

ONE TO 101



CRUISING OUR HISTORIC COASTAL HIGHWAYS

• BY MELISSA BRANDZEL

“The Bradys Come Home”

Here's the story of a lovely lady / Who was bringing up three very lovely girls / All of them had hair of gold / Like their mother / The youngest one in curls....

By now, you're picturing nine faces in a tic-tac-toe grid, pivoting their heads to look at each other.

The Brady Bunch holds a special place in the American TV canon. When Mike, a widowed architect with three boys, marries Carol, a homemaker with three girls, trouble and hilarity ensue. Robert Reed and Florence Henderson headed the cast, with their kids played by

Barry Williams (Greg), Christopher Knight (Peter), Mike Lookinland (Bobby), Maureen McCormick (Marcia), Eve Plumb (Jan), and Susan Olsen (Cindy)—and Ann B. Davis as their wisecracking housekeeper, Alice.

The country loved watching this blended family's adventures, told with heart. Whether it was Greg's hair turning orange or Cindy's Kitty Karry-All doll going missing, the mishaps, sibling rivalry, and, ultimately, love and

forgiveness created an ideal picture of suburban family life in the 1970s. The iconic ABC half-hour sitcom ran for 117 episodes (1969–1974) and sparked spinoff series, TV movies and specials, feature films, and a reality show.

But how did *Brady Bunch* creator Sherwood Schwartz (who'd already struck gold with his *Gilligan's Island*) conceive his Brady concept?

“Dad read in a newspaper that, for the first time in America, the number of blended families with children from previous relationships had approached the number of traditional nuclear families. He realized that there were no television shows that represented this,” says Schwartz's daughter, Hope Juber.

All of the networks rejected her father's idea, she says, until the film *Yours, Mine and Ours* (1968), in which a widower and widow combine families, became a box-office success. “Suddenly he got calls from the networks wanting to revisit his blended family television show,” says Juber.

True *Brady Bunch* aficionados know the Brady home interior was a set on the Paramount Pictures lot. It was dressed in then-current style, from the brown color palette to the floral sofa, plastic plants, and ceramic lamps. Perhaps most memorable was the floating twelve-step staircase from the living room to the second floor. The pressed wood paneling, shag carpet, and

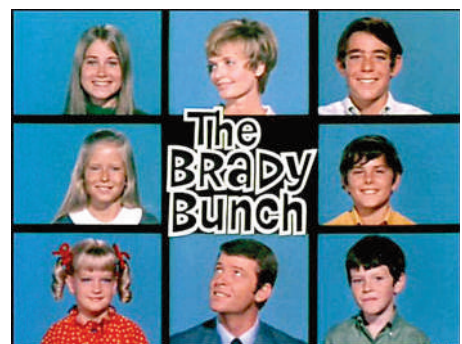


US HIGHWAY 101 travels from Olympia, Washington, to Los Angeles via Oregon. Historically the route extended south to San Ysidro, California, at the border of Mexico.

orange Formica kitchen counters seem retro-tacky now, but like any good Hollywood set, it contributed perfectly to the narrative.

The Brady house exterior, meanwhile, was a real home, one that can be seen today. Some claim the ranch-style, split-level dwelling on Dilling Street in Studio City, California, is America's second most photographed house—after the White House.

How did it come to be tapped for the series? “Dad was looking for an architecturally interesting house, since Mike Brady is an architect,” Juber explained. “The location scouts had a few that they presented to him and he just liked the look of [that] one. I can see why. Our house, the one I grew up in, had a style and silhouette that was in some ways very similar.”



FIT TOGETHER: [Left] The 1959 home that became the *Brady Bunch* house was chosen because show creator Sherwood Schwartz believed it looked like an architect's home. All the establishing shots of the house were shot before production formally began.

Built in 1959 by Harry M. Londelius, the 2,500-square-foot midcentury modern Brady house featured a pitched shake roof, cathedral ceilings, beige wood paneling, and Palos Verdes stone. The house exterior, however, didn't match the set design. "Though in the show, the Bradys live in a two-story house, the house chosen wasn't two stories at all. They hung a fake window to make it seem like it had two stories," Juber noted. The real interior didn't match, either. There was no floating staircase. The décor and layout were entirely different. And while the actual house had two bedrooms, the set had three (four if you count Alice's bedroom downstairs; five with the den). Yet audiences were none the wiser.

FAMILY PHOTOS: [Right] Publicity photos distributed during the run of *The Brady Bunch* frequently featured the family posing on the stairs. After HGTV renovated the home, the kids from the cast—Susan Olsen, Mike Lookinland, Eve Plumb, Christopher Knight, Maureen McCormick, and Barry Williams added another stair shot to the portfolio.

For decades, the Brady home sat quietly, posing for fans. Then something very "Hollywood" happened: The house made a comeback by starring in its own show.

A Very Brady Renovation

In 2018, the house went up for sale for \$1.885 million. A bidding war ensued. "We were the winning bid until [NSYNC singer] Lance Bass put in a slightly higher bid," said Juber. "HGTV swooped in...declaring that no matter what we bid, they intended to beat it."

HGTV threw down \$3.5 million and launched *A Very Brady Renovation*. Led by the "Property Brothers" Drew and Jonathan Scott, the reality show undertook the task of making the interior of the real home match the beloved old Brady set. And all six Brady kids, now middle-aged adults, would participate.

For nine thousand hours over seven months, they knocked out walls, lowered the foundation, and built a second story with three bedrooms—in all, increasing the home to 4,500 square feet. In went the brick, the stone, the floating staircase, the orange-countertop kitchen, and the furniture, some of which had to be custom made. The exterior redo involved a paint job, trees, and a front window. To help recreate the décor, HGTV asked the public to contribute furnishings resembling those in the Brady home.

The show debuted in September 2019.



Brady Bunch House • 11222 Dilling Street • Studio City, California 91602 • The house is not open for public tours.

When the renovation was complete, the transformation was startling—it looked exactly like the set. "Since, in reality, there was no inside of the Brady house except for soundstage 5," said Juber, "and that was one with no ceiling, and open walls, it was an amazingly surreal moment to walk into the completed HGTV renovation and feel like I was walking into a familiar past that didn't even really exist."

Wait, there's more! HGTV's *A Very Brady Contest* granted one Brady superfan and up to six guests a week's stay in the renovated house in early December 2019, plus \$25,000. The

public voted Lisa Shaw of Charlotte, North Carolina, as the winner. Then came HGTV's *A Very Brady Renovation: Holiday Edition*, which aired in mid-December 2019. All six Brady kids returned to decorate the house and make and enjoy a holiday meal together.

These days, the home is only open for tours by celebrities. Yet fans still take photos of the outside. And one thing is certain: When it comes to the Bradys, there's always another sequel. ♥

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