

# TV Hosts Create Once- In-A-Lifetime Experience For Each Contestant

On a late Friday afternoon in the studios of WGN-TV, the Illinois State Lottery's new "\$100,000 Fortune Hunt" game show has just finished taping. Co-hosts Jeff Coopwood and Linda Kollmeyer walk off the set, sit down, and kick off their shoes. They're laughing about the game's winner, who was absolutely thrilled.

"He was jumping up and down, up and down," says Coopwood. "That's what's fun about this show. You had this guy who was very glib, very low key, taking all of this in stride the whole show. Then the second he wins, he loses it."

The week before, the winner—a middle-aged man with a beard and glasses—had leaned over, grabbed Coopwood, and kissed him. Coopwood had turned to the camera with wide eyes and said, "Are we still on the air?"

"What do you do?" asks Coopwood.

"The guy was excited, and I'm sure, in a million years, he'd never dreamed he'd be bussing me on the cheek."

The two performers exude the same non-stop energy and enthusiasm which makes them a good match for such a high-energy show.

Coopwood, born in Chicago, is an actor and opera singer who has worked in everything from theater and

opera to television commercials. Kollmeyer, who worked as a nurse for a year after graduating from the University of Missouri, has experience in modeling, acting, and dance.

Both performers think their experience helps them relax in front of the camera, but being a game-show host is not the same as acting.

"I'm not as paranoid as I expect I would be if I didn't have that background," says Coopwood. "but I'm not playing a role here. I'm just what you see."

"If it was Shakespeare or something like that, I don't think I'd fit the role," says Kollmeyer. "But this is a great opportunity for me because, like Jeff said, you can just be yourself."

"Don't let her lie to you," jokes Coopwood. "I saw her certificate from the professional square-turning school."

Coopwood and Kollmeyer were selected from a pool of about 60 performers who auditioned on-camera. After they were hired, they discovered that they were represented by the same Chicago agent, Emilia Lorence. Both admitted to sneaking into the agency's office and looking up each other's photographs before the first day of work.

With nine shows under their belts, Coopwood and Kollmeyer feel they've worked a lot of kinks out of the new show, and they've come up with a weekly formula that works. They are quick to credit each other for that success.

"Linda makes me look good," says Coopwood. "When it comes to give and take, she is the most supportive person I've ever worked with in this business."

Aside from the challenge of working on Chicago's first major game show, what Coopwood and Kollmeyer enjoy most about their new job is that they are in the business of making dreams come true.

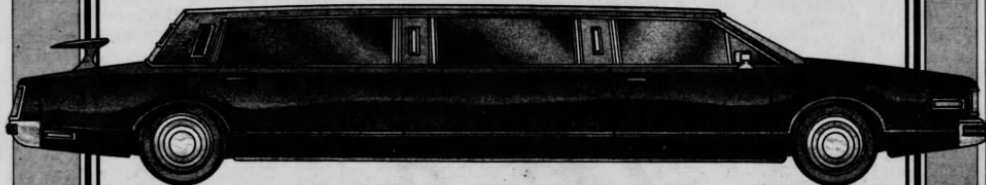
"What we do here each week will impact at least one person for the rest of his or her life," says Coopwood. "To be there and experience that transformation firsthand is an honor and privilege."

Beyond that, the hosts feel a sense of responsibility toward the contestants. "Twenty years from now, somebody's gonna put a tape in the VCR to show their grandkids the one time they were on TV," says Coopwood. "We try hard to make this that once-in-a-lifetime experience." CAROLYN ARDEN-BRESSLER



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