

Lynda Hirsch on Soaps -- Gossip

by Lynda Hirsch

"One Life to Live" has lost another member of the Buchanan clan. Recently, Clint Ritchie died following the implantation of a pacemaker. Now we have gotten news that Phil Carey (Asa), 83, died this month, too. Carey was diagnosed with lung cancer three years ago. In the story line, Asa was killed off when Carey would not agree to go from contract to non-contract player. Carey joined OLTL about 30 years ago, and he and his high-living, conniving character were long an integral part of OLTL. Carey was admittedly crusty â€” he once told me, "Listen, young lady," (it was long ago), "always say what you want. Take a stand. Backing down is never a good thing." If you wanted to make Carey melt, the mention of his wife, Colleen, was the surest route. In real life, Clint Ritchie loved to tell this story about the man who played his Pa: "You know, for years when the Buchanans were hoisting a beer on the set, it was the real thing. Suddenly the producer cut off the liquor and replaced it with tonic water or tea. The reason was we did get a little lively on the set. I was the one elected to tell Phillie. When I told about the liquor being gone he was stunned. 'What (expletive) caused us to lose our booze?' I wanted to say, 'You, Phillie,' but he would never have believed it." The OLTL cast and crew from past to present planned to offer a toast to both Carey and Ritchie in Manhattan.

"Days of Our Lives" is about to lose another star. This time it is the actor's choice. Rachel Melvin (Chelsea) has decided not to renew her contract. The actress, who joined the soap in 2005, has seen her character go from detestable to delightful and everything in between. The illegitimate daughter of Bo and Billie, Chelsea has been on the backburner since her on-air romance with Daniel was axed. In the beginning, it was all Chelsea all the time. Now Chelsea pops up in "I don't know how to get a man" scenes. When the character was introduced, her drunken driving killed Bo and Hope's son. Hope eventually forgave her. Chelsea was on the road to redemption. The actress always made the character compelling. However, there were so many personality changes it was a wonder she didn't get whiplash. The character is being written off. No recast is expected.

In the "timing is everything" department, a major distributor of magazines is trying to strong-arm publishers to pay more for its services. A recent industry report shows that cash register magazine sales (where most magazines and tabloids are purchased) are down over 11 percent from a year ago. The distributor, Source Interlink, was refusing to send several published products including Soap Opera Weekly and Soap Opera Digest to high-selling outlets like Wal-Mart. Publishers had struck a deal with another distributor. This week, a court ordered the distribution by the alternative halted. This move hurts readers who just want to purchase an occasional magazine. Magazines do not make their money on the newsstand; it is the number of subscribers that sets advertising revenues. Advertising is down. Magazines are making "we can't believe how little it costs to subscribe" offers to pump up subscription ratings. On-site sales cost more to produce than a customer pays. Years ago, Reader's Digest did not have ads. It asked subscribers to pay more for the magazine so they would not have to put ads in it. Readers agreed to the higher price without ads. Two years later, the price of Reader's Digest was up and it was filled with advertising.

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