

icons

A TOAST TO TELEVISION'S BEST

THE SWEETEST GOODBYES

A look back at our favorite series finales in CBS history

by Jim Colucci

*M*A*S*H*

EPISODE: "Goodbye, Farewell and Amen"

AIRED: Feb. 28, 1983

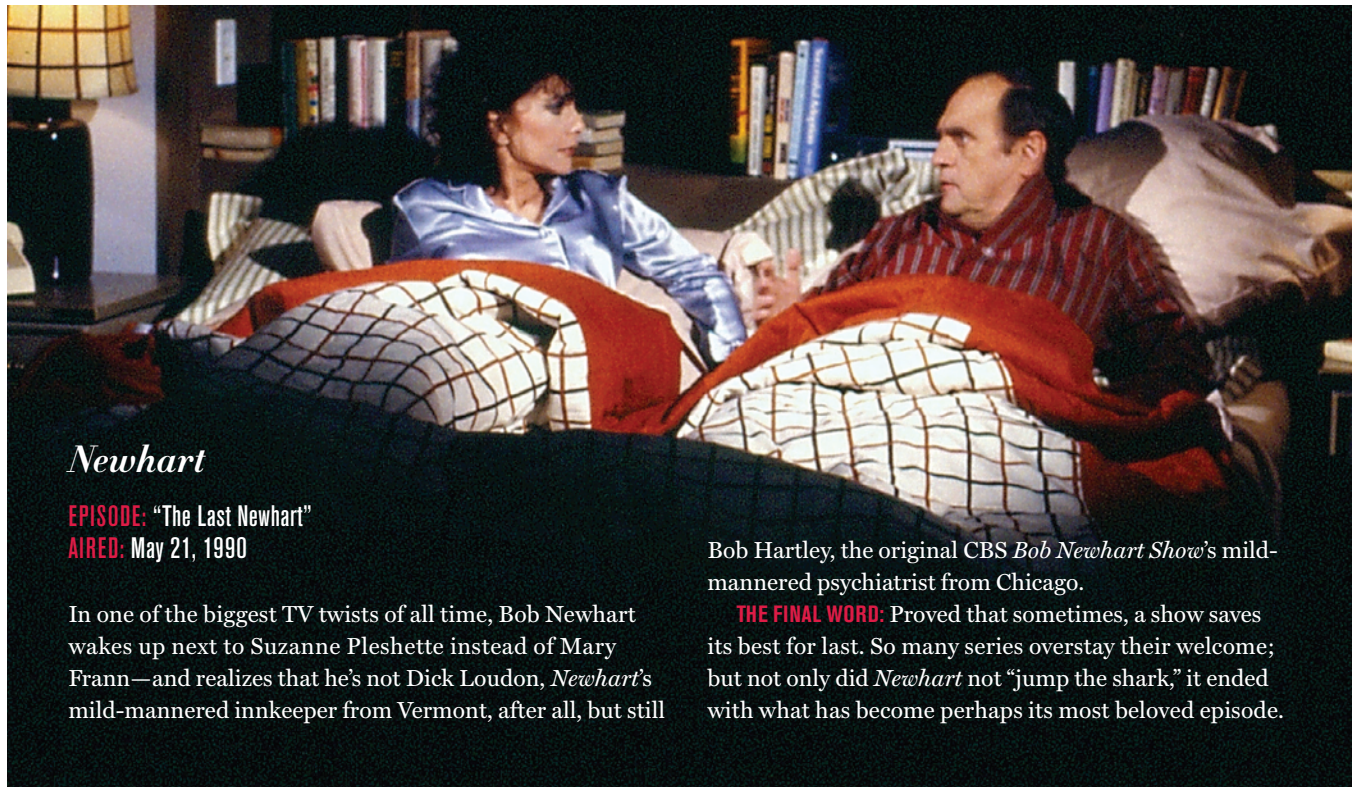
*M*A*S*H* had run as a series on CBS for 11 seasons—more than three times as long as the actual Korean War—before calling it quits.

An estimated 106 million Americans tuned in to watch Hawkeye, Hunnicutt, Hot Lips and the rest of the mobile 4077th strike their tents for the last time, turning "Goodbye, Farewell and Amen" into what is still—and likely forever to be—the most-watched scripted episode of television.

THE FINAL WORD: War may be hell, but as Hunnicutt spells out his message in paving stones for Hawkeye in the helicopter buzzing overhead, we realize that saying goodbye can be truly painful.



MORE SWEET GOODBYES



Newhart

EPISODE: "The Last Newhart"
AIRD: May 21, 1990

In one of the biggest TV twists of all time, Bob Newhart wakes up next to Suzanne Pleshette instead of Mary Frann—and realizes that he's not Dick Loudon, *Newhart's* mild-mannered innkeeper from Vermont, after all, but still

Bob Hartley, the original CBS *Bob Newhart Show's* mild-mannered psychiatrist from Chicago.

THE FINAL WORD: Proved that sometimes, a show saves its best for last. So many series overstay their welcome; but not only did *Newhart* not "jump the shark," it ended with what has become perhaps its most beloved episode.

Mary Tyler Moore

EPISODE: "The Last Show"
AIRD: March 19, 1977

Before *Mary Tyler Moore's* finale, most shows would end with an ordinary episode, with nary a word of farewell. But *Mary's* cast and crew had grown nostalgic over their final season, co-star Betty White told the Archive of American Television, so the writers chose to end on an emotional note.

In the episode's final scene, after a new owner buys Minneapolis station WJM and fires all but incompetent news anchor Ted Baxter, the bawling gang gathers in a group hug and exits the newsroom one last time, singing "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." And it's good of Mare who then leans back in the doorway—literally to turn out the lights on a TV classic.

THE FINAL WORD: Reinforced the concept of closure for series television, giving viewers the chance to say goodbye. After all, to paraphrase Lou Grant, we treasure these people.



Everybody Loves Raymond

EPISODE: "Finale"
AIRD: May 16, 2005

Raymond culminated its nine-year run with a typically half-hour-long episode, but "Finale" reminded us that Ray Barone was not the title character for nothing.

When Ray undergoes routine surgery and his doctors worry that he's not waking up properly from the anesthesia, the family panics over the potential of losing its favorite son and emotional center, then rejoices when Ray turns out to be OK. The deceptively simple setup gives the Barones one last chance to do everything they do so well: argue, annoy, eat and love—not necessarily in that order.

THE FINAL WORD: Bucked the trend toward bloated farewells a la *Seinfeld* or *Friends*. Not oversized or overblown, "Finale" is a perfect-sized reminder why, for so many seasons, everybody truly did love *Raymond*. 🍷



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