



NAME: JOHN NOAKES

Born: Halifax, W. Yorkshire

Educated: Shelf Council School and Rishworth Boarding School.

Academic achievements:

Youngest ever to gain Rugby colours for school: Excellent cross-country runner and school gymnast.

Artistic achievements:

“2 out of 10, try harder!” Mainly because cartoon drawings were not appreciated by the art master who was an “arsehole”!

Joined RAF in 1951-1956 ended up as a fully qualified engineer on jet engines and water-cooled and air-cooled engines.

Joined BOAC in September 1956 as engineer on DC7c’s and stayed 18 months. During this time decided to become as actor (something I had always wanted to be since a little lad in Halifax) Took drama lessons for 3 months whilst working, then Mr Askew, my tutor, suggested that I go to Drama School. I auditioned and

Joined the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in autumn term 1958.

For the first year I was unable to get a grant, so to cover my living expenses I worked my way through in term-time by cleaning offices from 06:00 - 09:00, supplemented by the occasional weekend work. The fees I paid by working for Airwork during the holidays. The second year I was able to get a grant and received enough to manage without working. I ended up with the Shakespeare Prize and was thought to be one of the students most likely to succeed....but I only wanted to become a repertory actor and my ambition was not reaching out for stardom.

My first professional job was with Cyril Fletcher's pantomime "*Mother Goose*", Christmas 1960, in which I played the Dog and the Clown and some would say my career has stayed on the same level ever since.

On leaving drama school...I joined Cyril Fletcher again and was his "feed" in his summer show. This was followed by a Welsh Children's Theatre Tour and then repertory work first at Leicester's Theatre Royal, then at Cromer, Harrogate, York, Manchester, Sheffield and Farnham. Whilst there, I auditioned for a production of *Chips With Everything at the Royal Court in 1963*, which was then transferred to Broadway where it ran for 5 months.

On my return I worked at Worthing and Leatherhead theatres and also did a number of television dramas. Then in 1965 a director friend at Leicester asked me, at short notice, to play **Willy Mossop in *Hobson's Choice***, which I previously had done for him at Farnham. During this production my photograph appeared in the Leicester Mercury as "guest artist" and was spotted by Bidy Baxter, whilst visiting her mother. This led to an interview and a job on "*Blue Peter*" and the rest as they say is history! I was with the programme for 12 years finally leaving in 1978 to return to the theatre and play Willy Mossop yet again, this time at the Oxford Playhouse.

Whilst with *Blue Peter* in 1976 I started work on the first of six series of "*Go With Noakes*", the final series being finished in 1981.

After leaving *Blue Peter* I did a number of pantomime seasons, a series about dinosaurs for **Granada Television** and various commercial campaigns for television, most notably, *Spillers Dog Food & Everest Double Glazing*. I have also done "endorsements" for a number of products and voice-overs, including *Andrex Toilet Paper*, at which point, I could truly say, "I had finally reached the bottom of my career!"

In 1982 I set off sailing with my wife, Vicky, heading for the Caribbean. I had put up the idea of filming this project to several people but logistically it was difficult and in the end no-one was able to get it together, so we set off anyway, got smashed up in a hurricane off Casablanca and were rescued by a 70,000 ton Japanese tanker....if a film crew had been on board we might have got the documentary of the year award!

Returning to the UK, we had the boat repaired and refitted and during this time I worked for *TVAM Breakfast Television* and did a number of *Calendar* programmes for Yorkshire Television. **In 1984** we set sail once again heading for the Caribbean and as fate would have it, ended up in Mallorca, originally for a 3-day stay....but somehow never left, buying an old farmhouse eventually in 1986 as a base for our sailing activities. For more than 10 summers we cruised in the Western

Mediterranean, often with charter guests, visiting France, Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, Malta and Tunisia, finally selling the last of our last sailing boat in 1995.

In 1996, we bought a motorboat in Florida and spent two summers exploring the East coast of America and the Canadian Lakes. (Once again we tried to find someone to film this project but to no avail!) After selling the boat we continued our exploration of North America on 4 wheels....buying a Winnebago motor home and travelling for a further four summers the length and breadth of America and Canada, finding fabulous places and things to film, mostly off the normal tourist track. It certainly was a missed opportunity not to have been able to share this wonderful adventure with a wider audience! Finally in **September 2001**, we sold the motor home in Amarillo, Texas and returned to Mallorca.

During my years in Blue Peter I was able to participate in a number of activities, too numerous to mention here, but some of the highlights were bobsleighbing, parachuting, white water canoeing, climbing and diving. I also still enjoy sailing, mountain walking and swimming.

I have over the year's collected Dutch art-nouveau ceramics and have a catholic taste in all forms of art. Back in the 70's I tried my hand at glass sculpture, and I started painting in watercolours a few years ago and have now become an ardent fan of Jackson Pollock, since discovering his work in the States.

In 2003 I joined my wife, Vicky, for the first time, organising and running, "**Walking Tours**" in Mallorca's mountains, something she has been doing for over 10 years....it's never too late to try something new!

2006 saw me once again going back to boats when I was asked to present a DVD on *The Heritage of Inland Waterways* and recently I was joined by Peter Purves when we launched the *Zurich Children's Heritage Competition* taking me back once more to the *Blue Peter* days when I again got to climb Nelson's Column. This time the easy way!

Most recently I appeared on the *Celebrity Weakest Link* and the *Dr. Who - War Machine* video.

2008 also saw me presenting an award at The Royal Albert Hall for the Most Popular Entertainment Presenter at the *National Television Awards*.