

Ken Booth is a former news director, anchor, and investigative reporter with KNOE-TV, a CBS-affiliate in Monroe, Louisiana which once aired the popular children's show hosted by Frank Selas, "The Mr. Wonder Show." The original of this article can be accessed via [this link](#).

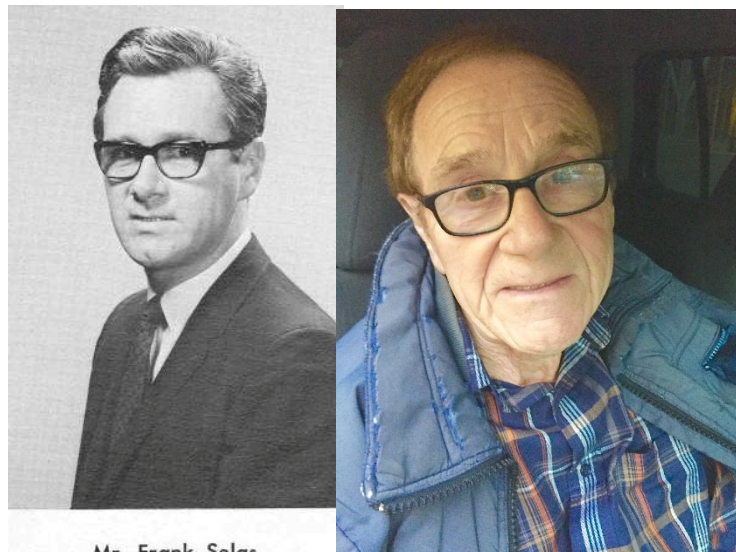
## **THE ODYSSEY OF 'MR. WONDER'**

**The Chilling, 37-Year-Long Cold-Case Chase Has Ended**

**By Ken Booth**

**State and Federal authorities have taken into custody 76-year-old Frank Selas on fugitive warrants growing out of a 1979 case involving the sexual abuse of young boys in Louisiana. He was arrested last night in the town of Bonita, California, located just south of San Diego near the border with Mexico. He was apprehended without incident.**

**Selas, shown here in a 1979 photo and a photo taken last night when he was arrested, had been on the run since June, 1979 when authorities in Louisiana issued warrants for his arrest on charges that he sexually molested six young boys during camping outings he arranged in Louisiana's Kisatchie National Forest.**



Mr. Frank Selas

**The arrest was effected by members of the U.S. Marshal Service, Southern District of California, San Diego Task Force as a result of leads developed by members of the Task Force and Detectives.**

**The alleged sexual assaults in Louisiana had occurred in Rapides Parish where then-deputy William Earl Hilton and Graham Hendricks were assigned the case. Hilton is now the Sheriff in Rapides Parish.**

**At a joint news conference today with Ouachita Parish Sheriff Jay Russell and Rapides Parish District Attorney Phillip Terral, Hilton said, "There are cases you never forget, some that always are in the back of your mind that you hope one day to solve. And today, this person has been brought to justice."**

**Dressed as a magician and wearing a top hat, Selas had been working as the host of the "Mr. Wonder" afternoon children's show on KNOE-TV in Monroe. As part of a promotional event, he –not the station—sponsored the trips for young boys between the ages of 5 and 15.**

**Selas was experienced in escorting such trips for young boys not only in other U.S. locations but overseas as well, as you will see.**

**To the news staff at the television station Selas' unexpected hiring in 1978 as an on-air anchor although a surprise was not without precedent.**

**It was not unusual for Jimmy Noe, Jr., the station's owner, to hire somebody outside the knowledge of his department heads and thrust the newbie into the employee pool.**

**So it had been when Selas, shown here in this undated photo, was added to the staff with only Selas' word as any kind of known background check. Selas, in his late 30s at the time, had apparently met Noe when they shared a plane ride.**



**Mr. Frank Selas**

**His anchor performance was poor enough to subject the station to jokes and substantial ridicule causing Selas to be yanked after less than a week.**

**To save his employment, however, Selas convinced Noe that he had previously served as a children's show host at an Oklahoma television station and he could do the same for the Monroe operation. Noe agreed and thus the Mr. Wonder program began an on-air weekday afternoon schedule.**

**If Selas had indeed ever worked at an Oklahoma station, much less his running a kid's program there, it has never been verified. However, that elusive piece of information is not the only vetting failure involving this man.**

**Perhaps, had those involved at the time had available to them the Internet and its search capabilities, they would have known that Selas was a bit of a globe-trotter and that his working with young boys had predated his Louisiana camping trips by at least eight years.**

**In 1970, he was a lay-teacher for 4<sup>th</sup> grade boys at St. Mary's International School in Tokyo. He also is said to have been a leader of the Boy Scouts at the school.**

**But according to the *Japan Times* in a news story published in June, 1971, Silas was claiming to have lived and worked in no less than 31 countries as part of his "studies into Child Psychology."**

**Sylvia MacEachern has tracked sexual abuse cases for more than 30 years. Her blog, *Sylvia's Site*, keeps readers up-to-date on abuse issues and "betrayals of trust in the Roman Catholic Church in Canada."**

**Her attention may have been drawn to Selas' case**



**Sylvia MacEachern and her Husband**

**in October, 2014 when it became known that St. Mary's school in Tokyo was to investigate child sex abuse following a teacher's rape confession. This was, of course, many years after Selas had left the school but who had apparently worked there with the male teacher caught up in this unrelated scandal. Apparently, Selas' name then popped up with respect to the outstanding warrants in Louisiana dating back to '79.**

**How Selas departed St. Mary's has raised questions on its own. Years after he had left the school, one of the Brothers at**

**St. Mary's is reported to have mentioned to a visiting graduate that Selas had been fired amid questions surrounding his own behavior. This, in connection with an unverified account of a 1970 trip he and some young boys took to Expo 70 in Osaka. In any case, as late as 1972 Selas was still listed as a teacher at SMIS although MacEachern has said she does not believe he was back teaching there after the summer holidays that year.**

**As "Director of the Junior Peace Corps-Japan" Selas and other adults took 37 boys and girls (mostly military dependants) ranging in age from 7 to 17 on a month-long summer tour of Hong Kong, Thailand, Nepal, India, and the Philippines. An article appearing in the June 18, 1971 "Tokyo Weekender" section of the *Japan Times* said "two-week summer camps in August at Lake Inawashiro, Bandai-Asahi National Park, at the base of Mt. Bandai, Fukushima.**



Organizer Frank Selas points out some stops on the Junior Peace Corps Adventure. (Lower right) shows group of boys returning from a sailing 'dry run' training exercise for the Asia trip.

Selas continued to drop onto and off the grid. Fast forward to September 5, 1974 and a classified ad in the *Gallup Independent* newspaper in northern New Mexico. By this time, Selas had surfaced as Principal at the St. Anthony Catholic Indian Mission School in Zuni, New Mexico.



**According to the ad the school was looking to hire some teacher aides. It read, "St. Anthony School Zuni has opening for teacher aides. No special education requirement. No experience necessary. Apply in person. Ask for Frank Selas, Principal."**

**The wording of that ad was similar in many ways to the ad KNOE-TV placed in *BROADCASTING* magazine when Selas began his TV children's show.**

**The May 15, 1978 ad appearing on page 66 said:  
"Production Assistants needed for daily children's program. No money but great opportunity to learn by doing. Volunteers contact Mr. Selas, KNOE-TV, Post Office Box 4067, Monroe, LA. 318-322-8155."**



**The ease with which Selas was moved off the news program anchor desk and into bowtie, outrageous glasses, and top appearance of some kind of ringmaster might be understandable since KNOE-TV had once before programmed a highly successful children's show that drew a far-reaching and loyal audience.**



**A typical noisy 60's Saturday morning live audience in the huge KNOE-TV studios for the highly popular Happiness Exchange children's show.**

**It had been at least ten years since "Happiness Exchange" was a Saturday morning staple on the station which provided an opportunity for kids to be seen on television by parents and other family members across a wide geographical area including north Louisiana, southeast Arkansas and west**

central Mississippi. The show spotlighted birthdays, free toys, cartoons, dancers and other displays of young talent.

Probably owing more to the format of the program which displayed the personality of the little ones over and above any professional polish much less 'personality' Selas may have brought to the new Mr. Wonder show. Without doubt it was the enthusiasm of the kids which accounted for his show's popularity. Nevertheless, Selas was even named Grand Marshal for the Christmas Parade in distant Natchitoches Parish in 1978.

Partly as promotional pap and partly to enhance his alleged bonafides as a children's entertainer, Selas even flew off to New York to pose for pictures with Bob Keeshan, CBS' lovable Captain Kangaroo.

It was against this promotional backdrop that Selas began to set in motion the next chapter in his true life saga.

By Spring, 1979, Frank 'Mr. Wonder' Selas announced he would sponsor camping trips for boys aged 5 to 15 to the sprawling Kisatchie National Forest in the central part of the state, a good 100 miles from the station.

Several of the children would later tell their parents that Mr. Wonder had abused them...one, even had to go to the hospital.

**On June 6, 1979 a UPI wire story headlined with AUTHORITIES WONDER ABOUT 'MR. WONDER,' shocked just about everybody.**

***"Mr. Wonder," the host of a children's television show, was sought Wednesday by Louisiana authorities on two warrants for his arrest in the molesting of at least six young boys.***

***Frank Selas, 40, emcee of 'Mr. Wonder's Children's Show' on KNOE-TV in Monroe is wanted on charges of misbehavior with juveniles, authorities said. He is accused of molesting at least six young boys during a summer camp he sponsored last weekend for boys from 5 to 16 years old, deputies said. One of the victims was hospitalized, they said."***

**Selas parked his vehicle at the Monroe airport and immediately embarked on the life of a fugitive, reportedly fleeing to South America.**

**Except for a semi-occasional piece of pure speculation as to his whereabouts, his trail has remained ice cold ever since.**

