



Obsessions: Oprah's saving the best for last

By **Lisa Respers France**, CNN
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Oprah Winfrey will end her popular daytime talk show after this season.

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Oprah Winfrey is in the last season of her popular talk show
- There's been a scramble for tickets to her show as well as guest spots
- Editor says Winfrey is "going for it" in her remaining days on air

(CNN) -- Tom Franklin has never met Oprah Winfrey, but that didn't stop him from dreaming what most writers dream.

"With her Mississippi roots, I kept fantasizing that she would see the title, say 'I know what that means, I'm from there' and pick up the book," said the author of "Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter." "I'm really sad because she got so many people to read and was doing such good work."

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Many Oprah fans in general are saddened by her looming departure from her daytime talk show. But that sorrow has also been tempered this season with a bit of mania over the show that, after 25 years, has become a staple of Americana. In the world of television, there is no one bigger than the "O."

The talk show host has helped to stoke the flames of the excitement in the waning days of her show by delivering episodes that are seemingly bigger, better and brighter than anything she has ever done.

From reuniting the cast from "The Sound of Music," to scoring interviews with Michael Jackson's ex-wife, parents and children, and surprising Barbra Streisand with a visit from Robert Redford, Winfrey is going out with a bang the likes of which television audiences have never seen.

Todd Gold, managing editor of [Fancast](#), said all of the excitement befits the ending of the reign of the "queen of television." Gold said he imagines Winfrey and her producers have put a great deal of imagination and energy into thrilling her audience each episode.

"She's going nuts," Gold said. "She's going for it. This is her final lap and it's just going to build and build every day."

Crazy over her "Oprah's Favorite Things" episode? Well, this season Winfrey delighted fans with not one, but two shows and sent her audience members into a frenzy with such high-end gifts as an iPad, a cruise and a 2012 Volkswagen Beetle.

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--Todd Gold of Fancast.com



"It isn't even a new Volkswagen, it's a Volkswagen from two years from now that hasn't even been made yet and was only seen by Oprah," said Gold. "And isn't that so Oprah? You didn't even have to be there [in the audience] to be thrilled by those episodes because all of the excitement just spilled over from watching it."

That excitement has also translated to ratings gold. According to The Hollywood Reporter, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" averaged 8.3 million viewers for the week of November 8, up from the average of 7 million viewers a week who have been watching since the final season

began in September, according to Gold's site.

When the talk show host announced a year ago that she would end "The Oprah Winfrey Show" in September 2011 after a quarter century on the air, it not only set off a mad scramble among viewers to get tickets; potential guests also felt the pressure to get on that golden stage, which has served as a launching pad for success for everyone from doctors to small-business owners.

[The New York Times reported](#) that one aspiring writer even started blogging her attempt to get her book published before Oprah leaves the airwaves.

"It's not just that she had the Midas touch and everything she touches turns to gold," said Susan Harrow, media coach and author of the book "How to Get Booked on Oprah." "It's that people are invested in Oprah and they really see her as someone whose opinion matters to them. People who follow Oprah, they want to know what she thinks, what she's eating, what she's wearing, because if she's doing it it's got to be important to them."

And that obsession with Winfrey has only intensified as the remaining months tick down.

Shelly Jystad is a member of the Bookworms, a book club which recently headed to the show in Chicago, Illinois, from Jamestown, North Dakota, for the episode featuring best-selling author Jonathan Franzen.

The group was thrilled with the chance to be in the audience, which Jystad said included a 100-year-old fan who had followed Winfrey's career, and the gift of a free Amazon Kindle e-reader to every audience member.

Jystad said Winfrey's success has been aided by being so easy to relate to and so open to sharing her own struggles. "Part of it is knowing her journey," she said. "She's been able to overcome so much, and I think she is very genuine in her desire to help others achieve their dreams."

And Jystad said she doesn't believe Winfrey's influence will cease, simply because the talk show host won't be on the air.

"I think she will just be influencing people through another venue with her new network," she said.

But fan Monique Merritt, 26, said she has grown up with the show and doubts that there will ever be another like it. Even as Winfrey moves on to the next stage of her career, heading up the OWN Network, Merritt said she doesn't think the venture will be able to garner the same interest Winfrey has every day for the last 25 years.

"She talks about so much that happens in the world and she hits so many important points," Merritt said. "It's not just a talk show. The new network is cool, but it's not the same as seeing her every day at 4 o'clock."

