's getting into her car. He's upset with her because he walked into a donut shop (Mrs. Noh's, no doubt) and saw an

autographed picture of Linda addressed to her number one fan. He thought HE was that number one fan, so he thinks she's betrayed him, and now she's going to pay. Linda finally realizes that this guy is a real stalker, so she takes off in her car. He follows. He chases her for several miles through busy city traffic. Suddenly, Linda loses control of the car and has an accident! She's unhurt, but the stalker's still coming after her, so she runs into an apartment building. Unfortunately, nobody lives there anymore, as it was condemned due to earthquake damage. He chases her throughout the building, and they end up on a walkway overlooking the center court. The police SWAT team arrives. They shoot at him but miss. He and Linda struggle on the railing, but he falls over the railing to his death in the empty swimming pool. It's over, and Linda is safe. Creak! No, she's not! One side of the railing gives way, and it swings out over the drained pool. Linda is hanging on for dear life! What will she do? What *\*will\** she do?

Now here's where it gets *\*interesting\** ....

Rayleen Gibson arrives on the scene ("I'll Tumble For Ya"). The "scene" is no longer a SWAT situation; it's become a location shoot for "Tracey Takes On". Reality and fiction collide and merge as Rayleen prepares to be Tracey's stunt double. So we then see Rayleen dressed as Linda prepare to fall from the railing. Meanwhile, Tracey (who was described by Rayleen as "that stupid little Brit girl who takes all the parts so no one else gets a crack at 'em") is leaving the makeup trailer. She's done for the day, so she's back to being herself. It can be very confusing keeping track of all those characters and alternate realities. Quiet on the set! It's time for Rayleen to do her thing. She falls. "Is she all right?" asks Tracey. Yes, she is. "As if I care -- goin' home."

**COMMENT:** Not a bad sketch -- not bad at all. It's got humor, it's got danger, it's got thrills and spills (the chase could have come straight from an old private eye show); what more could you ask for? The twist at the end (where reality invades fantasy -- or is that the other way around) was a nice one.

**END CREDITS:** The extended theme song.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:** The short bits were good, as always. So was the Linda Granger sketch, which I believe was the longest sketch of the season. And I'm glad that we finally got to see Tracey being more or less herself at the end of the Linda Granger sketch. I always enjoyed her opening and closing monologues on her Fox series; I wish she'd do it more often in the second season.

## **11. The Best of "Tracey Takes On..." (Apr 03 1996)**

This is a one-hour special featuring many of the best bits from the first season. There are no new sketches in this episode, though one sketch has been modified with a bit from a different sketch.

**OPENING SEQUENCE:** The usual one, but with a few differences.... The credits appear during Tracey's word association, rather than after. The word association this time is a list of the topics of each episode (Romance -- fame -- charity -- death -- nostalgia -- law -- vanity -- health -- royalty -- fame -- the best of). Following this is the theme song. This time, we hear the entire song as we see a sequence of clips from the various episodes.

From the "Fame" episode: Rayleen Gibson arrives on the set to do a fall. This is where she called Tracey "that stupid little Brit girl who takes all the parts so no one else gets a crack at 'em". Her parting shot: "Let's make movies!"

From the "Romance" episode: "Midge and Chris" (about the pro golfer and her "nutritionist"/lover)

Mrs. Noh Nan Ning on romance (it's like a donut)

From the "Charity" episode: "Fern's Charity Ball"

Hope Finch on Charity (can't talk)

Kay on Fame (meeting Pablo Escobar)

From the "Royalty" episode: "The Royal Visit"

Fern Rosenthal on Royalty (Steve and Eydie)

Sydney Cross on Fame (how lawyers are now famous)

From the "Family" episode: "One Night Stand" (where Trevor is asked to father a child). NOTE: This sketch is slightly different from its original airing. An excerpt from the Linda Granger sketch in "Fame" has been edited onto the beginning of this sketch.

Ruby Romaine on Health (getting a mammogram)

From the "Romance" episode: the fantasy dance sequence from the sketch featuring Hope.

*CLOSING CREDITS:* Longer than usual -- we hear the complete theme again, except this time we can hear it clearly, without the soundtrack from the sketch clips intruding.

*COMMENTS:* Some of these were my favorites, too (the Midge and Chris sketch, the Trevor sketch). I would put the other two sketches in my second tier -- good, but not my favorites. I would have replaced one of them with one of the Kay sketches -- either the charity one with Cheech Marin, or the royalty one where she meets the exiled king of Albania. I might also have included the entire Hope sketch on romance. But these are little quibbles.

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