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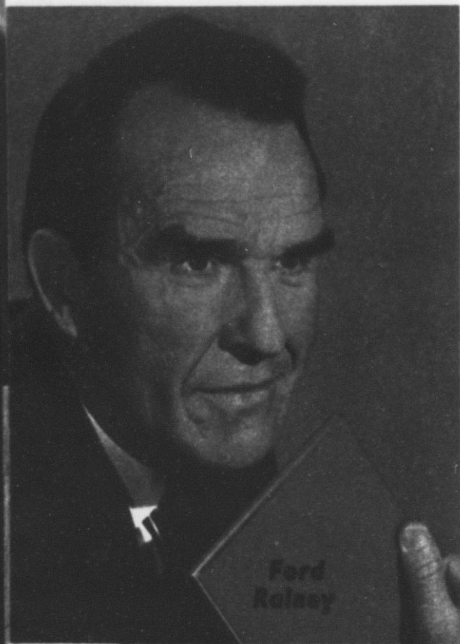
pany lists nobody who is exactly a household name. All are talented performers, some have good credits in the movies and television, but none rates as "big boxoffice."

Of them all, perhaps Harry Morgan is the most familiar to viewers. He was Peter Porter, a dour-faced cynic, for almost 10 years, first on the "December Bride" series and later in his own "Pete and Gladys" show.

The others in the company are Lloyd Bochner, Guy Stockwell, Jeanette Nolan, Bethel Leslie, Ford Rainey, Laura Devon, June Harding, Robert Blake and Warren Stevens.

Boone has the backing of NBC, which says the show will stay on the air. Most critics love it for what it is, theater drama on the air, in contrast to the slick, formula stuff.

In a poll of the critics, Boone's show



was rated the top new program of the season.

Sponsors keep shows on the air, however, not well-intentioned network officials or loving critics. And the sponsors' favorite reading material is the national ratings books. There "The Richard Boone Show" takes a clobbering from "Petticoat Junction."

How does Boone, who pioneered medical shows on television with his "Medic" series, size up his fight?

"I believe that a show such as ours builds an audience slowly," he says. "Week after week we do the best we know how, and the word gets around. I think that, given time, we'll do all right in the ratings, especially with adult viewers."

"Nobody expected a series of dramas to outrate a comedy show; that hasn't been the history of television."