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Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom Celebrates 50 Years; Looks Forward

OMAHA, Neb -- A television and cultural icon is turning 50. *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* premiered on NBC on Jan. 6, 1963. And television hasn't been the same since.

"*Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* brought the world's most exotic places and creatures right into Americans' living rooms," said Jim Fowler, who joined the legendary Marlin Perkins as the show's co-host. "Over the years it also became a Sunday evening tradition for families all across the country. And we pioneered a new television genre – the reality show.

"Of course, at the time we just wanted to create the most entertaining and educational show we could," Fowler said.

Mission accomplished. From its premiere 50 years ago, *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* has entertained, educated and inspired generations of Americans. *Wild Kingdom* received 41 major awards including four Emmys. It was the first television program to receive the National PTA's endorsement for recommended family viewing.

"I can't tell you how many people tell me that they pursued a career in zoology, wildlife conservation or a related field because of *Wild Kingdom*," Fowler said. "Beyond the awards and the ratings, the show's positive impact is truly astounding."

NBC was home to *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* until 1970, when it was syndicated on the Mutual of Omaha National Syndication Network. More than 200 local television stations joined the network, enabling the show to reach the largest audience in its history.

The Original *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* remained in production until 1986, with Peter Gros joining Fowler as the show's co-host upon Marlin Perkins' retirement. It continued in syndication through the mid-1990s.

The *Wild Kingdom* story didn't end there, however. From 2002 through 2011, the Animal Planet network was home to a new series of *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* shows. These hour-long programs built on the *Wild Kingdom* heritage by offering viewers compelling wildlife stories in a one-hour documentary format.

“We're excited to celebrate a half century of adventure, and we've got lots of exciting things planned to kick off *Wild Kingdom's* next 50 years,” Fowler said. “*Wild Kingdom* has always been ahead of its time, and we're moving forward on initiatives that will thrill our current fans and engage new generations.”

Wild Kingdom's website, www.Wildkingdom.com, is the hub of all that is new and exciting in the *Wild Kingdom*, Fowler said. From there, viewers can link to a new *Wild Kingdom* YouTube channel that features a complete library of original *Wild Kingdom* shows as well as new videos.

Liking “Wild Kingdom TV” on Facebook and following “Wild Kingdom” on Twitter will allow fans to keep up with all the latest Wild Kingdom news, videos, contests and trivia, he said.

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