

75 Years of Mystery Unfolds, Part VIII: 70s Sleuthing...Pamela Sue Martin as TV's Plucky Nancy Drew

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"I'm quite able to rescue myself!" intoned a startlingly brunette Nancy Drew, played quite wholesomely by aspiring actress Pamela Sue Martin in the 1970s Nancy Drew & Hardy Boys television show. Characteristically independent, strong willed, and bold, television's first Nancy Drew was a "very serious minded girl" with the "instincts of a bull dog."

Based on the Nancy Drew books, the settings were often filled with shadowy suspense and darkened scenes. Usually a hand or feet lurked in the camera's view as some unknown menace wreaked havoc on the unsuspecting--until Nancy Drew became intrigued and uncovered the villain's trickery.

Often seen spying on suspects, eavesdropping or sleuthing for clues, Nancy suffered her fair share of villain foibles--knockouts, chloroform, falling objects, and threatening notes. Carson Drew lamented in *The Mystery of Pirate's Cove*, "The day she started part time investigative work for me was the beginning of my gray hairs."

Aside from the graying hairs, Carson Drew often tried to rationalize Nancy's suspicions about people and strange events as being coincidences not worth worrying about. Nancy often knew something was not right while others around her did not buy into her intuition. "You catch on quick for a kid from River Heights," (*The Lady on Thursday at Ten*) "You look a little young to be a detective," (*The Mystery of the Hollywood Phantom*) and "She seems to think she's some sort of detective" (*The Mystery of Pirate's Cove*) were patronizing comments--a typical obstacle Nancy overcame with her "I'll show them!" attitude.

Attitude in check, Nancy modestly referring to herself as being a "part-time investigator." Somewhat of a feminist, in *The Mystery of the Solid Gold Kicker*, she playfully chastised a sports news director for panning to the pretty girls in the audience. When paired with Frank and Joe Hardy, Nancy and Frank argued frequently--especially when Frank wanted to protect a stubbornly independent Nancy. Sparks flew between Nancy and Frank and fell rather flat between Nancy and a more nerdy and less boldly characterized Ned Nickerson.

Though the Nancy Drew TV series lasted little more than a season and then some combined episodes with the Hardy Boys, Nancy made a lasting impression upon fans who have long since wished for a return of the plucky detective to TV. A 1995 series failed to garner ratings as did a 2002 TV pilot. If you're in the mood for nostalgia and some cheesy 70's TV special effects, grab a bowl of popcorn and your magnifying glass and unwind with the first season of both the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys, out on DVD from Universal.