

# The Schmooze

## Stories with a Yiddish Twist

### YIDDISH GUIDE TO MARLENE SANDERS

by  
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Three-time Emmy-winning TV journalist, Marlene Sanders, passed away on July 14, 2015. She was 84. The cause of death was cancer (“der rak”).

Shown below is a Yiddish Guide to Ms. Sanders, one of the “ersht” (first) female broadcast TV panelists.

“mishpokhe” (family)

Sanders grew up in a Jewish family home in Shaker Heights, Ohio. She said, “We were a definite minority, particularly in my high school.” Her high school sorority sent packages of clothing to Jewish families in Paris who had been on the run during the war and who came back to nothing (“gornisht”) after the war.

“shul” (synagogue)

Sanders’ family was relatively secular, only attending a Reform temple occasionally, but well aware of ongoing issues affecting the Jewish community such as discrimination and the Holocaust.

“teater” (theater)

Sanders moved to New York City to pursue a theater career. In 1955, after failing to land steady work in the theater, she accepted a low-level job in television “nayes” (news), working for Ted Yates, the producer for Mike Wallace of CBS. She eventually became associate producer of the

show, and after Wallace left, became co-producer. This was an unprecedented achievement as women were typically relegated to performing solely administrative functions in the newsroom.

Harvey Pack wrote, "On many shows, 'production assistant' was a euphemism for secretary-trainee, but "Night Beat" was something else. Marlene Sanders learned the news from the pros, and she learned it well."

(Source: "Breakthrough for lady newscaster," The Miami News, 5/11/71, Harvey Pack)

"religye" (religion)

Sanders did a documentary on Sally Preisand, who became the first female rabbi. Others involved Catholic women who wanted more of a role in their church, and the efforts of Protestant women as well.

"milkhome" (war)

Sanders was the first network TV female journalist to cover the Vietnam War from "dos feld" (the field). She reported from Vietnam's Highlands in 1966. She also covered politics and the assassination of Robert Kennedy.

"der man" (husband)

Sanders was married to TV producer, Jerome Toobin, who died in 1984. She said that she was able to work full-time in broadcasting for 35 years because she had good household help, A COOPERATIVE HUSBAND, and a high energy level.

"zun" (son)

Sanders had one child, a son, Jeffrey Toobin. He is a CNN legal analyst and New Yorker staff "shrayber" (writer). Toobin broke the sad news on his Facebook.com page: "Marlene Sanders, my mother, died today [7/14/15]. A pioneering television journalist - the first network newswoman to report from Vietnam, among other firsts. Above all, though, she was a great Mom."

"korespondirn" (to correspond with)

Sanders moved to CBS News in 1978 as a documentary correspondent and producer. She remained there until 1987.

"brekhn" (to break)

Sanders is credited with helping to break down the barriers women faced in broadcasting at that time.

“mekhaber” (author)

Sanders was a co-author of “Waiting for Prime Time: The Women of Television News.”

“zaverukhe” (blizzard)

Sanders reported on a blizzard: “Good evening...From CNS News...This is News Break. Winter moved in on the midwest today. 11” of snow in Minnesota. Also hard hit, parts of Michigan and Wisconsin. It was 9 months ago when the blizzard of ’78 hit New England. The medical community predicted it would be a busy time for maternity wards. It hasn’t happened. One nurse said, ‘Most of the men must have been out shoveling snow.’”

“leyter” (ladder)

Harvey Pack (“The Miami News”) wrote, “I first met Marlene [Sanders] only a few weeks after she came to N. Y. from her native Cleveland several years ago to begin her rise up TV ladder to become the medium’s first female Walter Cronkite.”

“alt” (old); “elter” (older)

“elterer oylem” (older audience)

“If I were to speak only about the images of older women in television (“televisye”), this would be a very short presentation, since we are virtually invisible.

First, some demographic facts: the 50 plus age group is the fastest growing segment of the U. S. population; the net worth of seniors is 5 times greater than that of other Americans; seniors control 48% of all discretionary spending. And yet, most US programming is directed at people between the ages of 18 and 49.

[after interviewing actors] “They said few soap operas had characters representing grandparents (“di zeyde-bobe”), aunts, doctors, lawyers, neighbours, or salespeople. The world of soap operas is composed of young (“yung”) adults, usually in romantic situations not at all resembling the real world (“velt”).” (Marlene Sanders quote, 2002)

“kind” (child)

“farzorn” (care for, to be responsible)

“The biggest hurdle [for working women] is childcare. I write a lot about that issue in my book. Women need to focus on making it much more available so they can continue to work.” (quote)

“khoyv” (debt)

“Whether they know it or not, every woman in broadcast news owes a debt to Marlene Sanders. With intelligence and determination, Sanders broke into what had been an all-male profession.”

(quote: Susan Stamberg)

“gloz sufit” (glass ceiling)

Sanders found the glass ceiling to be frustrating--ascending at times, but then descending without warning. In 1989, two years after budget (“budzhet”) cuts at CBS had cost her her job, she told USA Today: “THE BOYS ARE RUNNING THINGS AGAIN.”

“balibt” (beloved)

“di talmidim” (students)

For the last 20 (“tsvantsik”) years, Sanders was an adjunct professor of journalism at NYU.

“She [Sanders] was a tough, demanding teacher, famous for her weekly news quizzes. She really pushed students yet was beloved by them, many of whom are now working the TV industry. She was scheduled to teach next fall--not bad for 84!--until she took ill a few weeks ago. She will be missed by all.”

(quote: NYU professor, Mary W. Quigley)

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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:**



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