Detroit TV cultural icon 'Poopdeck Paul' dies

By Tim Kiska / Detroit News Television Writer September 21, 2000

Among baby boomers, few Detroit television personalities in the 1960s were bigger than Paul Allan Schultz -- better known to young viewers as "Poopdeck Paul."

He hosted Popeye and Pals on Channel 9 (then CKLW-TV, now CBET-TV) between 1956 and 1966, first as a weekend host and eventually as a seven-day-a-week personality.

But he became a local cultural icon for something other than Popeye cartoons. Schultz died Monday at his home in Belle River, Ontario. He was 75.

Between cartoons, he hosted limbo contests on the show, when limbo (with a hit record by Chubby Checker) was the rage among grade-schoolers. After the Beatles became big in 1964, he hosted a game in which contestants were judged by their ability to lip-sync Beatles records. He hosted miniature golf, football-throwing, bowling and table tennis competitions, as well. All of it was a hit with youngsters.

Along with the late Toby David, who played Captain Jolly, and Jerry Booth, who played Jingles the Clown, he ruled local kids' shows during the 1960s.

A native of Chesley, Ontario, he started his entertainment career in radio -- first in Kitchener, later in Montreal and Ottawa.

Recalls his son, William Schultz: "The name Poopdeck Paul came pretty much out of nowhere. They were about 10 minutes from going on the air, when somebody said, "Well, what are you going to call yourself?' And that's when he came up with the name."

Matthew Keelan, a director and producer at Channel 9 from 1950 until 1985, remembers Schultz for one particular innovation.

"He was one of the first people to get the crew to do things outside the studio," said Keelan. "He would end up having people doing gymnastics on the front lawn during the summer. He even had a skating rink during the winter weekends, and would shoot from there."

He was also smooth and quick.

WOMC-FM (104.3) sports director Mark Andrews remembers appearing on Schultz's show in a miniature golf contest.

"I was trying to win a bicycle for my sister, but I came in second," recalls Andrews. "I ended up instead with a box of Whiz candy bars and a box of 94 45-rpm records. He looked at me and told me, 'Remember, it's quantity, not quality.'"

Besides his son, Paul Schultz is survived by two daughters, Paddi Lou McDonough and Perri Lee Crerer; six grandsons, three granddaughters; four great grandsons; and two great granddaughters.

At Schultz's request, there will be no funeral services.