

Dr. Frances Horwich



Frances Rappaport Horwich, known to millions of young children as "Miss Frances" of *Ding Dong School*, was born in Ohio in 1908. She earned a University of Chicago Ph.B. in 1929 and taught first grade in Evanston for three years before earning her M.A. from Columbia University in 1933. Returning to Chicago, Horwich served 3 years as the supervisor of nursing schools, followed by 4 years as the director of junior kindergartens in Winnetka. In 1942, she received her Ph.D. degree from Northwestern University. For the next 2 years she served as director of the Hessian Hills School at Croton-on Hudson, New York. In 1943 she was appointed secretary-treasurer for the Association of Nursery Education and was active on the public committee of the American Education Fellowship from 1943-1947. In 1946 Horwich was an editor of *Understanding the Child* magazine. By 1952, she was Chair of Roosevelt College of Education, now known as Roosevelt University in Chicago. She's an early education and language arts specialist with teaching credits from 11 universities.

Dr. Horwich developed *Ding Dong School*, a television program for children 2-5, for NBC's Chicago station and soon thereafter the NBC Network. The program was created under the management team of Jules Herbuveaux, Judith Waller, and George Heineman. Although she reached millions of children, her story readings, craft demonstrations and songs seemed to be conducted right at home. For the final few minutes of each show, Miss Frances had her young viewers call their mothers to the TV to learn what materials would be needed for the next day's lesson. Aiding Miss Frances in the fun and learning were Lucky (a rabbit puppet), Jocko (a monkey puppet) and 3 live gold fish: Wynken, Blynken and Nod. Many instructions included finger painting, clay modeling, and use of crayons. NBC began color-casting *Ding Dong School* in March of 1954. Dr. Horwich was also appointed supervisor of all network children's programs for NBC Television.

She retained rights to the show and she transferred to Los Angeles where the program went into syndication as a daily and Saturday morning program produced on film and tape from 1959 through 1964. Some 80 stations began their morning with the syndicated version of *Ding Dong School*.

The program won a 1953 George Foster Peabody award. The New York Post called it: "The first network TV program really conceived to meet the pre-school child's needs...a simple but truly great program." *Life* magazine commented that "Miss Frances has done what most TV know-it-alls said could never be done: put on educational programs, both good and commercially successful."

Today, at 94, Dr. Horwich lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.