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Comfort Viewing: 3 Reasons I Love ‘Family Ties’

By Mara Reinstein

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When I quarantined with my parents in Michigan this past summer, I began my days ribbing my mom for watching early-morning “JAG” reruns in the kitchen and end them smirking at my dad for hogging the family room couch to devour episodes of “Taxi.”

“Haven’t you seen all these already?!” I’d ask.

I neglected to tell them that each night, before I went to sleep in my childhood bedroom, I watched “Family Ties.” Back in the 1980s, I faithfully tuned in to the NBC sitcom, usually on my black-and-white mini-television. More than three decades later, I clutched my iPad by the night stand and, with a few taps of my fingers, could stream any episode I wanted on CBS All Access. Sha-la-la-la.

“Family Ties” premiered on NBC in 1982, predicated on the idea that two idealistic former hippies (Meredith Baxter-Birney and Michael Gross) were in over their heads parenting the conservative Type-A-er Alex (Michael J. Fox), the shopping-obsessed ditz Mallory (Justine Bateman) and the introverted tomboy Jennifer (Tina Yothers). In an early episode, the elder Keatons are arrested on Thanksgiving for protesting nuclear arms. In another, they debate whether to buy a gun to protect their home.

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