

Gone but Not Unforgotten

By Stephen Sherrill
and Paul Tough

Every once in a while, a television program comes along that truly defines an era. "Home Improvement," which starred Tim Allen and played for many years on one of this nation's premier networks, was one such television program. And now, unless we have this wrong, it has gone off the air. Whatever day it was on — our best guess is Tuesday — is never going to be the same.

Although we ourselves never had the privilege of watching an episode, with the best sitcoms — and "Home Improvement" was on for many years, at least five years, perhaps as many as eight — that doesn't really matter. In a way, we all grew up with the characters on the show, which, from what we gather, was based around a family, perhaps called the Allens.

As a nation, we watched as that boy — the one with three names, Jonathan Something Something, who most likely played the son of Tim Allen — came of age before our very eyes. We're pretty sure that the cen-

tral couple, if indeed they were a couple, went through some difficult times together, but pulled through and always remembered to laugh — just as America learned to do during those same five or more years.

The show, like all great sitcoms, was a touchstone for our own lives. Sometimes, when channel surfing through the dial, we'd pass "Home Improvement" and think, "there's 'Home Improvement.'" Things like, "So-and-so to do a guest appearance

A sitcom that
truly filled
its time slot.

on 'Home Improvement'" or "'Home Improvement's' Tim Allen was seen in a restaurant" or "Coming up next: 'Home Improvement.'" Those are memories that can never be taken away, not even by an executive somewhere making a bottom-line decision to cancel the show with no concern whatsoever for the wishes of its many viewers — unless of course it was one of those things where Tim Allen wanted to go out on top, assuming the show is, at

present, on top, in which case we apologize to the executives of whichever network did in fact broadcast the program, and salute Tim Allen on his classy move.

The final episode itself was undoubtedly a worthy send-off, a last chance to say "So long" to some friends. For the many years the Allens came into our living rooms each week, America was their home, and, yes, they improved it.

So farewell Tim Allen, farewell that lady who — we're guessing — played his wife. Godspeed. Tuesday (Wednesday?) nights are going to seem awfully lonely without you. Thanks for the memories. What a long, strange trip it's been. We'll miss you. Goodbye. Adieu. An era has ended. We, as a people, are forever changed. □

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