

Stan Kaufman

From an email about 'Almost Live!' that he sent June 3, 2024

"My part in all of this [the Museum of History & Industry exhibit] is so minor that I think a short email account will suffice.

"Back in the late 1980s and 1990s, I recorded 'Almost Live!' for our own amusement but without a sense of what a classic phenomenon it was. Some years later when videotape was being obsoleted, I digitized all those tapes before our devices could start to malfunction. My edits were inelegant but serviceable, though I'd not bothered to record important metadata like broadcast dates or episode order. Nevertheless, I at least had a bunch of Almost Live! to watch again.

"I mentioned one evening to the parents of Clara Berg [MOHAI's costuming and textiles specialist], who have been friends of ours for decades, that I had this repository, and I'd be happy to give them a copy. They weren't much interested but said that they thought Clara would be, so into her hands the memory stick went. And the rest, as they say, is history.

"Around this time, I became aware that there were others who were way ahead of me in 'Almost Live!' studies. [A man with the pseudonym of] "George Buford" had put together an exhaustive record of all the shows and was putting up sketches at YouTube to supplant his personal server. But his work allowed me to identify my episodes and to add all of his individual sketches to my repository.

"Also around then, Pat Cashman started his 'Almost Live! Still Alive' podcast, which was most illuminating. In particular, during his interview with Steve Wilson, director of the show, Steve allowed as how he had all of the original tapes up in the top of his garage and that he figured he ought to do something with them before they deteriorated. Indeed he should.

"By that point, it turned out that Clara was fascinated by the show, so I began to lobby her to get MOHAI to obtain all of the original tapes from Steve and to digitize them either for a display or for sale as a fundraiser. The latter idea had no legs, but she was already plotting to do the former. Around then, she also started her Almost Style! on Instagram. The ecstatic response to it put her in contact with all the principals of the show as well as KING 5. Clara has been the ringleader in all that has happened subsequently.

"Meanwhile, "George" started putting full episodes up at YouTube, as has KING 5. So fortunately, better-quality versions of the show than mine are now available. I'm particularly glad for this, as I think the flow of each episode is greater than the sum of the individual sketches.

"In any case, a very happy state of affairs has resulted. The 'Almost Live!' show is the best time capsule from that pivotal era of Seattle's history, and we're all lucky to have it accessible once more."