



Dr. Smith after all these years.

Derek Szabo photo

Lost in Space no longer

The Jupiter 2 returns home after 25 years

By Bill Kelly

The Jupiter 2 crew from the '60s sci-fi TV series *Lost in Space* blasted off, again, Saturday after 22 years of being grounded. The event was staged as part of a collectibles exhibit at Boston's Bayside Expo Center and celebrated the 25th anniversary of the show's CBS premiere in 1965 when the space family Robinson along with diabolical but lovable stowaway Dr. Zachary Smith, first, blasted off into our imaginations.

It was as if little time had elapsed since *Lost in Space* aired its final episode, *Junkyard in Space*, in 1968, as the cast took center stage. All were there save Guy Williams (the father, John Robinson), who passed away recently.

The Robinson children, portrayed by Bill Mumy (Will), Angela Cartwright (Penny), and everyone's fantasy girl Marta Kristen (Judy), were still kids in the minds of all who had gathered to see their favorite TV stars, even though all three are now well into their thirties and forties. And June Lockhart, their TV mom, Maureen Robinson, surveying the scene with her customary pride, looked much younger than her seventy-odd years. Be forewarned, Cher, this sprightly septagenarian could give you a run for your money in vying for those Hollywood hunks under thirty. The Robot, too ... was there, that is ... and, well, he looked as metallic as ever with very few signs of rust. Nor did Lowell native Marc Goddard, who portrayed the dashing Major

Don West, look very rusty ... metallic either ... and at 54 that's a major feat.

But the star of the spectacle ... as he was 25 years ago, as he is wherever he appears, as always ... was Jonathan Harris (Dr. Zachary Smith). From the moment he walked out to greet the crowd, from the moment he uttered his first words, "Never fear, Smith is here," he was in control, and all willingly surrendered to his delightful rapier wit.

Recalling all the fan mail sent him over the years, Harris intoned, "And I must tell you about the countless indecent proposals I received. My only regret is that I didn't accept them all."

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Lost in Space, found

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Later, responding to a question about the cast, whether they all got along as well off camera as on, the stage-trained actor quipped, "Well, of course we did; why I slept with each and everyone of them."

As to who his favorite was, Harris's lips were sealed, but he betrayed his feelings with a warm hug for Angela Cartwright, an embrace and exchange of kisses with Billy Mumy, and a fervent "I want you" for the mature but still bedeviling Marta Kristen. As well as an admission of sorts, after all these years, that it had been he who'd written a paean to Marc Goddard's feet and requested a foot cast.

Ah, Hollywood.

Hooray for Harris

The stylish Harris, who was cozily ensconced at the tres chic Hotel Meridien during his stay in town, made his Broadway debut in 1942 at the Henry Miller Theatre on 43rd St. in *Heart of a City*. "I played a Polish flyer in the R.A.F. and had 10 lines, and oh, I said them loud and clear."

It was no overnight success as the well-heeled and traveled Harris already had appeared in 100 plays in stock companies all over the country. As it turned out, this was just the beginning for the prolific Harris, who went on to star in nine TV series, make several films (Harris: "I did three or four and they were terrible."), and work alongside some of the giants in the entertainment industry.

In 1945, he appeared in the stage production of *A Flag is Born*. The stars of the play were two legends ... Paul Muni and Marlon Brando.

"Marlon was young and extremely handsome," recalled Harris. "I was young and not so handsome."

Harris remembered Brando as "not a fun guy."

"If you want to know, he still owes me a dollar," Harris added with a twinkle.

Harris also made a movie with Alan Ladd and James Mason called *Botany Bay*. In it, he played the diminutive Ladd's sidekick. Thinking back to their scenes together, Harris recalled having to stand in a trench to compensate for Ladd's lack of height. "They'd also put him up on an apple crate, and I'd look up adoringly at him," sighed Harris.

But when he thinks of his film days, Harris remembers



The cast of *Lost in Space*. Front: June Lockhart mingles with fans. Back: Jonathan Harris tries to talk The Robot into another of his devious schemes.

Derek Szabo photo

the show, he played Bradford Webster. "I created a total eccentric," said Harris about his character who was Michael Rennie's confidante.

Harris added, "Directors always left me alone. I was always hired so that I would bring something offbeat and unusual to a character."

In *The Bill Dana Show*, where he played the harried hotel manager, he did so. But it was as the devious yet lovable Dr. Smith on *Lost in Space* that Harris outdid himself, creating his most memorable character.

"Initially [Smith] was designed as a snarling villain," Harris said, "but I found that very unpalatable. Since my great forte was comedy, I began to sneak in little comedy bits. I treated him like my alter ego."

"I'll tell you ... it's a secret, but I'll tell you ... it's time to tell after 35 years. I fashioned [Smith] on every kid. He was just a big kid."

Harris remembered one episode, which illustrated this perfectly, where he stole away into his room with a big chocolate cake. "I sliced a piece and stuffed it into my mouth. Then I pushed the cake back together like nothing had happened to it."

It was all improvised by Harris. Big kid indeed.

"It was a very special thing," he noted.

And added that this very special thing might have a new life in a *Lost in Space* reunion movie.

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But when he thinks of his film days, Harris remembers most fondly working with Bette Davis. "She saved my ass because I was fluffing all my lines," he noted. "She said, 'Oh, stop the shit, I've admired you for years.'"

Harris on the telly

Harris's first TV series was *The Third Man* which starred the late Michael Rennie (Harris: "He had such dimples."). In

"It was a very special thing," he noted.

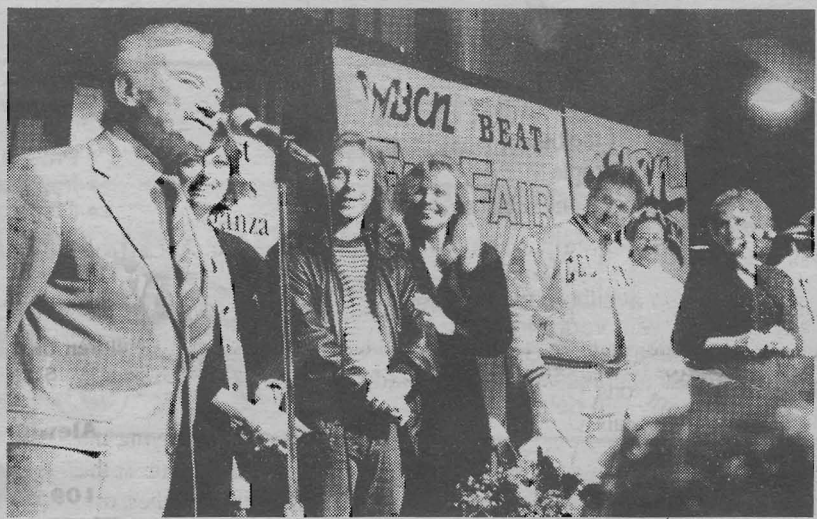
And added that this very special thing might have a new life in a *Lost in Space* reunion movie.

"I happened to have had lunch with (*Lost in Space* creator) Irwin Allen in mid-July, and he seemed interested in doing something," Harris said. "Frankly, I think it's a bit late. It should have been done 10 years earlier."

Still Harris added, judging from the amount of fan mail he receives and all the fans who show up wherever he appears, "There is interest there."

Until that happens, if it does, Harris will stay busy on the convention trail, doing commercials (he was scheduled to do a *McDonald's* spot, Monday), doing voice overs, cartoons, and wacky shows like the one he did a few years ago with the loony Charles Nelson Reilly, called *Uncle Crock's Block*. "We had a wonderful time," he chuckled at the recollection. "We'd whack each other with rubber chickens and everything. I have total recall from time to time."

As do his legion of fans, whose total recall of Dr. Zacharias Smith was fueled by the nostalgic return of the Jupiter 2, which touched down on the planet earth at Boston's Bayside Expo Center, over the weekend, after a 25-year journey *Lost in Space*.



Jonathan Harris entertains fans at the Bayside Expo as the rest of the *Lost in Space* cast marvels at his suave and debonair manner.

Derek Szabo photo