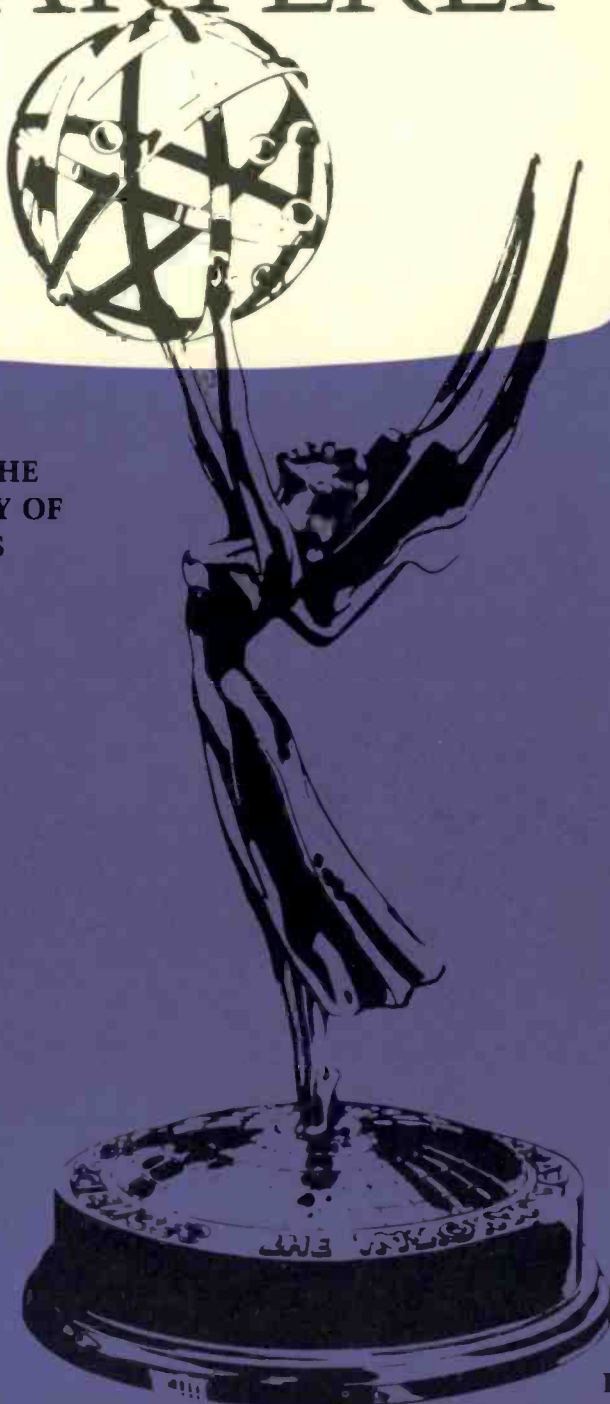


VOLUME XVI • NUMBER IV • WINTER 1979-80

TELEVISION QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

is published quarterly by The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York, 10019 (212) 765-2450

Members of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences receive TELEVISION QUARTERLY as part of membership services. Inquiry regarding membership should be directed to the office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

BUSINESS ADVERTISING OFFICES: Television Quarterly, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450. Advertising placement and other business arrangements should be made with the New York office of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Television Quarterly, NATAS, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 (212) 765-2450

The subscription rates for non-members, libraries and others is \$8.00 a year and \$3.00 a copy in the United States, \$10.00 a year and \$3.50 a copy in all other countries. Special Student Subscription \$6.00. Subscription orders should be sent to TELEVISION QUARTERLY, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 110 West 57th. Street, New York, New York 10019 Att: Trudy Wilson

The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily represent those of The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences or the members of the Editorial Board of Television Quarterly.

Design and Printing:
Chapman's Phototypesetting
1135 E. Truslow
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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

VOL. XVI

NO. IV

CONTENTS

Needed for TV 'Sweeps Week'— Three-Headed Viewers <i>Larry Michie</i>	7
Build a Video Library?— No Thanks! <i>Gary Kaskel</i>	13
British Television Faces The Eighties <i>Alex Toogood, Ph.D.</i>	19
News vs. Entertainment— Do Local Directors Care? <i>Mark Monsky</i>	27
Those Were the Days— Ed Sullivan Redux <i>Marlo Lewis</i>	35
The Curious Evolution of the Video Family <i>Michael A. DeSousa</i>	43
The Audience as Pressure Group— "The Heat Is On!" <i>Howard Gross</i>	47
EPSN: It's not for everybody <i>Brooks Clark</i>	53
Why Limit Broadcasters' Rights? <i>F. Dennis Hale, Ph.D.</i>	65
Book Review <i>Walter Goodman</i>	69



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Needed for TV 'Sweeps Week'— Three-Headed Viewers

By LARRY MICHIE

Every four years U.S. citizens elect a President. In 1976, there were some 214 million U.S. citizens. Only 81.6 million of them voted. The votes were equally weighted, those of the wise with those of fools. Of those who voted, 40,825,839 cast ballots for Jimmy Carter. Therefore, the man chosen by fewer than 41 million Americans—a choice essentially between two men who might not have been the favorite candidates of many of those millions—was given executive office over the political lives of 214 million people.

In the light of this imperfect approximation of democracy, an approximation generally accepted as just by the citizens affected, it must be acknowledged that the statistical tomfoolery of television "sweeps" doesn't really seem out of national character.

Nothing in American business practice really resembles the sweeps. Essentially, the local ratings during November, February and May determine the advertising rates that television stations can charge the rest of the year. Out of self-protection, and under considerable pressure, the three commercial networks ladle out their hoarded store of goodies during those months, attempting to overbalance the competitive positions of their affiliates. Since all three do it, of course, it is as likely as not that the result is the same as if no particular program scheduling adjustments had been made. But viewers, one way or another, are likely to see the difference. And a Hollywood producer, proud of his made-for-television movie or special or miniseries or theatrical film, may find his love child pitted in numerical battle against an unexpectedly vigorous foe.

Let us consider some recent cases in point.

No doubt the most celebrated *mano-a-mano-a-mano* in television history occurred when Rhett Butler fought it out with Randall McMurphy and Elvis Presley. It was the night of Feb. 11, 1979—a date TV historians will remember.

It was a Sunday, the night with the highest HUT (homes-using-television) level of the week. CBS-TV put on *Gone With The Wind*, which was until recent, inflation-haunted years the theatrical box-office champ of all time. It was a second run, admittedly, since it had played on NBC previously; but the ratings potential was undeniable.

NBC-TV countered with *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, the long-delayed but overwhelmingly successful theatrical film version of Ken Kesey's psychedelic classic. Oscar was bumping heads with Oscar.

Ratings-dominant ABC-TV's Sunday punch was a made-for-TV movie bluntly titled *Elvis*.

The three first-stringers didn't compete exactly head-on. The Civil War saga ran from 8-10 p.m. New York time, while the counter-culture fable was on from 8-10:40 and Mr. Swivel Hips was slotted for 9-11.

But the winner, clearly, was *Elvis*, the only one of the three made expressly for the medium on which it was appearing. The ratings were 27.3, for *Elvis*, 24.3 for *Gone With The Wind* and 22.5 for *Cuckoo's Nest*. None, obviously, failed. Equally, none registered the resounding success it might have against more pedestrian competition. Somewhere between the Mexican standoff and the Pyrrhic victory lies the Sweep Edge.

Television critics were outraged by this expense of spirits in a shameful waste, and some of that sense of overkill was communicated to the public. Conceivably, there were millions of viewers who would have enjoyed seeing all three presentations, and not simultaneously.

But most of all, a number of network executives were furious. The lead was taken by CBS Entertainment president Robert Daly, who promptly decided that there ought to be 52-week sweeps—that is, ratings for each individual market should be measured continuously. As it is, only the "overnight" markets—New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco—get that kind of loving attention.

In the abstract, the rest of the television business and its courtiers agreed. The problem—dare folks of breeding discuss it?—was one of money. Although CBS was willing to help such a rating expansion get on its feet, local TV stations feared, quite justifiably, that they would have to pay for its continuation. Millions of dollars were at stake.

As a result of the projected cost, there was no question but that a single rating service would have to be chosen to perform the ritual. Sweeps now are conducted by both A.C. Nielson Co. and Arbitron. One would have to go. What prisoner wishes to deny himself the opportunity of appeal? Prisoners of ratings also want some kind of check on their fierce numerical justice.

The result, in short, was that hopes for ratings reform were dashed. The structure remains in place, as deplored and as indispensable as ever.

And what has been the more recent history? The autumn just past, the November sweeps of 1979, provided an almost comic postscript to the preceding February.

Once-lowly ABC, in recent years risen to royal ascendancy, rather magnificently programmed only 28% of its schedule with special material. Its hopes were vested in an all-star mini-series, *The French Atlantic Affair*, considered likely to sweep—no pun intended—all before it. Its network competitors relied heavily on non-regular-series material, 49% by CBS and 47% by NBC, but there was a significant footnote to one case.

NBC, determined to shed its loser image, at the start of the season in September had gambled heavily by airing *Semi-Tough* and *Coming Home*, theatrical movies it had earlier scheduled for the November sweeps. Both did well, and along with other bold NBC programming got the beleaguered network off to a wonderful start, confounding its critics and delighting the public, which never cares what channel it's tuned to as long as the programs are entertaining.

Alas for ABC and NBC.

The French Atlantic Affair was a major flop, with a rating average for its six hours of only 13.1. The selective mini-series effort fell on its face.

At NBC, meanwhile, the November ratings fell off rapidly. Despite a heroic effort to staunch the leakage, rating points drained away with alarming fluidity.

At the end of the month, each individual market across the country was left in the usual suspense, waiting for the "books." But, applying the available numbers nationally, the ratings turned out like this:

Nielsen—CBS, 20.1; ABC, 19.9; NBC, 17.7.

Arbitron—CBS, 20.0; ABC, 19.6; NBC, 17.7.

An occasional market would be found where NBC was number one, of course; and in some places CBS would be number three.

But on the whole, CBS did its affiliates (and itself) proud, while ABC's vassals of the air could only content themselves with a respectable showing. NBC affiliates were left to contemplate the probable November results if they had carried *Semi-Tough* and *Coming Home*.

The winner of competition in the classic American capitalistic confrontation is supposed to be the public. Yet it is hard to see how the sweeps benefit anyone. The networks—NBC this past autumn proving the determined exception—are forced into displaying their most glittering wares at the most disadvantageous opportunities. Affiliate stations are under enormous pressure to hype their viewership with misbegotten pandering—"Live, on the 11 o'clock news, city hookers tell of terrifying abuse!"—and advertising agencies are left with the chore of trying to sift out meaningful competitive ratings that can be used for time-buying during the entire year.

The public, meanwhile, is simply manipulated as a sales object.

No broadcasters seem to be losing a lot of money as a consequence of the current sweeps practices, however, and a change would cost money. Rather like the Presidential election system, those who use it generally can live with its results, however undeceived they are as to its imperfections. And, frankly, proponents of changes in the electoral system probably have a better chance of gaining satisfaction than those who want to do away with the sweeps.

Larry Michie watches television every night in his capacity as Television-Radio Editor of the show business weekly, Variety. He was previously on the staff of Broadcasting Magazine in Washington.

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"Anyone who thinks cable can't miss in the Eighties hasn't learned the lessons of the Sixties and Seventies, when everybody said it couldn't miss, either. Some cable operators were so confident they felt they could give things away to get franchises—promising extensive local programming, building elaborate studios—and still make money. They didn't."

—"*Bring Plenty of Money*" by Allen Sloane, *Forbes Magazine*

* * *

". . . It has to be said that game shows, almost uniquely in American life, give the middle class the chance to get something for nothing. Tax shelters are for the rich. Foundations benefit professors, artists and writers. Welfare goes to the unfortunate, the lazy and the dishonest. Even those circulation-building magazine lotteries have smaller prizes for contestants who don't subscribe.

"It may be harder than ever to make a living these days, but game shows continue to reflect the American dream of easy money and a free frost-free refrigerator in every home. . . . The prizes have an aura of their own. A microwave oven that is being given away looks different to the folks at home from the same microwave oven . . . on display at Sears. You can almost hear the Cadillac Seville purring as the blonde models who are game-show fixtures caress its headlights and other erogenous zones."

—"*Games Shows*" by Tom Buckley
New York Times Sunday Magazine

* * *

"I don't hate the networks. They've been awfully good to me. They've paid me a lot of money and they've let me do some exciting things. I might get sore when CBS sabotages *Paper Chase* but it's not the first time that has happened to me. I blackmail them. I report them to the press. I behave terribly, but it's really without rancor. My job as a creative artist is to fight for my stuff by any means I can."

—*John Houseman (Interview with Randy Shipp, Christian Science Monitor)*

*"Things don't turn up in this world
until somebody turns them up."*

James Abram Garfield.

From the beginning, our free press has provided more than news.

It has expressed opinions, provided information.
And turned things up.

Intrepid journalists examined, analyzed and questioned when the truth seemed buried.

Radio and television have followed in that tradition.

From the reporting of news, the scope of broadcast journalism has broadened. And, today, includes editorializing, investigative reporting, and a dependable flow of information to help a concerned public better understand this troubled world.

Increasingly, broadcast news has been probing and examining and digging. And in this role, as a source of vital information and new knowledge, broadcasting has a major responsibility and an equally large opportunity.

For only in a democracy can truth prevail.

But first someone must turn up that truth.



WESTINGHOUSE BROADCASTING COMPANY

Build a Video Library?— No Thanks!

By GARY KASKEL

I was the first in my circle of friends to buy a Betamax. But after owning it just short of a year I've sold it along with my nice color Trinitron. And I'm feeling a lot healthier for it. These days I'm watching a 1959 Philco black-and-white set—when I'm watching.

What is the meaning of this antisocial act? Some background:

With the availability of popularly priced (less than \$1,000) home video machines like the Betamax, Selectavision and the videodisc, we're in the dawning of a new era of what some people call visual literacy. To educators and sociologists, this is a boon—instant access to thousands of programs on all subjects reaching a great many people.

But the real commercial impact, as the manufacturers of these machines are well aware (and are exploiting to the hilt), lies in the area of home entertainment. It seems like it'll be just a few years before every home has a video machine for every TV set.

But a closer examination of what these machines are really about, and what the motivations are of the people who are buying them reveals some very disturbing facts.

Now you have to understand where I'm coming from: All my life I was fascinated with TV. Growing up in Manhattan (where TV shows used to come from) I would write away for those free tickets to Ed Sullivan, Johnny Carson, Garry Moore, *Candid Camera* and the odd assortment of games shows and specials. I grew up with friends: Skelton, Gleason, Lucy. (I pity today's kids. Whom do they have?)

And when I got my first tape recorder for Christmas how did I use it? To tape the sound tracks of my favorite movies, and TV shows off the air. I can't tell you what a happy 13-year-old I was when we finally got a color set. Now I didn't have to take the subway down to the RCA Building to see the NBC peacock in all its glory. With my Dad's Kodak Retina I even became adept at catching some vintage moments of air time on Kodachrome slides. In short, I was an adolescent TV addict. Bona fide.

So when the Betamax home videotape recorder became affordable, it seemed like a logical thing for me. Like all new toys there was an excitement in buying it, bringing it home to uncrate it, then hooking it up.

Suddenly the TV, my old friend, took on a new face. It was no longer my master. No more was I at the mercy of its schedule. Now I could run the show. And run it again and again. TV was no longer the fleeting enjoyment doled out to me in small doses from childhood (its and mine.)

Now I could enjoy all those wonderful moments with my favorite personalities over and over. Whenever I wanted. Or could I?

After about eight months of ownership, and about 40 tapes later (that's a library of about 80 hours) it was beginning to dawn on me: Many of my tapes I'd seen only once or twice. I was spending big bucks on a video library that I wasn't getting much enjoyment from.

But the profound realization was still to come. One day it just hit me. How could I have been so dense? It wasn't fun anymore because I owned it. Simple as that. It had to go.

Here's how I see it today. There's one thing that the theater, movies and TV have in common. It's that they are all transitory experiences. Let's take the movies as example. What makes a movie something special? It's that you can't have it whenever you want it. You have to go outside, to a theater where it's playing only temporarily, pay money and see it once through. Part of the enjoyment of the movie is the experience you go through to see it and the fact that it comes and then leaves you. If the film is good, it leaves a positive image. And you relive the experience in your mind with a favorable impression. You may long to repeat the experience, even though you rarely do. But it's the transitory pleasure and the longing to recapture it that makes the movies special magic, if you will.

When television came in, it destroyed some of that magic (but not all of it) by bringing the process into the comfort of your own home. But you could still enjoy your favorites only when they were offered to you perhaps once or twice a year.

Now what happens with the home video machine? You "own" a great moment in cinema or TV. It no longer remains a fond memory. Now it can be played and replayed not only until it is no longer magic, but until it has become common and ultimately boring. The magic is destroyed by familiarity.

Look at the big stars of today: Barbra Streisand, Dustin Hoffman, Robert Redford, etc. What do they have in common? They all keep low profiles for the public. They do one or two pictures a year and that's it. Little or no TV—no commercials—and few public appearances. They know that if the public saw them around all the time, they'd grow tired of them.

These days the film studios are perpetrating insanity. In a rash of greed they're releasing all their films on video cassettes and discs to the public, who will soon become tired of them because they can have them whenever they want. Seeing a great film will no longer be an event. It will be commonplace, there at the command of a switch.

The record industry is the worst offender of over-exposure. What's the average life of a top 40 hit? Maybe a year? Probably less. In the name of a quick buck (get it while they can) the promoters break their backs to get their records played on every station possible as often as possible.

Who isn't bound to get sick of hearing the same song a dozen times a day, day after day? It's the public who suffers. When the Saturday Night Fever album came out it was enjoyable once or twice. Now a chill runs down my spine every time I hear the Bee Gees.

In the 1930s and 40s the big bands enjoyed tremendous success playing live gigs. They were exciting to hear live because in those days the only recordings for the public were on extremely limited fidelity 78 rpm records. Since hearing them live was the only way to hear a faithful sound, going to hear a band was an event. It was electric. I wasn't around then, but I'm told kids went to big band dances and wound up huddled around the bandstand just to listen to the music. That was excitement! The enjoyment was in the moment. Along rolls the 1950s and hi-fi microgroove records and *bang*, people are tired of the old sound they can hear any old time in their living rooms.

Gary Kaskel is an author and film-maker. He is currently working on a feature production titled "Schizophrenia!"

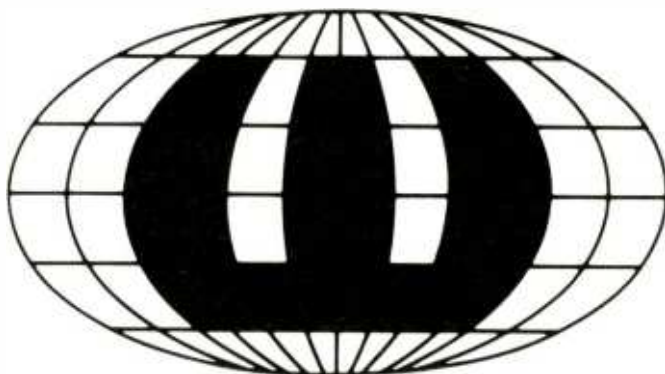
The preceding article appeared, in somewhat shorter form, in The Los Angeles Times.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"The passive nature of television watching can be documented with the low, slow waves produced by electro-encephalograms of people sitting in front of the box. But probably only families—and perhaps psychiatrists—have to deal with the frustrated people who confuse half hour situation comedies with real life.

"There is very little pain on the tube. Characters with cancer die coolly, often with a smile; mouming is nothing more than a cutaway; "regulars" never seem to die. Humans hit by automobiles, lead pipes and bullets are up and around after a commercial. Villains, corrupt politicians and rotten bosses get theirs in the last scene. Foul-up kids straighten out at the end—thirty or sixty minutes after they began driving their parents nuts."

—Richard Reeves in *Esquire*



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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

“What matters most is not hardware. It is software—i.e. programming. In our business, the hardware arrives first, surrounded by headlines. . . . Only as time passes does a unique form of software grow up to fit the special abilities of the new hardware system. There are only two of these new technologies in operation—pay television, which is primarily conducted via cable television and the fledgling video cassette and disc business. For quite different reasons, neither one has really established an identity of its own yet.”

—*Elton Rule, President of ABC, Inc.*
Address to Detroit Adcraft Club

* * *

“I’ve taught in universities for 30 years, and until five years ago almost no student would have expressed a belief in reincarnation or devil possession. But now I find that as many as 30 per cent, as I lecture around, claim that they believe in this.

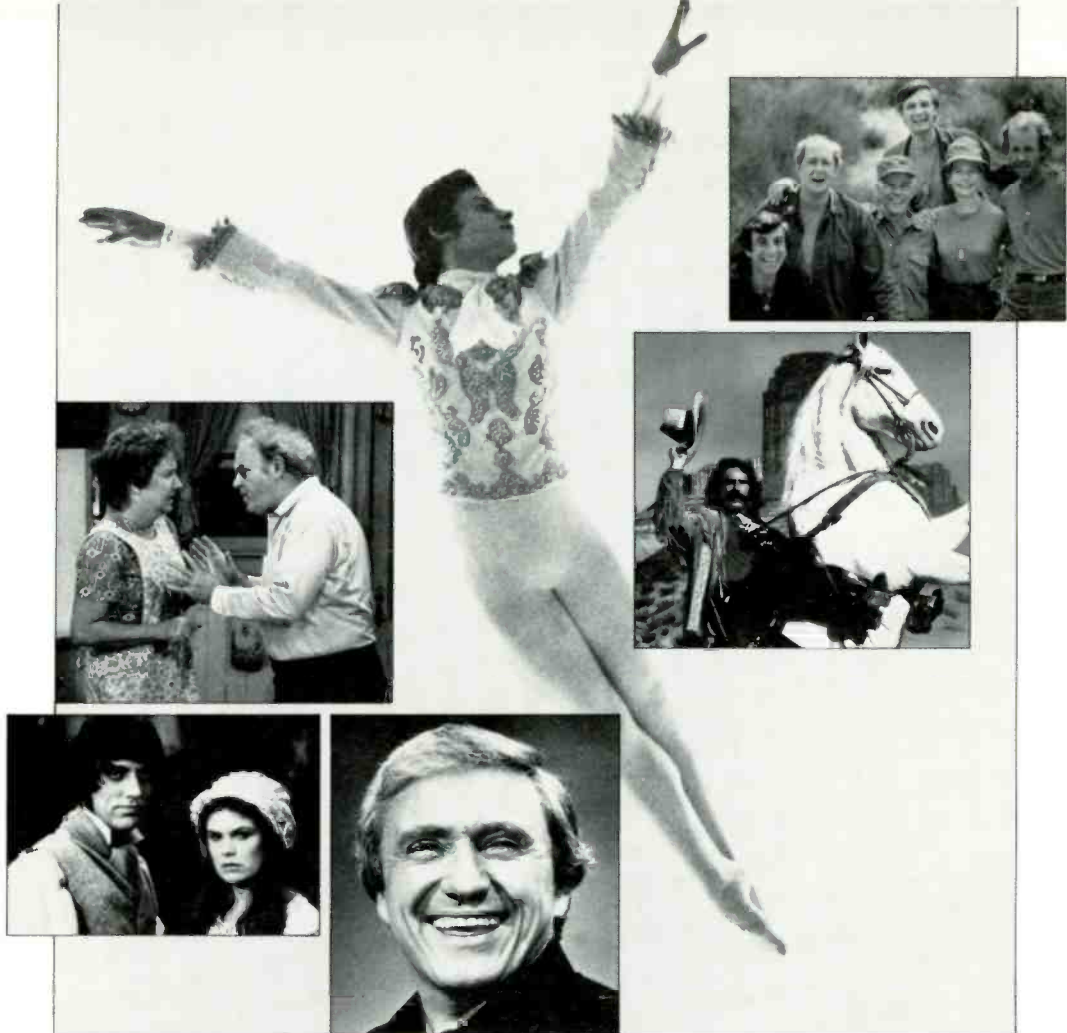
“When you ask them what their source of information is, they often cite TV shows called ‘docu-dramas’ that mix fact with fiction—sometimes very, very loosely, but so cleverly that it is hard for the layman raised in the television age to sort things out. He thinks it’s all true.”
—*Prof. Paul Kurtz, State University of New York at Buffalo (U.S. News & World Report)*

* * *

“We must not fall into the trap of believing that ‘free television’ really isn’t free because it carries commercials that are paid for by the viewer. There is a theory that the advertiser must get more money for his product in order to pay for his televised blurbs, which in turn raises the price the consumer-viewer must pay for that product. But it is probably not true that the price of the product must go up because of the advertising. Even if it were, the TV viewer is not required to pay the cost.

“Suppose the viewer doesn’t buy the product, and suppose that somebody who never watches television does buy it—the program is therefore free to the viewer, the cost being paid by his fellow citizen who ignores the tube.”

—“*The Networks*” by *A. Frank Reel*
(Charles Scribner’s Sons)



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 Cincinnati, Ch. 19, WXIX-TV
 Kansas City, Ch. 9, KMBC-TV

Represented by Metro TV Sales

British Television Faces The Eighties

By ALEX TOOGOOD, Ph.D.

Change is in the air. This is just as well for British viewers. Currently, their television has hit a spot of heavy weather.

Britain's grand old "Auntie", the BBC, is beset by internal squabbles and inadequate funding. Programming has lost its high lustre, and the Corporation's prestige is resting on the laurels of yesteryear rather than the accolades of today.

British TV critics have deplored the dearth of serious drama and documentaries and raged at "the Beeb" for wasting time on game shows and American imports like *Starsky and Hutch*.

The BBC's rival, Independent Television, approaches its 25th birthday as a rich and proper dowager. Gone are the old days when every evening's schedule was a brash, jazzy challenge to the BBC. Now ITV plays it safe, a safety determined not so much by ratings as by political comfort. This new stance seems to reflect the country's recent move to the right, a factor that augurs ill for bold, innovative television.

If you look closely, however, you may see signs that the current reverses are only temporary. There is great excitement over prospects for a *fourth* national network. For the past fifteen years British audiences have enjoyed three national services: two provided by the public corporation, the BBC, and the other by the various private commercial companies of Independent Television. For the past decade there has been heated debate over the utilization of a fourth channel.

At the outset, it was assumed that the Independents were a shoo-in. Despite murmurings from such vested interests as education and a natural annoyance by the BBC, the allocation of a second channel to ITV was seen as the very British thing to do. It would bring equality to the two sectors of broadcasting; it would present a semblance of balance to the system and it would not lead to anything embarrassing or awkward. The Independents regarded the matter as a *fait accompli*. Then, suddenly, their complacency was shattered.

A small but vociferous band of liberal thinkers, headed by a maverick academic and former broadcaster, Tony Smith, developed a proposal that became known as the Open Broadcasting Authority. (OBA) It was a direct challenge to the status quo, the entrenched duopoly of the BBC and ITV.

The new Authority, interestingly, would produce nothing. Rather than pattern itself on existing broadcasting institutions, the parallel would be

to a publishing house. Any producer, including independents but not excluding existing bodies, would be invited to submit programs. It was hoped that this would open up new and invigorating forms of broadcasting whereby minority groups, avant garde groups and such would provide programs. In short, broadcasting would be used as a social tool.

A forum for debate on this issue was provided by the Annan Committee, an investigatory body established by the government to evaluate broadcasting and make recommendations for its future. Its 1977 report caught everybody off guard. Rare for such documents, it was pragmatic, eschewing the dilettantism of earlier reports. The thrust of the report was a recommendation that the fourth channel be assigned to the Open Broadcasting Authority.

Such reports usually are put aside to gather dust. But the government—Labor was then in power—hastily endorsed the concept of the OBA. Then, in May, Labor fell and Mrs. Thatcher's conservatives came to power.

Not surprisingly, the Independent broadcasters have friends in the Conservative Party. One of the government's first announcements was that the fourth channel would be awarded to ITV, with service expected to start in 1982.

So it was that an opportunity for a daring and provocative broadcast concept was pipped at the post by a national election. The OBA proponents were partially to blame, not having fleshed out their proposals with a solid prospectus.

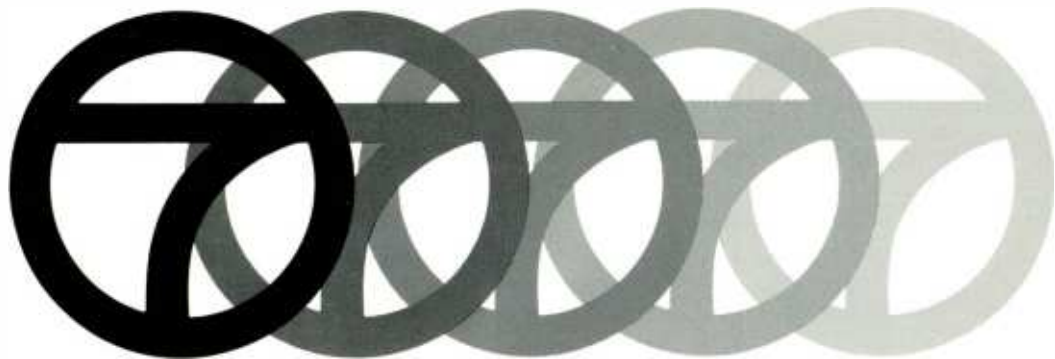
In balance, the Conservative government has acted wisely. Independent Television is certainly in the best position to provide the new service at no cost to the government. Wisely, the new channel has been assigned to the Authority which regulates the independent companies, and not to the companies themselves. This insures that the taint of commercialism will be contained.

The Director-General of the Authority has already outlined the role of the new channel. Its primary function will be to "counter-program" the existing commercial network. This is not to imply a cultural ghetto, as it will also balance the existing channel's public service offerings.

With two outlets, the Independents hope to serve minorities, to develop new formats, to experiment and to indulge in the new-found luxury of nurturing "sleepers". In the best British tradition, all this will be in prime time.

A year hence, the Authority will conduct competitive hearings on the licensing of TV companies to serve the various regions. These hearings are a far cry from the rubber-stamp procedures of the FCC hearings in the U.S. The Authority makes it clear that it grants *new* licenses, it does not renew the old. It appears likely that some of the present companies will be replaced and that the regional concept itself will be reviewed.

(continued on page 22)



The ABC Television Stations.
New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco.

New regions may be created as a means of pinching off the power of some of the largest companies.

Infrequent license hearings are understandable at a time when British nerves are frayed. Much is at stake.

While commercial television in Britain is regulated with a rigor that would horrify American broadcasters—including a proviso that insures the government 70 percent of company income—Independent TV is still one of the biggest money-making entities in Britain. Competition for those lucrative licenses will be keen.

Here we may note two adverse effects on current operations. Existing companies are reluctant to spend shareholders' money when there is no guarantee that they will be in operation a year hence. Even more devastating, the companies turn to safe, dull programming that will not dismay the Establishment. This trend is more than a response to an insecurity over license renewal. Wary of criticism from government, broadcasters are down-playing investigative documentaries and social drama. Costume plays and game shows are the style of the moment.

An ironic consequence of all this caution is a shift in the balance of power. The once-dominant Thames Television has abdicated its leadership to London Weekend. A few years ago this was the company most likely to lose its license.

The fight for the OBA was not a lost cause. It threw into sharp focus some of the major problems of British broadcasting. The Independent Broadcasting Authority has realized that a place has to be made for independent producers. Word has gone out that up to 50 per cent of programming on the new network will come from sources outside the existing companies.

Still, certain matters remain unresolved. OBA's advocates have questioned the very structure of Britain's broadcasting system. Unanswered is the hard fact that both the BBC and ITV are clearly entrenched in the establishment, sharing the same primary goals. This bodes ill for the new concern with public interest.

A more immediate problem is this: the introduction of another outlet for the Independents upsets the gentlemen's agreement whereby a very delicate balance was maintained between the BBC and ITV.

On an average evening, the two program services of the BBC draw an audience equal to that of the single ITV channel. This is seen as essential to justify the BBC financing, the bulk of which comes from a receiver tax or fee levied on all viewers.

Some Britons fear that added competition will force Auntie BBC into a more competitive stance. Omens are already alarming the establishment. Early '79 saw the Corporation's executives attempting to set up BBC-1 as a popular channel by transferring most of its informative programming and its service to minorities over to BBC-2. The move was forestalled by pressure from concerned BBC staff and by subsequent

action from the BBC governing board. But senior executives are continuing to draw their battle lines.

Viewers who have been enraptured with the BBC over the years see such moves as tokens of grim times ahead. But they are living in the past. The sad truth is that the BBC has changed. Budget cut-backs have caused a decline in standards. License fees have not kept pace with inflation. And there has been a crisis of confidence at staff level.

This inadequate funding means low salaries—a full thirty per cent below the income of comparable colleagues at ITV—and a heavy turnover of employees. Within the past year, the BBC has lost ten percent of personnel at all levels. Those remaining take a Luddite position to protect their very limited interests. Trade unions, for example, have rejected ENG technology, refusing to permit the BBC from purchasing news film from outside sources. Such intransigence hardly assists the Corporation in improving its news coverage.

Lack of money has affected programming on two levels: insufficient budgets for the programs themselves and a loss of key creative personnel. To compensate, the BBC has begun to rely heavily on American imports. Such programs are fairly cheap and they usually prove popular. In a random week last spring, the BBC was offering eight made-in-the-USA series during prime time. The same week saw six American feature films, and only one British.

When not showing American imports, the BBC has turned to the cheaper sort of home-grown entertainment. Remote telecasting of live events, esoteric minority activities, darts competitions and billiards tournaments have all made a come-back. This is playing havoc with the concept of balanced programming on the two BBC channels.

For more than a decade, Americans have looked to the BBC for "prestige drama", the sort of programs seen on the PBS *Masterpiece Theatre* series. Now the Corporation avoids such costly programs.

While Independent television will no doubt settle down after the license hearings and embrace the challenge of additional service, the solution for the BBC remains elusive. The harsh truth is that the Corporation has lost its friends.

It is a cutting irony that the high reputation of the BBC rests on the quality programming that emerged during the years when Sir Hugh Greene was Director General, yet it was these same top-drawer programs that slowly alienated the Corporation's constituencies.

Whatever the flaws of the BBC's first Director General, Lord Reith, he realized that this new invention, public broadcasting, could survive only if it reinforced existing social standards. Greene believed that the media should question, challenge, criticize the existing social order. This resulted in exciting TV fare: biting social drama, irreverent satire and news-worthy documentaries. But such programming made powerful enemies. It upset politicians and influential pressure groups.

It was Greene who also embraced the idea of competition with ITV. This inevitably set the grand old "Auntie" image back on its ear. Twenty years ago, such competition was a marvelous stimulus. But the idea may not be practical today. Perhaps the time has come for the BBC to cooperate with the independent sector.

Currently, the BBC and the ITV are engaged in costly competition for exclusive sports coverage, glamorous special events and block-buster feature films. This, admittedly, is not the best way for a financially strapped public corporation to justify its high expenditures. Now and then, if the BBC is outbid, it perversely decides to cover the event anyway, and never mind giving the audience a choice.

If the BBC can return to its grand concept of serving the public interest with style and grace, perhaps financial aid might be offered without strings attached. Then the BBC might look back to its golden days as a ground plan for its future.

Dr. Alex Toogood has been a television director in the U.S., Australia, and in his native New Zealand. He was educated at the University of North Carolina and Ohio State. He is now professor of television production at Temple University in Philadelphia.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Television's success in squeezing the political process into the framework of commerce is primarily an American achievement. No major European country permits sale of time for political purposes. The prevailing pattern in Europe is allocation of free time on the basis of a mathematical formula—such as votes in a previous election, or party representation in a legislative body.

"The candidate who merchandises his candidacy with 'commercials' in paid-for time is an American contribution to the electronic process. This may well be one of the most dangerous effects of the success of broadcast advertising."

—*"The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate"*

By Erik Barnouw
(Oxford University Press)

FERRER ☆ MARTIN SHEEN ☆ EVA MARIE
 DANNE WOODWARD ☆ RAYMOND MAS
 ☆ JOHN HOUSEMAN ☆ JOHN GIELGUD ☆
 EVOR HOWARD ☆ ELI WALLACH ☆ JESSI
 ESS MEREDITH ☆ ANTHONY HOPKINS ☆
 ORGE C. SCO ★ CYRIL RIT
 WALL ☆ RIC TH ANDERS
 THOMAS M BETTE DAVI
 LEEN DEWH RSON WELL
 TH EVANS ☆ ARD BURTO
 N ROBARDS GUINNESS ☆
 YNNE ☆ EVA LE GALLIENNE ☆ MAURICE
 FONTANNE ☆ JAMES STEWART ☆ DAME
 S ☆ SARAH CHURCHILL ☆ JULIE HARRIS
 CHARLTON HESTON ☆ PATRICIA NEAL
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Moore Show
My Three Sons
Family Affair
The Beverly
Hillbillies
The Andy
Griffith Show
Hogan's Heroes
Gomer Pyle
Petticoat Junction
I Love Lucy
The Dick
Van Dyke Show
The Honeymooners
The Phil Silvers
Show

News vs. Entertainment— Do Local Directors Care?

By MARK MONSKY

A dynasty is changing hands in American journalism, with little notice and even less serious scrutiny.

The history and backbone of American journalism used to be the newspaper editor. A figure that—at least mythologically—embodied a crusty, concerned and curmudgeony spirit.

But quietly, the weight of news dissemination has been shifting to broadcasting. It is now an accepted fact that most Americans get their basic news from television. Thus, newspaper editors may still have the history, but the backbone has shifted to broadcasting.

All this has happened in less than three decades, and is now changing at so rapid a rate that concepts of journalism's place in broadcasting have hardly had time to be argued.

In fact, I live in the middle of it and rarely get time to debate such things until I plop myself down in front of the tube and confront myself. And since I do not watch much other television or even other television news, I hold these conversations generally with people here in New York, whom I have known either in broadcasting or newspapers.

Thus, considering what had happened in this shift of things, I toyed with the invitation to the 35th annual meeting of the Radio and Television News Directors Association, a/k/a RTNDA. This one was to be at Caesar's Palace, no less, in Las Vegas, last September.

Leaving piles of newspapers, magazines, and real problems behind, I flew from muggy New York to the flat, dry heat of the Las Vegas desert hole. I had a fistful of brochures, mostly about the central theme of the meeting: electronics.

If Las Vegas was hot and bright, so was the lobby of the Palace. Packed with noise and glitter, girls in microskirts and maxichests, and people pulling at the one-arm bandits, their cups full of coins and their eyes empty of enjoyment.

I could see what the paying tourists got here, but what was waiting for the newsmen?

It began with some concern for substance: Howard K. Smith warned of the increased governmental hostility toward the media and there were reports and discussions on First Amendment issues, mostly centering on courts and judicial assault. By early in the afternoon, conscience was still

holding up as a panel got into the pros and cons of coverage of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident.

The attendance at these first sessions was mixed, with only a few of the total registrants in attendance. Many were still checking in that morning, and being hit with the fresh distractions of slot machines, the rattle of dice, and pretty young women with extraordinary eye contact.

Also, the overwhelmingly popular attraction—judging from the number of repeat visits—were the show booths where, manufacturers and services offered their wares. Here is where the vast numbers of small town news directors were to be found.

And what were they looking at? Helicopters with remote-controlled cameras and fancy transmitters, cameras, relays, recorders, etc., etc., etc. It looked like a TV (and radio) newsman's idea of F.A.O. Schwartz on a Saturday afternoon. Purveyors proudly showed-off their news-fangled stuff, to the obvious wide-eyed amazement of the news executives.

Displays of equipment were not the only heavily-visited booths. Services that provide pre-canned feature material in one form or another abounded. They, much like the syndicated columns for smaller newspapers, were there to give what (it is presumed in TV Heaven in New York) the locals lack.

The grasp on content seemed to slip a little by late afternoon. The planners at RTNDA sent the radio boys off to talk about equipment in their little panel and the TV boys heard such gems as "Helicopter Microwave: The Future of Live Television News."

At lunch time on Friday, a hint of the national reality was delivered by Bill Leonard, President of CBS News, when he touched a soft point on the question of TV news and quality. Said Leonard:

"We must realize that greater quantity and more popularity are important, but not enough; that unless we are careful, the new commercial success of some television news programming may be our undoing. For the great danger to our profession is a blurring of the lines between news and entertainment."

Leonard added that remark immediately after trying to caution news directors to guard against losing their news identity and becoming business executives with an entertainment commodity.

Some sat up and listened, rigid faces taking in the array of broadcasting management power and prestige around them; a few even took notes. But many others examined their fingernails and read over guides to Las Vegas entertainment. Leonard's words dropped into the room like the quiet knocks of a judge's admonishing gavel, but to many they might as well have been tapdancing clicks. Immediately after he spoke, some rushed

(continued on page 28)



Columbia Pictures Television

forward to shake hands; most drifted out and more than a few went back to looking at the toys.

But there were no booths for the NAACP or other black groups and the crosses were burning back East. In fact, the only issue-oriented booth that seemed to be making headway was that of the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

Journalism reared its vaguely familiar face—if you could be conscious by 7:30 Saturday morning in Las Vegas—when three teachers from mid-western universities were on a panel on teaching reporting. About 30 people showed up.

Otherwise, official participation was in panels like:

- Stress Thrives in the Newsroom: Causes and Methods of Coping
- Motivating Employees
- Separate Courses in Managing Union and Non-union Newsrooms
- Gaining Control of Your Time
- How To Get Anybody To Do What You Want
- The Growing Impact of Privacy Decisions and Legislation.

By Saturday midday, the group was thinning out at a steady rate as each went his separate way. By then, a few small groups had formed, and the subject of content came up.

Ed Turner, from Oklahoma, wondered aloud how much longer this attitude would go on. Turner has been almost everything in the business, from Metromedia group VP for news, to producer at CBS news, and many-time news director. He wasn't very impressed by the toys. But, he shrugged, maybe it didn't mean that when the news directors went home, things would be the same. It was possible, he said (staring at me with a look that clutched at hope), that when they got back to their cities, substance really did count.

Outside at the registration desk, the deep voices of TV and radio were asking for bills, their efforts barely heard over the incessant clatter of money changing hands.

On an empty poker table, I found a copy of Bill Leonard's speech, typed and handed out by efficient PR people. It was open to the last page:

"For what profiteth the news person who wins the air time and loses his own—I almost said soul."

Several men were checking out now, clad in slick grey suits and natty hair.

"Let us be extra vigilant," the speech went on, "that for the electronic journalists, success does not mean failure.

"Let us never forget that we are news people. First. And always."

Later that day, a local TV "Live" van had pulled up to the front of the hotel. A technician said they were getting ready to do a spot. I asked if

they covered Leonard's speech. No, he said, they were just there to do a live shot originating from the scene; LIVE just for the sake of being able to say they are LIVE. The news had come and gone.

The hotel lobby gift stand had a few newspapers from Nevada and California and even some copies of the *New York Times*. There were stories about our economy, the rise of gold and the plummet of the dollar; the social strains of the society showing themselves as crosses are once again burned on the lawns of homes recently sold to black people; charges that our national defense is a disaster area.

Around us, arrayed at poolside, squads of women decked in endless ropes of gold chain poured oil on troubled tans, while pale and grey news directors paraded back and forth with the mandatory brochures in their hands, fresh from one goody tank to another.

On Friday, John Chancellor came out to address a luncheon and he too tried to stress content. He was followed by a panel on Three Mile Island, trying to pinpoint whether news coverage made it worse or didn't report it well enough. Blessed with a good sense of time and place, the Governor of Pennsylvania and the head of the Nuclear Regulatory commission cut the baby in half: The media was too cool at first, too hot toward the end. In sum, what we used to call in the Ivy League a "Gentleman's C."

Thus, several score of the nation's news directors sat in that meeting hearing what amounted to the formula for success. That formula in its many versions was typified by a concern for method rather than meaning; form rather than content; the reporter as personality vehicle, rather than as reporter. Not much was said about journalism, or issues; or where we should be looking in the society now. Mostly, talk was about time and length of "talking heads," pacing, story angles, gimmickry.

Back at the ranch, the approximately 60 booths were in full swing, with brochures, buttons, bags, etc., circulating. Some people from the National Right to Work Committee tried hard to buttonhole a hapless passing news director to talk about their crusade, but they were fighting an uphill battle. Not far away, Paul Harvey's radio syndication had a beautiful red-headed woman, posed in statuesque beauty, inviting interest in that singular radio broadcaster's viewpoint and product.

The major speeches had been given by network figures, not local news directors. Not one curmudgeony voice was heard from Wilmington, North Carolina, or Tucson, Arizona. No television version of anachronistic fashion (like Sarah McClendon) stirred a breast.

There were no economists to argue the viewpoints of our economic disaster; no military figures to attack or defend the status of our national defense; no Grey Panthers to plead for our starving elderly; no civil rights advocates to plead to our consciences.

Some 800 men and women who, in a very real sense, help shape this nation's political and social thinking had gathered. They were fed on tans and transistors, within a desert watering hole.

On the way out of the main lobby of the Caesar's Palace, there was a bulletin notice announcing the next group, The Association of Diesel Specialists.

Mark Monsky is news director of The Ten O'Clock News on WNEW 5 in New York City. He was previously a reporter and producer at CBS News. He attended Columbia University and is the author of "Looking Out for Number One", published in 1975 by Simon & Schuster.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I think I know something about this medium. I know that television can make learned men appear confused and confused men appear learned. . . . In the end, the people who'll decide which trials get on television are the same people who run television now. They'll be looking for drama . . . they'll be looking for entertainment, for ratings. And if they find what they're looking for, they'll inevitably diminish the stature of the courts."

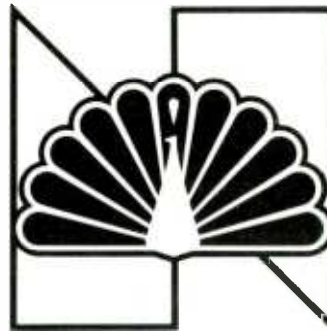
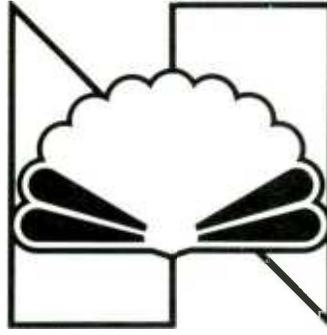
—Richard Reeves
"TV on Trial", PBS

* * *

"The print media have used the expression 'sex and violence' so often that the issue of sex and violence has become a see-saw. If violence goes down over here, sex must necessarily be rising over there.

"I submit that that equation is a misnomer, because there is no sex, per se, on television. If violence consists of killing a man with a pistol at point blank range, of cars careening over embankments and bodies spilling forth, of men beating each other to death with their fists, if those are acts of violence, then acts of sex—well, you get my point."

—Norman Lear
(Address to New England Chapter, NATAS)



NBC PROUD AS A PEACOCK



Those Were the Days— Ed Sullivan Redux

By MARLO LEWIS

BACK IN THE 1950s, we lived by different standards. We had to entertain without resorting to double-entendre humor, exploitation of sexual situations, or overexposure of the human anatomy.

We followed one general rule of thumb: if something couldn't be discussed at a dining-room table with an entire family present, we wouldn't allow it on the air. It was unthinkable that on any show there could be mention of orgasms, perversions, or preferences in bosoms and buttocks. Commercials adhered to definite rules, and there were no singing jingles in praise of laxatives. We had not yet been liberated from a sense of privacy, and sensitivity to the reactions of others. Today, we would be hopelessly out of step.

Watching TV now, from soap opera to situation comedy shows to talk shows, it would seem that every enlightened American home is an open forum where the conversation is free to roam from Mom and Dad's love life, to Grandma's menopause, to little sister's inability to climax with her sixteen-year-old boyfriend who is turning gay because he has impregnated her.

But in the first decade of the Ed Sullivan show, we know, from direct audience communication, that people really cared about what came into their homes. Thousands of letters poured into our office every week, telling us what was acceptable and what was not. All letters were read and analyzed, and, to those that voiced complaints, Ed conscientiously responded.

When he thought a criticism unjustified or unreasonable, he answered with vigor. From the beginning of the show in 1948, quite a few objections to Ed's affectionate physical contact with black performers came through the mail. "Did you have to put your arm around Bojangles Bill Robinson at the end of his dance?"

Another irate viewer wrote, "We know you're a nigger lover! You don't have to prove it by kissing Pearl Bailey." Still another complaint read, "We enjoyed Ella Fitzgerald up to the point where you had to make the point of hugging her right there in our living room."

Every one of these correspondents was told off by Ed and lectured on the folly of racism. On the other hand, when some of our viewers expressed disapproval of what they considered racy material, or of overly revealing costumes, Ed apologized, and we tried to rectify the situation.

In our prop room we kept bouquets of artificial flowers and yards of netting in every shade and color so that we could make last minute cover-ups of low-cut dresses. Every female vocalist, including Patti Page, Peggy Lee, Kay Starr, Abbe Lane, Sarah Vaughn, Marilyn Maxwell, Diahann Carroll, Julie London, and Sheila MacCrae, wanted to appear in the same expensive gown she wore in her nightclub act. These creations had been designed to expose as much of a woman's charms as the law allowed. On the Sullivan show, the law allowed very little.

Sometimes, in our war against immodesty, we ruined costumes that cost thousands of dollars. The girls were either furious or tearful. I dreaded these cleavage crises, but Ed was unmoved. With him it was "shape down or ship out." "This," he said, "is television—not burlesque!" The day Jayne Mansfield came on the show, the studio was agog with corny jokes and half-baked ribaldry.

Jayne Mansfield was indeed an impressive sight. Tall and formidably contoured, she intended to wear a dress designed to make the most of her assets. She insisted that her gown be inspected in the privacy of her dressing room. Seeing people in varying degrees of undress is part of backstage life and means nothing. But what took place in Miss Mansfield's dressing room was strange even for that informal milieu. She opened the conversation by stepping out of her street dress and holding it out to me. From the waist up she was wearing nothing. "Look," she said in her sweet, high voice. "All my clothes are made like this—with the brassiere built in like the one I'm going to wear tonight. And my husband, Mickey, has been so wonderful! He knows so much about body building; he's been giving me all new exercises for these." She pointed to her breasts as though they were two animals she had in training and which she had just let out of their cage.

There were other sources, besides letters, from which we gleaned information about the preferences and prejudices of our viewers. Every week some fifteen hundred people came to our dress rehearsal and show, and when the curtain came down, Sullivan would move to the front of the stage and talk to the audience. He would ask for their comments and criticisms, their likes and dislikes. They were never reluctant to let themselves be heard. As Sullivan used to say, "I don't give a damn what the professional critics say about the show. I listen to the audience—they tell me the truth!"

The best-remembered example of television censorship took place in 1956, when Elvis Presley appeared on the Sullivan show. But curiosity about it persists to this day, and I am still asked, "Why did you photograph Presley only from the chest up?" That occurrence has become part of the Presley legend, and the true story about it has never been told before.

(continued on page 38)



ABC Television Network

The first time Elvis appeared on our show, in 1955, we photographed all of him. Although we were aware that the young singer's act was loaded with sexual overtones and wild pelvic gyrations, and that ours was a Sunday-night family show whose audience had presumably spent the morning in church, we felt we could mute any offensive moments. And we did, with subdued lighting, side-angle shots, overhead long lenses, and all-around judicious camera work. Both Ed and I were very cautious about Elvis from the very beginning, as he had already stirred up public condemnation in many quarters. In Nashville he had been hanged in effigy, and in St. Louis a Presley dummy had been burned. In Florida, his lower-body movements had been banned. Billy Graham had gone on record saying he would not approve of his children watching Presley. Even Sullivan had once remarked, "I don't think Elvis Presley is fit for family viewing!" But the general public had begun to accept Presley and his style with growing enthusiasm. He was making headlines everywhere, teenagers were tearing at his clothes at public appearances, every concert was a sellout, RCA had bought his contract from another record company, and their first release, "Heartbreak Hotel," hit the top of the charts and stayed there. Those who had been on the fence about his appeal, like Ed, decided that the young man really had something special, and under controlled conditions his appeal would come through without vulgarity. Our techniques worked, and Elvis's first show with us was a smashing success.

By 1956, Elvis had turned into a superstar. He was deluged with exclusive service and endorsement contracts guaranteeing astronomical money. His renditions of the songs "Hound Dog," "Don't Be Cruel," and "Love Me Tender" rode the crest of the popularity wave. Almost eighty products bearing his endorsement reached the market, and within two short years his gross income reached \$100 million. He could no longer appear in public without being mobbed, and, so that he and his entourage could have privacy when they traveled, he bought a fleet of cars and three jet planes. The legions of the young were marching to a new beat, and Elvis Presley was their Pied Piper.

The contract that Ed had made with Colonel Tom Parker, Elvis's manager, could easily have been bought off, had Presley not wanted to go through with a second appearance. The \$7,500 fee promised Presley in the agreement was, in the wake of his meteoric rise, ridiculous. But Parker and Presley honored their commitment and settled on a date for their second shot, even though they had been offered \$50,000 to appear on other shows. They made only one stipulation—that we televise Elvis from Hollywood, where he was making his first motion picture, and integrate his segments into our show, which was televised from New York. This posed a hair-raising problem for us, because everything on our show was live, and we were not certain that AT&T and the CBS engineers could reverse the east-west transcontinental cable on Sullivan's cue. This electronic capability had not been developed yet, and we faced the pos-

sibility that after all the tremendous buildup, Ed would be caught introducing "Elvis live from Hollywood!" and come up with nothing but an empty screen. Moreover, Elvis had become such a national idol that it was necessary to handle his few minutes like a two-hour spectacular.

We had to provide police cordons inside and outside the CBS West Coast headquarters, and special security guards around Elvis's dressing room to protect him from the hysteria of his fans. We took over the largest CBS studio, installed hundreds of extra seats, and arranged for a full complement of engineers, cameramen, sets, and props. Public interest in the event had risen to such a pitch that national newspapers and magazines were running endless stories, interviews, and photographs about it. The second appearance of Elvis Presley on the Sullivan show was heralded as though it were the Second Coming.

Today, Elvis's antics on TV wouldn't warrant any notice. But, because that's the way we were in those days, I flew three thousand miles to direct Presley's three-minute segment. In Hollywood, I found Elvis and his entourage glad to see me. They were flattered that we had not turned them over to a free-lance director. Had they known the real reason I was there, they would have told me to take the show and get lost. Presley's movements had become so explicitly sexual I knew we couldn't photograph him. At air time I instructed the camera crew to scrub all previous instructions and that I would "wing" the shots on the air. They looked at one another like a platoon of soldiers whose captain has suddenly gone out of his mind.

During the next few minutes, all the country saw of Presley was upper-torso shots and facial close-ups. After it was over, I had no desire to face Presley, Parker, the executives from Twentieth Century-Fox, the representatives from RCA, or a band of agents from William Morris, all of whom had a great stake in Presley's career and all of whom were surely waiting backstage to organize a lynching party for me. Of the thirty-five hundred shows I produced and staged in my life, this is the only one where I sneaked out without so much as a single good-bye.

As soon as I arrived at the airport to catch the night flight back to New York, I called Sullivan to find out what the reaction had been. "Marlo, the spot was just fine. We were protected all the way. But remind me when you get in tomorrow—I'm supposed to tell you off. The William Morris boys called, and, to listen to them, you'd think we'd destroyed the kid. Personally, I thought he looked great."

Thirty-five million people watched the show, setting a record that was not exceeded until many years later. Strangely enough, a much greater sensation had resulted from that photographic censorship than if the total Elvis had been presented. What I had done with the cameras became the talk of the trade, and the story has lived on as part of the Presley legend. In the reams of material about Presley—in the articles, the biographies, the tributes, and the obituaries—this incident is recounted over and over

again. I remember most vividly what Presley himself said about it some months later. We met by chance at a party in Las Vegas, and I was not quite sure how he would greet me. To my surprise, he threw his arms around me. "Marlo," he said with a big smile, "remember that time in Hollywood? Well, you done me real good!"

There is an object lesson here somewhere. Maybe leaving something to the imagination makes a good thing even better.

Marlo Lewis was producer of the Ed Sullivan Show during its long run on CBS. He was also involved in the production of the Jackie Gleason and Phil Silvers Shows.

The preceding article is drawn from "Prime Time" by Marlo and Mina Bess Lewis. It is reprinted here by permission of St. Martin's Press and Jeremy Tarsher, publishers. Copyright © 1979 by Marlo Lewis and Mina Bess Lewis.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"The aspect of advertising most in need of analysis and change is the portrayal of women. Scientific studies and the most casual viewing yield the same conclusion: women are shown almost exclusively as sex objects or housewives.

"The sex object is a mannequin, a shell. Conventional beauty is her only attribute. She has no lines or wrinkles (which are, after all, signs of maturity, of expression and experience), no scars or blemishes—indeed, she has no pores. She is thin, generally tall and long-legged, and, above all, she is young. All 'beautiful' women in advertisements (including minority women) regardless of product or audience, conform to this norm. Women are constantly exhorted to emulate this idea; to feel ashamed and guilty if they fail, and to feel that desirability and lovability are contingent upon physical perfection."

—Jean Kilbourne in *The TV Book*
(Workman Publishing Co., 1977)

PRIME TIME PRO- TECTION

You're in the prime of life now. You have a promising career in the television industry and your future looks bright.

As a professional, you are dedicated to meeting the needs of your broadcast audience and also to providing the best lifestyle possible for your family. But what assurance do you have that a sickness or accident won't jeopardize all this?

The only time you can protect your future is now — while your health is still good. That's why the **National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences** has endorsed

coverage to help protect the prime time in your future.

Disability Income Protection

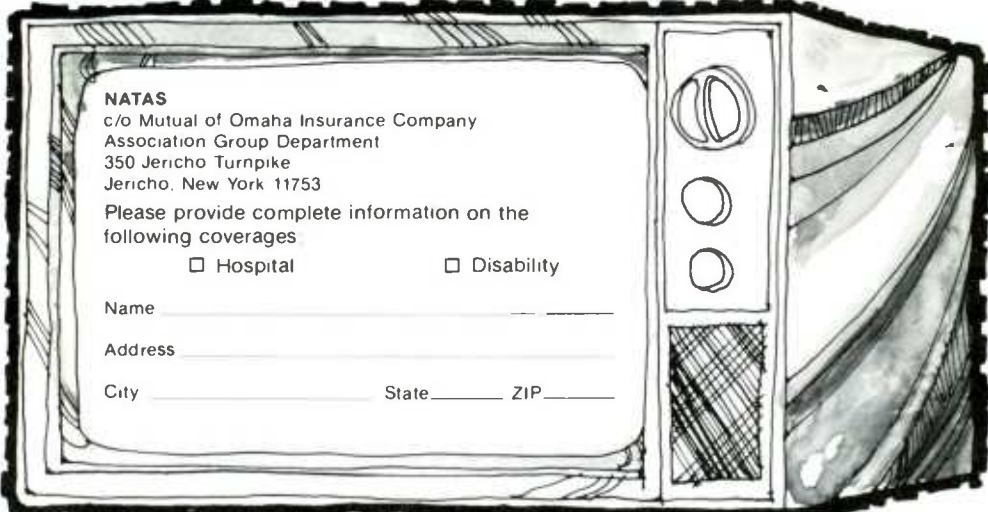
Protection that can help make up for lost income when a covered sickness or injury keeps you from working. Think of it as your "paycheck protection."

Hospital Coverage

Essential coverage that can help provide ammunition for the battle against rising medical care costs.

As a member of **NATAS**, you qualify for this protection at Association Group rates. For more information, simply fill out and mail the coupon below. Mutual of Omaha, underwriter of this coverage, will provide personal service in helping select the best plan for you.

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The Curious Evolution of the Video Family

BY MICHAEL A. DeSOUSA

If prime time television serves a constructive purpose for the sociologically-minded, it is as a barometer of changing social models and conventions.

In recent years I have been struck by the positive mutations in television's portrayal of the "average" American family. If my observations are accurate, we are now seeing fewer "cartoon families" and more multi-dimensional ones.

The family, of course, has always been standard video fare. It makes sense that the historical preoccupation with the nuclear family—from Homer through Shakespeare and down through the years—should vividly endure in today's dominant story medium, TV.

In the early years, we had *Father Knows Best*, *Mama*, *The Life of Riley*, *My Little Margie*, *Ozzie and Harriet* and many others, all cheerful and wholesome.

One might even argue that these domestic series typically fall into sub-groups. These sub-groups and their inhabitants tell us much that's significant about the diverse, even contradictory strains in the national character.

Considering the *family as cartoon*, we recall characters that could have been animated by Disney. From *I Love Lucy* to *Happy Days* the message has been the same: life has its ups and downs, its laughter and tears, but serious problems? Never. Nobody dies, children are attractive and amusing (or obstreperous). Each family unit contains: one bumbling, lovable Dad, one sensible, lovable Mom, one little clone of Dad named Junior/Skip/Biff, as well as caricature household help, loony friends and grumpy neighbors.

A second subgroup would be the *family as ideal*. Here the family is warm, close, the binding seam of the national fabric.

Like the cartoon families, these problems also caricature reality. But they are, as the saying goes, heart-warming. Marriages are made in heaven. You never saw Robert Young coming home at the end of a hard day and roaring his displeasure at Jane Wyatt. As for that clan of Walton's Mountain, their goodness and sweetness all but sugars over the tube. They *care*—and in an era of national turmoil and distrust they have created an oasis of love and fortitude.

Perhaps the greatest sham of the idealized family is simultaneously its greatest attraction. There is no personal isolation, no bona fide loneliness or sorrow.

In his perceptive analysis of domestic comedy, TV critic Jeff Greenfield reacts to this appalling fiction. "No one sits at home at night watching television," he writes. "The most pervasive habit in American life today usually goes unrecorded in even the most 'realistic comedies, because it is not funny. Instead, the sturdiest barriers of isolation vanish under the power of the family bond."

It comes down to this: the family serves as a cocoon, a mobile womb which protects and insulates members from the contamination of the outside. Living in such a purified environment is fine—so long as you never have to leave it. The ideal television home is admirably furnished, wonderfully protective and hopelessly static.

While occasionally inspirational, the ideal TV family eventually serves to degrade our own experience as family members. We must all fall short when slapped against the yardstick of perfection. In consequence, we must secretly resent our video models. And, more significantly, resent our own failures.

Finally, we come to a new sub-species of TV family, a token of a new attitude and style in TV writing and acting. I call it the *family as grotesque*. Its strong suit is the unmasking of the pretense, the pettiness, anxiety and abuse that constitute the darker side of American family life. In this genre we have such characters as Mary Hartman, Archie Bunker, Maude, George Jefferson, and the Ropers, all reminding us of the ruses and delusions we all live by.

These programs are caricatures of the most extreme sort. As such they are sometimes brilliant satire, sometimes merely self-flagellation. The attraction of these programs is that, despite their stereotypic excesses, they manage to portray strong feelings, unlike the cartoon or ideal families who excel only in comic or melodramatic nuances.

The grotesques live life intensely. Archie and his son-in-law are combatants from contending generations. They range and bully and whip-lash with jokes that hurt. George Jefferson struts and glories in his new found financial success. Maude agonizes over whether or not to have an abortion. In all these shows we see powerful vignettes which redeem the otherwise cheap-laugh contrivances.

As enjoyable as some of the family shows are, we are left with a hunger for something more, something we can identify as reflecting our own experiences.

The general disinclination of television to portray real-life biological families may explain the appeal of dramas and "sitcoms" based on the model of a *surrogate family*. That is, a close-knit band of assorted adults who rely on one another for emotional support.

As prototypes of the *surrogate family* we have the nearly canonized favorites, *M*A*S*H* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. These programs make a comforting assumption about the human condition: that we are all interdependent, needing others to make our own lives meaningful. Nobody's dependence is neurotic or parasitic. Affection, humor and mutual respect are the hallmarks.

As a viewer-critic I sense that the sort of humane realism exemplified by these families is a salutary trend. Such programs offer no moralizing, but the message is clear: Communal bonds, fraternal feeling can be as strong—and as solacing—as blood ties. Heroism, in these programs is usually a reluctant act and therefore more credible. Nobody is allowed to grow too big for his hat. Instead we see the struggle of egos, the efforts to maintain tranquility. Somehow, we see the drama as mirroring the contests in which we continually redefine ourselves as changing links in a family structure.

In one of the last articles written before her death, anthropologist Margaret Mead speculated on the role television might play in contributing to the stability of the American family. She concluded that "TV, more than any other medium, gives models to the American people—models for life as it is, or should or can be lived."

Television often seems uneasy with its role as transmitter of role models and social patterns. But it cannot escape its destiny. Since the TV screen dominates the lives of many Americans—some of whom watch five and six hours a day—it may be said that the medium has an ethical responsibility to light up the dark passages in our human struggle.

Michael DeSousa is an instructor in the rhetoric department, University of California at Davis. His special fields are broadcast criticism and international communications.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"A producer I know in Hollywood says, 'You'd better not show you love a program you're presenting to a network executive because they want you to think only of demographics and ratings. And if you love it, you might forget about those.' I thought that was a terrible commentary."

—Fred Rogers of "*Mister Rogers Neighborhood*"
(Interview in *The Christian Science Monitor*)

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The Audience as Pressure Group— “The Heat Is On!”

BY HOWARD GROSS

Something on television displeases you? It happens all the time. What to do? Well, you might call your local station. Or you can write to the network. You can fire off an irate letter to the FCC. But will anybody listen? Probably not. And all you'll get for your trouble will be a polite form letter signed by a secretary.

Irate viewers are discovering that there's a better way. That is, express your outrage to the sponsors, the people whose messages keep the networks in business. Let the people who make the beer or the hair spray or the detergent know exactly how you feel about their underwriting of *Three's Company* or one of the gamier Harold Robbins novels. Tell the sponsor you are not going to buy another jar of his face cream, peanut butter or axle grease.

In sum, tell the sponsor in mournful numbers that he is failing you, the consumer, and that you must now fail him, the purveyor.

Consumer pressure is not a new scheme. Its history, going back to the Red-baiting days of the 1950's, is not entirely honorable. But today the pressures have little to do with political ideology. They are concerned, rather, with matters of taste and morality. The great protestors are parents who feel that the home screen is offering too much sex, violence and bad grammar.

In July, the National PTA TV-Action Center released its Spring TV Program Review Guide. The listing marked the fourth time thousands of PTA members have monitored and scored all prime time network programming. More important, it was the PTA's second attempt to identify and rate advertisers according to the shows they sponsor. The guide book singled out corporations that consistently support shows the PTA objects to and urged members to make their displeasure known by "selective product usage".

The Parent-Teachers' Association is but one of many organizations discovering that the surest way to the network program department is through the advertisers. Not surprisingly, neither advertisers nor broadcasters are enthusiastic about this latest trend in consumer activism.

"There's nothing wrong with groups like the PTA monitoring television", concedes Peter W. Allport, president of the Association of National Advertisers, "but they are making a big mistake when they try to make advertisers the final voice."

Companies using television to promote their products dislike controversy. They also dislike the idea of censorship. "We just don't want to get into that area," says Mr. Allport.

Industry critics do not share that view. Advertisers, they claim, should be held accountable for the style and content of programs they sponsor. The public—which ultimately pays the cost of advertising—should be able to register its delight or dismay over the entertainment beamed into its intimate circle.

How effective are these pressure groups?

Last season saw an organized effort to "neuter the medium", as some put it. The negative response to *Soap*—expressed, curiously, before the series even went on the air—did expurgate some of its raunchier aspects.

"There's no question that we had impact," claims TV Action Center Director, William Young. "We were very effective in bringing down levels of violence. Now we are doing the same with sex."

Program producers disagree. They insist that the disappearance of the so-called "sexploitation shows" was the result of poor ratings, not "interfering busybodies."

In other quarters, the tactics of the "busbodies" are raising the issue of the First Amendment and censorship. One who was apprehensive of this aspect was FCC Commissioner Margita White who warned that "these tactics are not without danger to free speech principles. They can lead advertisers to shy away from controversial shows, resulting in blander programming."

For the home viewer, what constitutes "adult entertainment"? In the upcoming season, the answer is "Nothing very raunchy, and 'soft violence' only."

"I can't remember a more oppressive climate," a studio executive told *Variety*. "The censors are really leaning on us. . ."

The networks are increasingly circumspect, *Variety* adds, now that pressure groups have zeroed in on advertisers. Even a scattering of protests can scare a sponsor, sometimes compelling him to withdraw from a program in which he has already bought time.

That scattering of protests is often just that. A few thousand well-placed letters and telephone calls can sometimes persuade an advertiser to reconsider his TV commitments. In an industry whose standard unit of measure seems to be one million, one must conclude that advertisers are easily intimidated.

Equally disquieting is the way some organizations choose their targets. Protests are sometimes based on little more than hearsay, or an item in

a gossip column that a certain book or play will be televised. When CBS let it be known last December that it would broadcast Pete Hamill's novel, *Flesh and Blood*, in the spring, the National Federation for Decency—a self-appointed media watchdog—immediately warned TV's top hundred advertisers to avoid the program.

Subsequently, CBS postponed the drama, blaming production problems. The NFD boasted that its protests had caused the network to cancel the program. Whatever the reason, nobody outside the network has read the script or seen any part of the program, including the NFD. The drama finally was aired in October, the incest scenes intact.

Not all the protests are motivated by prudery, Provincialism or political (including racial) considerations. The American Medical Association has approached the National Association of Broadcasters to work with them in establishing a standard—moral and aesthetic—for children's television.

Action for Children's Television has petitioned both the FCC and the Federal Trade Commission to outlaw certain kinds of programming and advertising. Even the PTA, which favors the widest range of protest tactics, is considering a challenge to the licenses of network owned stations in Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland.

These efforts, it must be noted, have not all been crowned with success. Response from local stations has been disappointing. Local stations are in the business of selling time. Network response has been polite but casual. Protestors are not averse to seeing a "cozy relationship" between the TV industry and agencies entrusted with regulating it. Even when licenses are challenged policies remain unchanged. It takes years of litigation to bring a challenge before the FCC.

In consequence of all these hurdles, protest groups have learned that the way to stir up a fuss is to complain to the advertisers.

But what about the taste and sensitivity of that great monolith, the general public? Are tiny pressure groups, organized and shrill, shaping the medium to their special taste? The answer depends on who you put the question to. The PTA, with its six million membership, is a potent persuader. But broadcasters and advertisers agree that it's the mass audience that still exerts the greatest power—by staying tuned or snapping the dial to another channel.

Some advertising men see protests against sex and violence as symptoms of a deeper discontent. That is, distrust of business, anger over changing morality, the growing fear over worsening economic conditions.

Some advertisers are seriously concerned by the growing negativism toward their allocation of TV money. A re-evaluation of priorities seems to be going on. The networks, too, seem more zealous of public approval. Networks worry about losing affiliates, about advertising products deemed harmful to the environment.

Meantime, the pressure groups are not putting aside their weapons: the pen, the telephone and the boycott. They have finally found an efficient way to talk back to television. And they have the heady feeling that television's paymasters are listening.

Howard Gross is a free lance writer with a varied media background. He has taught television techniques at Northwestern and at California State College, Fresno. He holds a B.A. from Queens College and an M.A. from Northwestern University.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I sat and looked at TV Guide. I pulled out all the adjectives that describe women on the shows. And here they are:

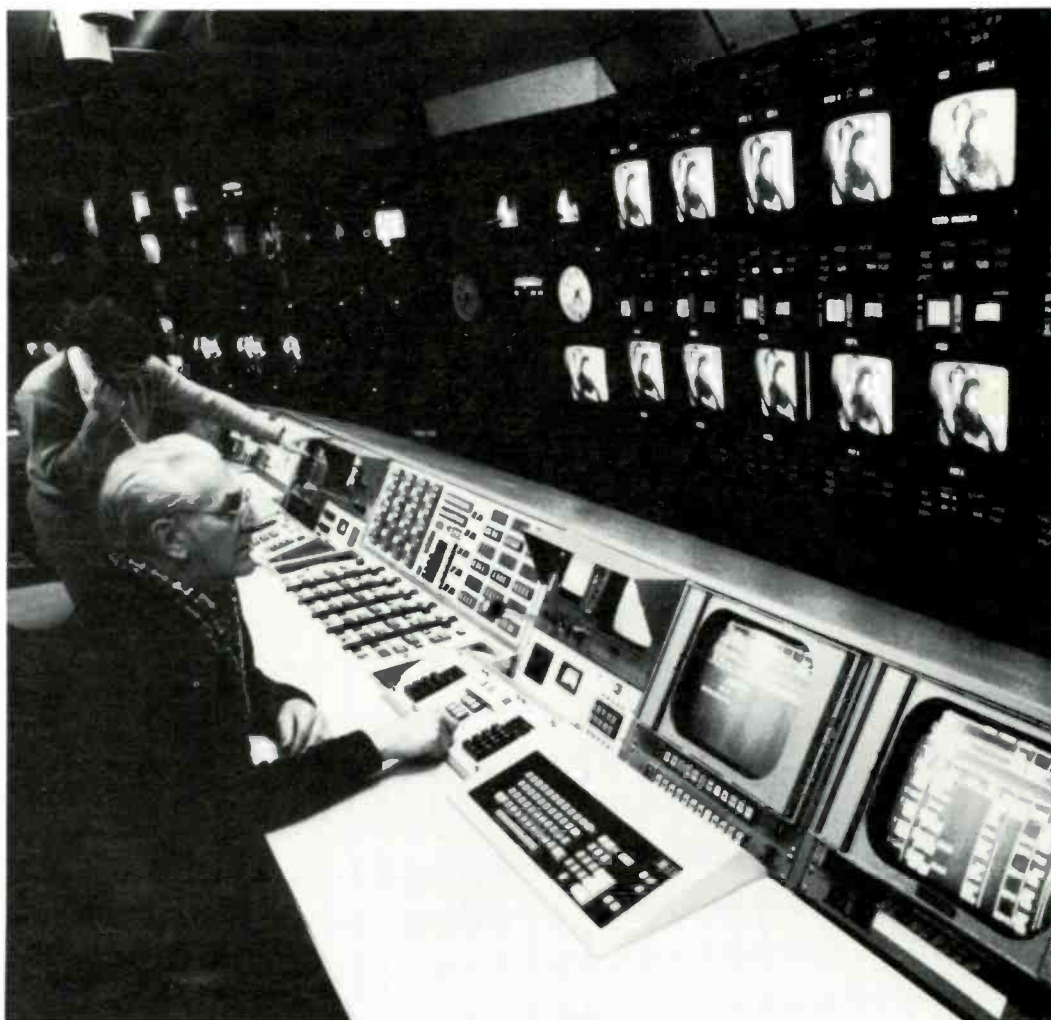
'Heartbroken housekeeper . . . misguided housewife . . . student victim . . . Old Flame . . . invalid wife . . .' This is what the programs are about. ' . . . Widow . . . Do-good nun . . . Natural mother . . . gossipy female . . . predatory salesgirl . . . stripper . . . voluptuous French maid.'

"That's this week on television. Now, here's what I got for the guys: 'Venerable physician . . . Private Eye . . . Lawyer for chemical company . . . Handsome dentist . . . Wealthy rancher . . . Reverend Mister . . . Airport official . . . Ex-cop . . . Lawman . . . Corporation executive.' Now, what does that tell you about women?

"Forty-one million women work. What do they have to do with this stuff? Who are all these voluptuous things? . . . We'd love to be something besides sirens, witches, or dumb-dumbs.

"Somebody has to wake up and make us into something a little better."

—Jane Trahey, Advertising Executive
Interview with Tom Snyder, NBC.



How a 3-minute medical report saved 1,000 lives.

In early June, 1974, Dr. Henry Heimlich, an Ohio surgeon, developed a simple technique that could save people who were choking.

Later that year, Dr. Frank Field of WNBC-TV New York—an NBC Owned Television Station—demonstrated the Heimlich Maneuver on the air. The response was immediate—and overwhelming. 30,000 people wrote asking for details.

Police departments started including it in their training programs.

An insurance company mailed over a million reprints to its policy holders.

And hundreds of people wrote to thank us for saving their lives.

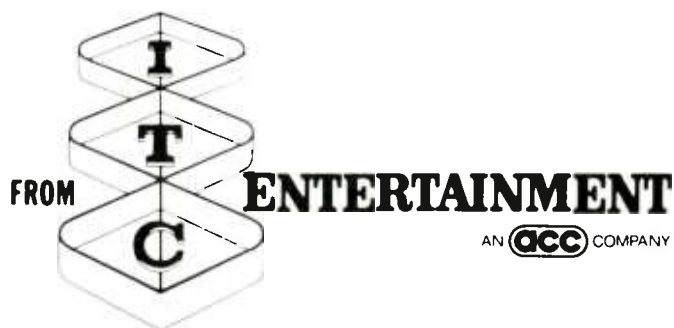
The Heimlich Maneuver was demonstrated and re-demonstrated on all five NBC Owned Television Stations. And throughout the nation, news media reported the phenomenal story of this lifesaving demonstration.

Any television station can cover the news. But we believe our responsibility goes beyond merely reporting the day's events. That is why we take the time to broadcast information vital to our viewers' needs—and, in this case, their lives.

We'd rather do more than not enough  **NBC Owned Television Stations**

WNBC-TV New York/WRC-TV Washington, D.C./WKYC-TV Cleveland/WMAQ-TV Chicago/KNBC Los Angeles

Entertainment For The World



ESPN: It's not for everybody

By BROOKS CLARK

For those who are counting, about 20 percent of the national TV audience is now hooked up to one cable system or another. As each day passes and the services expand, those 14.5 million viewers must stand in awe of the volume and diversity of programming made possible by the wonders of cable-TV technology. Maybe not everyone is interested in soap operas in Chinese or late-night pornographic talk shows—or even *The Odd Couple* 10 times a day. There's no argument, though, that now more than ever there's something for everyone.

It shouldn't surprise anyone, then, that on September 7, 1978, many cable viewers sat down to meet a new station—the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network—which offered sports. Not *some* sports, or even *mostly* sports. ESPN offered sports and sports alone. “A unique and innovative station,” they promised in their first telecast, “a service specifically designed for the cable television industry, featuring NCAA sports, national and international, amateur and professional events covering the entire sports spectrum.” Their introduction, which ran 57 consecutive hours from 7 p.m. Friday to 4 a.m. Monday, went on to promise that someday they would put forth sports programming around the clock, everyday of the year. As ESPN's president, Cher Simmons, (formerly of NBC), told *the New York Times* recently, “What we've created is a network for sports junkies who have to have a fix every time they touch the dial.”

It may send divorce rates soaring. It may make us, more than ever, a nation of spectators. At this point, though, it appears that ESPN will fulfill most of the expectations of its planners, perhaps go to 24 hours a day by late 1980, it may even turn a profit by 1981. When it does, its story will enter into the folklore of grand and impossible schemes made possible through bold vision, crafty entrepreneurship, timely investment and, above all, Tankee ingenuity.

The story began in June of 1978, with a Yankee of sorts, William F. Rasmussen, then 45, a transplanted Chicagoan who was then communications director and play-by-play announcer for the New England Whalers hockey team. Rasmussen conceived the idea of a cable network that would funnel Whalers games and University of Connecticut events into various systems around the area for a fee. He was encouraged by local cable operators and went to RCA to look into the possibility of

hooking up with their communications satellite, *Satcom 1*. As he recounted in the September, 1979 issue of *Connecticut* magazine, "We wanted to look into using satellites for feeding, but at that time many of the cable operators in Connecticut were not yet capable of receiving satellite feeds. The salesman thought I had a good idea, but he said, 'Why just Connecticut? For about the same price you can have the whole country.' I said, 'Great, I'll take one.'" A transmitting channel, or transponder, on a communications satellite costs \$1 million a year, but the potential for broadcasting to the entire North American continent makes it something of a bargain. In August of 1978 Rasmussen and his son Scott, then just 22, conceived of an around-the-clock all sports network and selected Bristol, Conn. as their base of operations, and in the first days of September they placed their order with RCA for a *Satcom 1* transponder.

At that time six of *Satcom's* 24 transponders were vacant, mainly because of the limited number of earth receiving stations that could pick up a satellite signal. In fact, the numbers of earth stations, even then, were swelling, but, as the story goes, a front-page article around Labor Day in *The Wall Street Journal* really got the bigger names worked up about the possibilities of broadcasting *via* satellite. When RCA awarded the last six transponder later on in September, all the names save that of ESPN had a familiar ring to them. With the mandatory democratic principles of such NASA-aided projects in full effect, the little guy was in with the big guys.

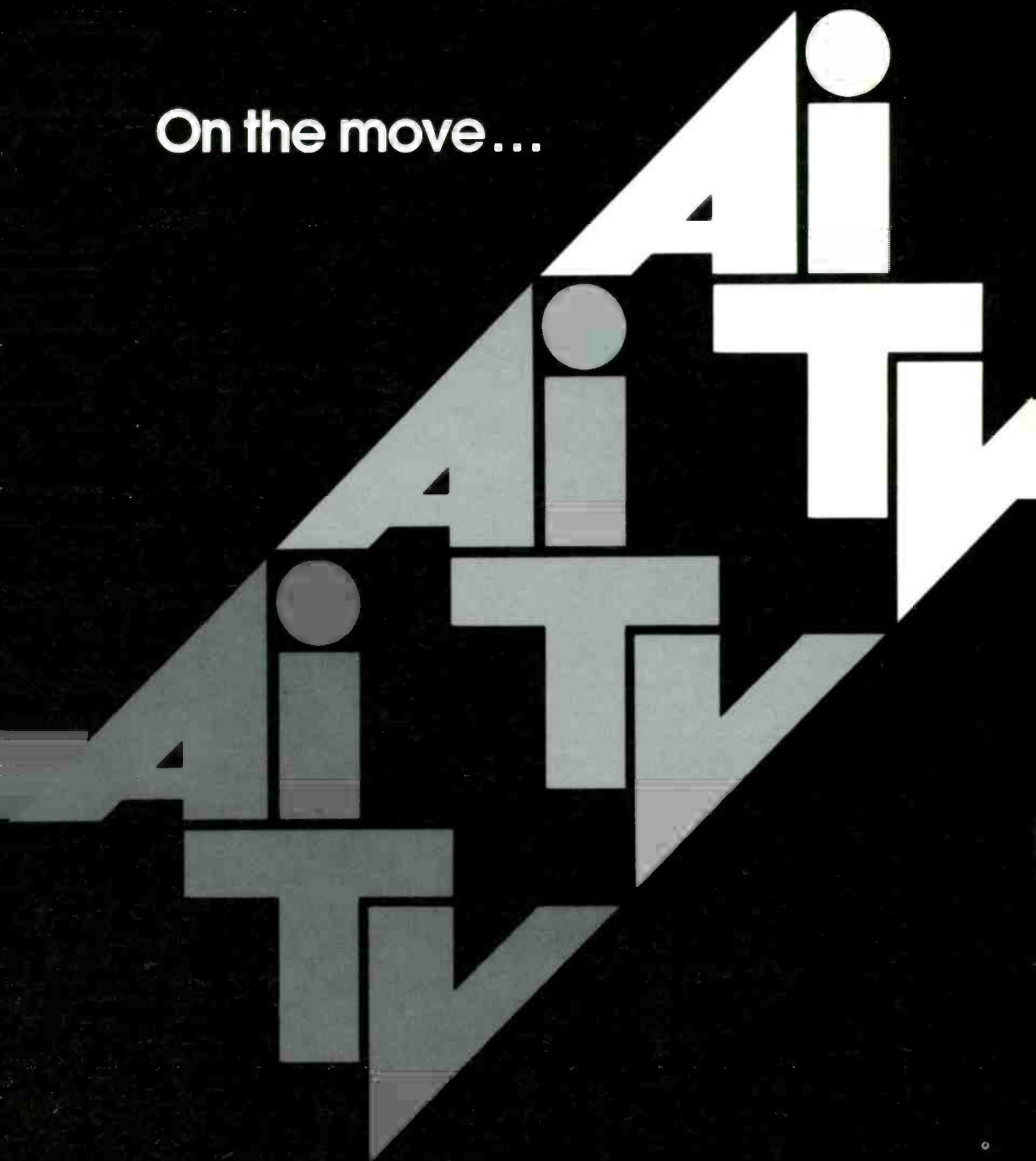
It was not so much that the concept of a nationally broadcast station was new: Ted Turner's WTCCG from Atlanta had pioneered that idea. Nor was ESPN first onto the idea of using satellite to earth station broadcasting: Home Box Office had been banking on it since 1975. (Moreover, one might note, they have reserved five of the 24 transponders aboard *Satcom 3*, launched on December 6 at a cost of around \$50 million. As of December 11, the \$20 million, five-by-four-by-four foot satellite had been "lost" over the Pacific, where it had been keeping an irregular, looping orbit. RCA apparently lost the signal of the satellite just as they were about to fire an engine that would have put it in a stationary orbit, like the one of *Satcoms 1* and 2.)

The market value of transponders has, naturally, grown with the numbers earth stations—from around 700 at the start of 1979 to well over twice that by the end. (More important, of course, is that earth stations have become an item of fashion, having made Neiman-Marcus' '79 Christmas catalogue at a trifling \$35,000 apiece.)

In January of 1979, ESPN took over Transponder No. 7 aboard *Satcom 1*, and proceeded to broadcast a basketball game between Connecticut and Rutgers from the University's Field House in Storrs. In February, the Rasmussen's ship came in, as the Getty Oil Company agreed to purchase 85% of ESPN for \$10 million. From that point forth, ESPN could afford

(continued on page 57)

On the move...



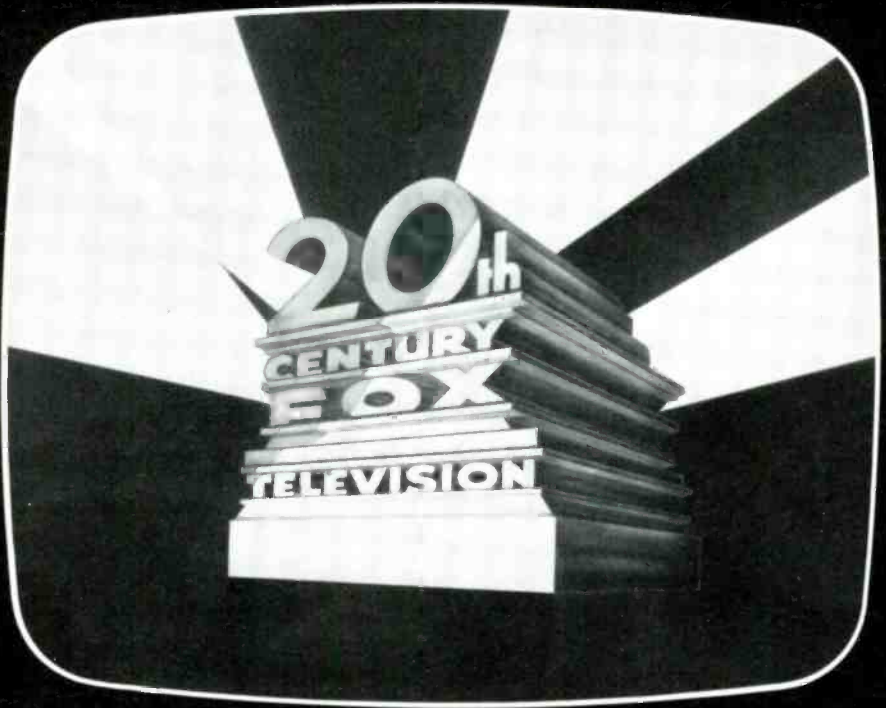
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to be as high-minded and professional as it wanted, and has done so particularly in the kind of personnel it has lured to its door.

President Simmons went to ESPN in July of '79 after 15 years in the Sports Department at NBC, and at ABC before that. The senior vice-president in charge of operations and production, Allan B. (Scotty) Connal, was hired in August after 32 years with NBC. The network's most recognizable announcers are Lee Leonard and Jim Simpson, the latter a veteran who came to ESPN in September. The elder Rasmussen continues as chairman of the board while the younger is the network's vice president.

Between the initial broadcast in September and early December, ESPN has put out 1400 hours of programming across their affiliates systems. In round terms, that is more sports than all three networks combined put forth in a full year, and they are operating now at a clip of about 60.5 hours straight between Friday evening and Monday morning and about 10 hours every weeknight. Their programs have been about 50 percent live and 50 percent taped, covering LPGA golf, boxing, tennis, bowling, lacrosse, full-contact karate, rugby and hurling from Ireland, horse shows, volleyball, and other assorted more traditionally telecasted events. About 65 percent of their material comes from collegiate sports, by way of a two-year contract with the National Collegiate Athletic Association signed in March of '79—including 18 sports in all three divisions of NCAA competition. Happily enough for a number of athletic programs around the country, that means \$3,500 to schools involved in a major event and \$1,000 to those in a minor one. For schools that don't make it on national TV all that often, that money isn't going to hurt at all.

The collegiate coverage is probably the single healthiest aspect of the rise of ESPN. The sports being telecast will be *real*, most of them—amateur, many of them—and most of them are ones which don't usually see the light of day. This will, first of all, be welcome relief from the "trashsports" enacted by grinning celebrities on such network dandies as *The Superstars*, *Challenge of the Sexes*, and *Battle of the Network Stars*. Second, though, a glimpse at amateur enthusiasm in sports that might more often than not be sports for sports sake might give the establishment a better idea of why it is that the professional sports that *don't* get the ratings—notably basketball and hockey—manage to lose the same viewer that would die before missing a professional baseball or football game. Many convoluted reasons have been brought forth, but most of them avoid the simple fact that, given the long, tedious seasons and everybody-makes-it playoff systems in pro basketball and hockey, the games simply don't matter.

Any mention of the players' professional attitudes have to take a back seat to that simple reality. Baseball players are professionals, too, but every one of the 162 baseball games each season matters, and more to the point here, every game in the career of a collegiate athlete in a less-visible sport matters to him or he wouldn't be doing it. In the long run,

this is going to make ESPN's product more desirable than perhaps even they realize.

Of the remaining 35 percent of air-time that is not made up of college events, only 20% are other sorts of events, with the remaining 15% comprised of news and talk shows. The technical quality of most of the broadcasts has been surprisingly good, and it has gotten better. Obviously, given the sheer volume and novelty of many operations, some gaffs are inevitable—but ESPN does not look cheap on the air. And towards the proof of the pudding, the first Nielsen ratings of specific ESPN telecasts were not discouraging. The lowest rating, a 1.0, came on a Thursday, Nov. 15 telecast of an international basketball game between Brigham Young University and the U.S.S.R. Out of around four million households that would have had access to the telecast, about 40,000 tuned it in. Davis Cup tennis on Friday, Sept. 14 was not much better, rating a 1.2, while a delayed broadcast of a four-game NCAA football bill on Sunday, Nov. 11 came in at a 1.3.

The better ratings so far have gone to boxing, as a Nov. 17 championship fight rated a 2.5, and the welterweight championship bout between Pipino Cuevas and Angel Espada, broadcast live from Los Angeles on Saturday, Dec. 8 came in at 3.9.

The network is quick to point out that those are simply base ratings, an early indication of who would be watching simply because there are bodies in motion on the screen. As much as anything else, ESPN is looking forward to achieving the levels of potential viewership that might qualify for some or all of *TV Guide's* 101 regional editions around the country. *TV Guide* usually looks for potential viewership between 10 and 15% of the homes in a given area before listing a station, and in many areas ESPN is close.

At the moment, ESPN sends signals into 625 systems around the country, with a potential of between six and eight million households. Those numbers are hard to put a tag on, because they are always changing along with the growth of ESPN affiliates, which include Manhattan's Teleprompter, Sammons, T.C.I., Times-Mirror, and United Cable. ESPN is provided as a basic service, which is to say that the viewer doesn't have to pay for it. Each affiliate, in accordance with a five-year agreement, is paying the network between three and four cents per viewer per month. Viewers who have come on since the agreement are not included and after five years, the whole arrangement will be re-assessed. In all likelihood, ESPN will then be an advertising supported operation.

The major ad sales to date have been to Anheuser-Busch, which spent \$1.38 million last May on the largest single buy in the annals of cable TV, and Mazda, which is now in for \$600,000, with an option to continue for another \$600,000. Current 30-second spots range from \$500 to \$1000. The first-year's bill for ESPN has been reported at \$16 million, and as majority owner, Getty has picked up most of the tab.

To the layman, the technical aspects involved in satellite telecasting remain a mystery. Bill Rasmussen put the whole process in a nutshell in his first greeting to the public: "The picture you are watching right now has been taken by a camera sent through some sophisticated equipment to this earth transmitting station, which in turn feeds the satellite located 22,300 miles above the equator just south of Hawaii. The satellite receives the picture, sends it to an earth station near *your* home, which in turn takes the picture into your living room set. Total elapsed time, one-fifth of one second."

Most of the sophisticated equipment Rasmussen was talking about is carried around in "ESPN Remote Units," trucks built by Compact Video Systems, Inc. of Burbank, California, for approximately \$1.5 apiece. When the last of five units is completed in March, the fleet will comprise two 40-footers with an eight camera capability and three 27-footers with a capability of six cameras. Each contains the most sophisticated remote television facilities available, including three one-inch video tape machines with slow motion replay, a complete Vidifont graphic display system, and an audio board with 44 inputs and up to 24-channel output for multi-track recording. The trucks will connect *via* telephone to an earth "uplink" station, which relays to the "downlink" earth stations in Bristol.

The earth stations are two white dishes which stand outside the network's Broadcast Operations Center along Route 229, just 110 miles northeast of New York City. The dishes are 10 meters across and eight feet deep in their centers. They will be kept extra busy starting in February when, *Satcom 3* being found, ESPN will take over another transponder, making possible regional telecasts and shuffling of live and taped events.

Networks like ESPN are rushing at full speed to catch up to possibilities provided by the various technological innovations that have made cable TV the growth industry it is. In one of the few instances in which ESPN has been shot down of late, we get a firm reminder of what the larger number and diversity of TV channels available over cables are really all about. Five corporations put in bids last fall for the rights to the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles—NBC, CBC, ABC, Tandem Productions and ESPN. While NBC's bid of \$85 million for the 1980 Games in Moscow had four years ago seemed outlandish, the bid placed by ABC for the L.A. Games made that figure seem altogether pale, at \$225 million. Even under the winds of an oil company, this kind of contract is way beyond the resources of an emerging station. The larger networks prove constantly that their material is designed for the lowest common denominator, as anything without a 30 rating meets a swift and merciless death. The technological innovations in cable TV have made possible a different medium entirely—one with a specific design to appeal to the special interest, much like a magazine. The Olympics interest practically everyone, and it is almost correct that the mass medium do its coverage.

ESPN will survive and prosper, however on the particular interest of the sports “junkies” and, probably more to the point, on the particular interest of advertisers who wish to appeal to them. ESPN is definitely not for everybody, but in the cable industry, that’s all right, too.

Brooks Clark is a graduate of Dartmouth College and a frequent contributor to sports publications. He resides in New York.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

“We are very good at transmitting experience and we are very bad at transmitting facts. Newspapers, meanwhile, are very good at transmitting facts and very bad at transmitting experience. The mix in the United States today is such, however, that more people depend on us than upon newspapers, yet we are just not a big enough vessel to handle that.”

—*John Chancellor, NBC News*
(Quoted in *The New Leader*)

* * *

“If you took the violence out of American television, there wouldn’t be much left. And if you took the American television out of British television, there wouldn’t be much left of that, either.

“Without imported series, our programme planners couldn’t fill the schedules. Whether schedules ought to be filled is another question. As things stand, American series have to be brought in. Nearly all of them are violent to some degree. But those who believe that violence on television causes violence in real life should take consolation from the fact that most of the violence in American series is on a par with *The Incredible Hulk*, torpidly jumping up and down on the languorously writhing opponents of freedom and justice.

“It’s British programmes that show life’s dark underside. In American programmes—however full of crashed cars and lying bodies—the values remain unswervingly wholesome.”

—*Clive James, TV Critic*
The London Observer

2 WCBS-TV

2 KNXT

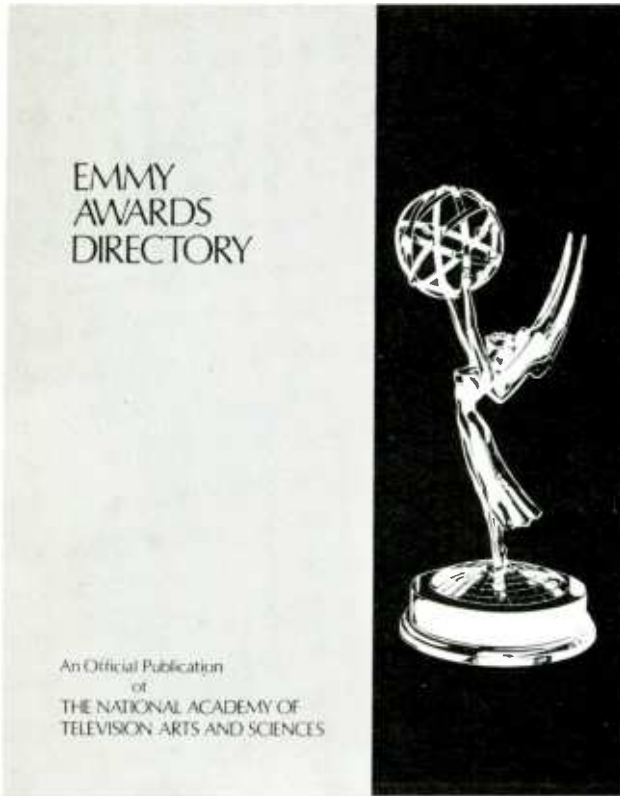
2 WBBM-TV

10 WCAU-TV

4 KMOX-TV

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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

“Public Television should be taken apart from top to bottom and put back together someplace else . . . There is no reason for public TV to be headquartered in Washington and every reason for it not to be . . . Like other bureaucracies, the public TV establishment now exists primarily to perpetuate itself.

“Some people will say they love the opera and the British serials and the squab-cooking lessons they see on public TV. Good for them. But the system should be much more.”

—Tom Shales in *The Washington Post*

* * *

“Parents let their kids stay hooked [on TV] for the same reason they let them get hooked: to keep the peace. It was television that pacified the baby, television that often ended arguments between sisters and brothers, television that kept them ‘out of trouble’. In the process of pacifying the kids, many parents pacified themselves right out of the habit of being in charge. They’ve ‘kept the pace’ not by resolving arguments but by letting them dissolve in front of the screen.”

—“*Close to Home*” by Ellen Goodman
(Simon & Schuster)

* * *

“I don’t believe Public Broadcasting matters very much right now. Oh, to its faithful following it is a welcome respite from time to time. But as a force in its own right it has miles to go, and promises to keep. In grasping to survive, we have given over to corporate underwriters—some of whom are my friends and many of whom are here tonight—the power to decide our prime time schedule. By deciding what not to sponsor as well as what to sponsor, corporate underwriters are the ultimate pipers.”

—Bill Moyers, *Address to the board of directors, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, New York*

* * *

“We must not fall into the trap of believing that ‘free television’ really isn’t free because it carries commercials that are paid for by the viewer. There is a theory that the advertiser must get more money for his product in order to pay for his televised blurbs, which in turn raises the price the consumer-viewer must pay for that product. But it is probably not true that the price of the product must go up because of the advertising. Even if it were, the TV viewer is not required to pay the cost.

“Suppose the viewer doesn’t buy the product, and suppose that somebody who never watches television does buy it—the program is therefore free to the viewer, the cost being paid by his fellow citizen who ignores the tube.”

—“*The Networks*” by A. Frank Reel
(Charles Scribner’s Sons)

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Why Limit Broadcasters' Rights?

By F. DENNIS HALE, Ph.D.

Radio and television journalists enjoy fewer press rights than newspaper and magazine journalists.

That's how the law and First Amendment stand today as they have been defined by the U.S. Supreme Court, Congress and Federal Communications Commission.

The public rejects this double standard for broadcast and print journalists and sees no rationale for distinction between the rights of the two groups.

That was the major finding in a scientific survey of students at one typical community college in one medium-sized American city.

The city is Waco, Texas, population 100,000, and the school McLennan Community College, enrollment 5,000. Waco sits in the center of Texas, half way between Dallas and Austin. The city boasts the Brazos and Bosque rivers; it's the home of Dr Pepper, and the Great River Raft Race.

Waco also is the seat of the oldest college in Texas and the largest Baptist university in the world, Baylor. A Baylor grant paid for the study of press rights.

The survey tested the attitudes of 250 college students concerning 22 specific press rights.

One right was: "Newspaper reporters should be subjected to fewer government regulations than television reporters." Over 90 percent of the students disagreed or were neutral about the statement.

By disagreeing, students were rejecting the legal status quo. In America of the 1970s, print journalists most definitely *are* subject to fewer legal controls than broadcast journalists.

This was noted in a 1978 Supreme Court opinion by Associate Justice John Paul Stevens: "We have long recognized that each medium of expression presents special First Amendment problems. And of all forms of communication, it is broadcasting that has received the most limited First Amendment protection."

Broadcasters enjoy less protection than print journalists in at least five areas:

—Broadcasters are prohibited from using indecent or profane language over the air. The Supreme Court upheld this FCC regulation by a 5-4 vote in a 1978 decision concerning the broadcast of a 12-minute monologue by satirist and comedian George Carlin. The repeated use of seven dirty words in the comedy sketch might be indecent or profane, but it defi-

nately was not legally obscene. The government could not have punished a newspaper or magazine that published the same monologue.

—Broadcasters may be prohibited from using the tools of their trade—cameras and recorders—when reporting government meetings open to the public. Such devices may be banned from courtrooms, Congressional hearings and county commissioner sessions. At the same meetings print journalists are free to use the tools of their specialty—pencils and note pads.

—Broadcasters are mandated by the FCC's Equal Time Provision to provide competing candidates with equal access to the air waves. If candidate Smith is sold a 30-second, prime-time ad, Smith's worthy opponent must be given the opportunity to purchase an equivalent ad. By contrast, a newspaper has a right to tell any candidate with an ad to go fly a kite. This is rarely done, particularly when the candidate has payment for the ad in hand.

—Broadcasters are limited in the expansion of their empires. No individual may control more than seven AM, seven FM and seven television stations. This is an FCC regulation. By comparison, there is virtually no limit to the expansion of newspaper chains. Toby J. McIntosh, correspondent for the Bureau of National Affairs in Washington, D.C., observed that "As long as newspaper chains are reasonably prudent about acquisitions they can avoid antitrust prosecutions."

—Broadcasters are required by the FCC's Fairness Doctrine to provide balanced coverage of controversial public issues. Although print journalists are ethically committed to balanced news, this is not a legal mandate.

In 1974 the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously held a Florida statute unconstitutional that required newspapers to print the replies of candidates the newspapers had editorially attacked. Chief Justice Warren Burger noted in his opinion: "A responsible press is not mandated by the constitution and like many other virtues it cannot be legislated." In 1969 in an equally unanimous decision, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Fairness Doctrine.

Thus broadcasters face greater restrictions than print journalists on a variety of legal fronts—balanced news, candidate treatment, media ownership, indecent language, and filming meetings.

Students in the Waco survey rejected this distinction. Over 80 percent agreed or were neutral on: "Press photographers should have the right to film criminal trials that are open to the public."

There were a number of indications that these findings mirrored the general public.

First, subjects represented a cross-section—half were male, half female, and the average household income was \$25,000.

In addition, students responded to some questions substantially the same way as nationwide samples of adults. A majority considered television a more credible news medium than newspapers. This parallels findings of Roper surveys during the last decade.

At the heart of the Waco survey were four pairs of statements on specific press rights. A statement was made on one page of the questionnaire for newspapers. An identical statement was made for radio and television on another page.

Following are the broadcast versions of the four statements:

"Radio and television stations should have the right to broadcast programs that contain indecent language."

"Radio and television stations should have the right to publish one-sided political stories that ignore one candidate's version of an event."

"A person should have the right to own as many radio and television stations as he desires, even as many as 100."

"Radio and television stations should have the right to refuse to sell advertising time to political candidates that the stations disagree with."

In all four cases the college students reacted similarly to the broadcast and newspaper versions of a statement. Some 50 percent agreed or were neutral on newspaper ownership, compared to 51 percent on broadcast ownership.

Thus public opinion was the same on a press right, for both broadcasters and newspapers.

Although the student public refused to distinguish between broadcast and print rights, they did distinguish between specific rights, supporting some and rejecting others. A strong majority rejected the right of the news media to be biased in its political coverage, either in news or advertisements.

This should serve as a warning to civil libertarians and journalists about the fragility of press freedom. This finding is consistent with public opinion surveys by political scientists that have found that the public supports civil liberties in their abstract form, but not in their specific application.

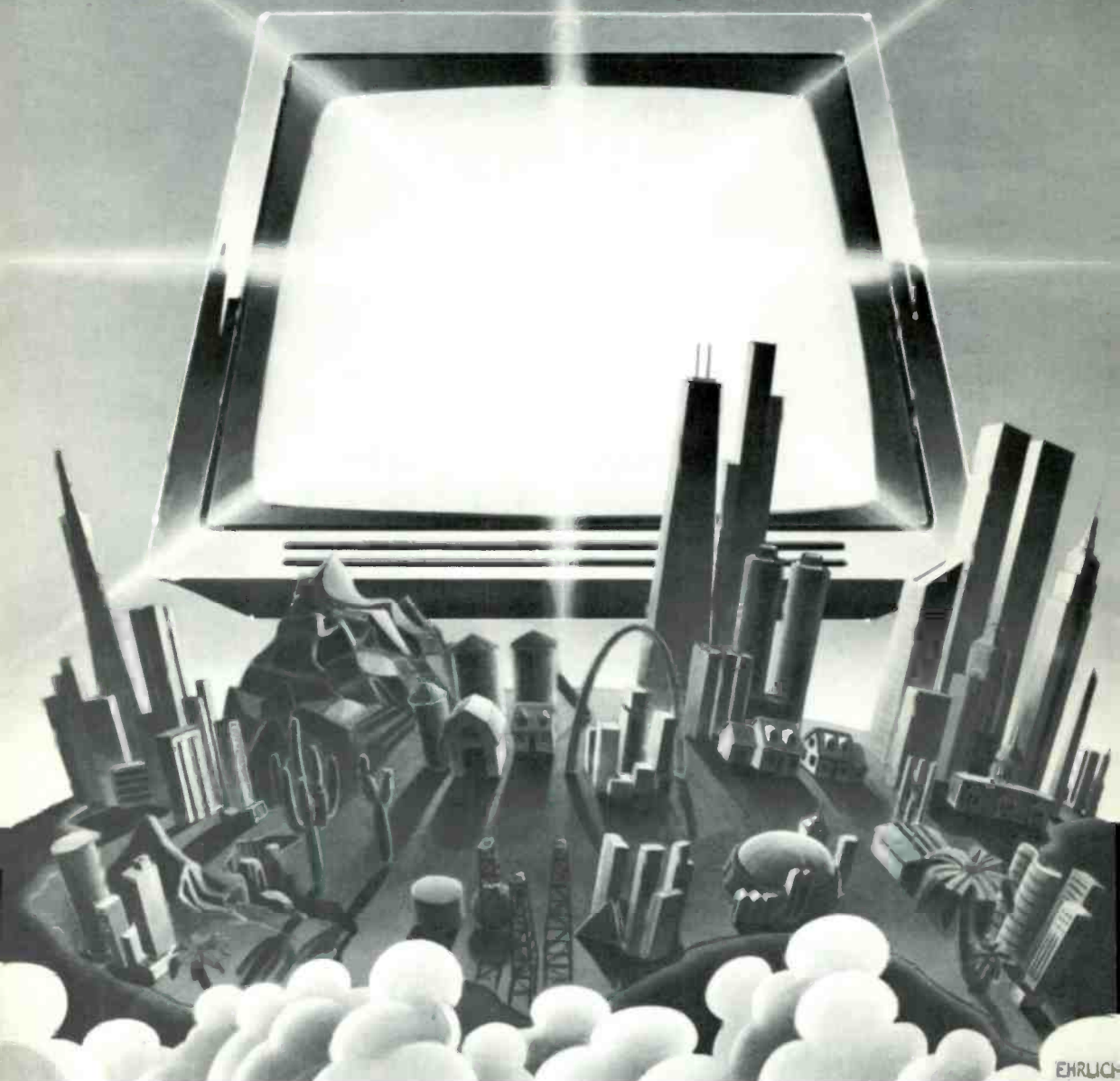
Nearly everyone agrees that freedom of speech is desirable. But only a minority in the general public agree that it is all right for an American to recite passages from the *Communist Manifesto* from a soap box on a street corner in their neighborhood.

The double standard governing the rights of broadcast and print journalists is eroding. Over half the states are experimenting with allowing the cameras and tape recorders in the courtroom. And various news organizations, including the Society of Professional Journalists, are lobbying Congress to abolish or modify the Fairness Doctrine. Public opinion rejecting a distinction between broadcast and print rights could hasten this process of equalizing the rights.

Dennis Hale teaches press law and news reporting at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. His articles have appeared in numerous academic and trade journals. He received his doctorate from the University of Southern Illinois.

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Book Review

The Networks, by A. Frank Reel. Scribners, 208 pages

By **WALTER GOODMAN**

Whatever the failings of commercial television in the pursuit of inspired programming, it has been a bountiful source of inspiration to book publishers. Scarcely a publishing season goes by without its complement of attacks on the quality of the shows, the character of the executives, the nature of the entire enterprise. Not since the Israelis transformed the Negev into a garden has so much perspiration been expended on a wasteland—only there has been no noticeable flowering as a consequence.

A. Frank Reel finds the source of all rot in the power of the networks, which he attributes to the structure of the industry. He reminds us of how the big three took charge, with the assistance of a feckless Federal Communications Commission, which early on limited the number of channels readily available to Americans to those in the restricted very high frequency range. His point is that given the economics of the situation thereby created and the quantity of advertising dollars that rests on a single rating point, no network can afford to be anything but craven in prime time.

Although Mr. Reel invokes the by now ritualistic condemnations of prime time programming, using some mighty tattered incantations along the way, his special cause is not so much better shows as more diverse shows. A former president of Metromedia and attorney for other relatively small TV interests that have striven with the networks for a share of their fruits of empire, he wants to break down and open up the extant oligopoly. That cause is assuredly in keeping with the principles of antitrust action in other fields. But would a division of the spoils in fact lead to better shows? Granted, the programs that now fill prime time leave something to be desired, but is it certain that advertisers or independent producers or local stations or additional networks would not, if they could, merely make things even worse, difficult though that may be to conceive? My impression is that when it comes to popular entertainment, the networks have acted as often as not as the protectors of "quality" against pressures by local affiliates and advertisers to play even

more to the mob. (What the extension of cable TV will do to the equation remains problematic; the author takes a restrained view.)

Mr. Reel could respond to such strictures by pointing out that better or worse, a diffusion of power might at least make it economically feasible to produce shows for more discrete audiences than the mass now pursued by the networks. He acknowledges that some of his suggestions for repairing the situation, such as eliminating VHF and opening up the far broader UHF range are unrealistic at this stage. But two suggestions, though unlikely to come to pass, do evidence a certain perverse ingenuity.

One would give each network control of all the local affiliates of all the networks for an evening or two a week. Thus, the network in charge of any given prime time period, having no inducement to compete with itself, would presumably be freer to program for different audiences. Mr. Reel, the friend of free enterprise, does not seem to notice that this proposal would seek to attain diversity through monopoly.

He also suggests that the F.C.C. order each network to devote an hour or so of prime time once a week or so to non-commercial programming—no advertising. The incentive of profits having been removed, the networks could deliver something besides the sitcoms, shoot-em-ups and big-deal movies that now dominate. (Mr. Reel compassionately suggests that this advertising-free slot be fixed at the end of prime time so as not to interfere with the programmers' cherished "audience flow" early in the evening.) This proposal, observe, would rely on Washington, largely responsible for having already restricted the television marketplace, to restrict it further, in the interest of diversity.

Ideas such as these should be circulating, and works such as Mr. Reel's are welcome to the extent that they keep alive the discussion of the sorry state of American television. But it would be refreshing if now and then a critic of commercial entertainment would lay aside the pretense that the great American public is thirsting for something more than it is getting. When have so many ever enjoyed so heartily their own exploitation?

Television's critics will do anything rather than admit that the ratings tell us something; Mr. Reel prefers to kill the messengers. Most critics will do anything to get around the fact that bad taste is usually in the ascendance and that wherever democracy prevails in cultural matters, bad taste (along with its pal, intellectual sloth) is likely to prevail.

The people who run the networks are no doubt as greedy as Mr. Reel tells us they are; if they could make more money by making better programs, they undoubtedly would. If our large corporations believed they could reach their potential consumers with superior programming, many more of them could be induced to support public television. (And isn't it time that those virtuous impulses of the business community were encouraged by permitting carefully controlled commercials on the shows they underwrite?)

The pure in mind all hope that minority tastes may yet be better served, by public TV or cable or a fourth network or whatever, but at the root of most of the lamentations over the condition of television, I fear, is the dismaying truth that most people cannot be counted on to like what Mr. Reel or I think is good for them.

Walter Goodman, executive editor of New York's WNET/13 was formerly on the editorial board of the New York Times. He holds a B.A. from Syracuse University and a M.A. (in philosophy) from Reading University in England.

Mr. Goodman is the author of several books, including "The Committee," a history of the House Un-American Activities Committee and "A Percentage of the Take," a story of municipal corruption.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"True, television, most of the time, is the flabby center of our self-indulgent society. But the glory and fascination of television, like our society itself, is that it has the possibility of becoming something more. And sometimes, even if rarely, it fulfills that wonderful possibility. That is what leads me to public television.

"In this country, public television is customarily looked upon as the alternative to commercial television—the educational counterpoint to 'real' television. American public television came late, almost as an afterthought.

"But no longer. I myself do not buy the description of public television as an alternative. Alternative implies secondary, a follower, a backburner priority.

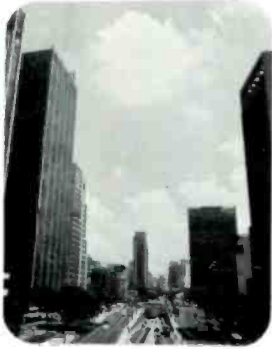
"I believe that public television in America should be the conscience of commercial television—and in a decent society we should let our conscience be our guide. Public television should serve as our guide, our model. Its very reason for being is to present programs of excellence.

"In my view, public television could be as significant to this country as the idea of universal public education was 200 years ago. For the first time in history, the best of art, music, literature, drama, information, public affairs and education are capable of being brought free to everyone. . . ."

—Lawrence K. Grossman
President, PBS

(Speech before Boston Chapter of NATAS)

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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Let me give but one example from personal experience of the pressures encountered in broadcast regulation.

"When I was at the FCC, I was one of a few commissioners who wanted to place some limits on the amount of commercial time allowed on radio and television. We strongly believed that some rules were long overdue. We proposed that the commercial time rules established by the broadcasters themselves through the National Association of Broadcasters be enforced. I finally mustered a majority on the commission to support this proposal.

"After I left, my successor, Bill Henry, was besieged by the industry. The Congress reacted almost immediately, and . . . the House of Representatives made it clear to the FCC that it regarded this area as off limits. Thus, we remain the only nation in the world with no rules on how many commercials a broadcaster may run, and our best broadcasters are reduced to the law of the jungle.

"Yet the FCC is blamed as a spineless tool of the broadcasting lobby, when, in fact, its efforts to regulate were frustrated by the Congress."

—*Preface by Newton N. Minow,
"The Politics of Broadcast
Regulation" by Erwin G. Krasnow
and Lawrence D. Longley.*

* * *

"There is no evidence of great public dissatisfaction with television, and certainly no sign that any dissatisfaction that exists is accompanied by any widespread belief in the desirability of radical reform.

"Furthermore, the present system has created in the broadcasters who benefit from it a very powerful set of vested interests which will oppose any change. The major source of change will certainly be the various technological developments—cable and pay television, in-home playback, and the provision of special services and information to the home."

—*Television and Human Behavior
by George Comstock, Steven Chaffee
and others (Columbia University Press)*

* * *

"The charge that television has rotted society by imposing new and ersatz forms of entertainment is not sustainable. Every television form has an honorable and quite proper history stretching back into our cultural past.

"At best, the new medium has taken some forms and given them a new vibrancy—the best of situation comedy would be a good example. In other areas, and variety is the most obvious, the transfer has brought nothing fresh and the forms are preserved in aspic."

—*Brian Winston, TV Critic
The Listener (BBC publication)*

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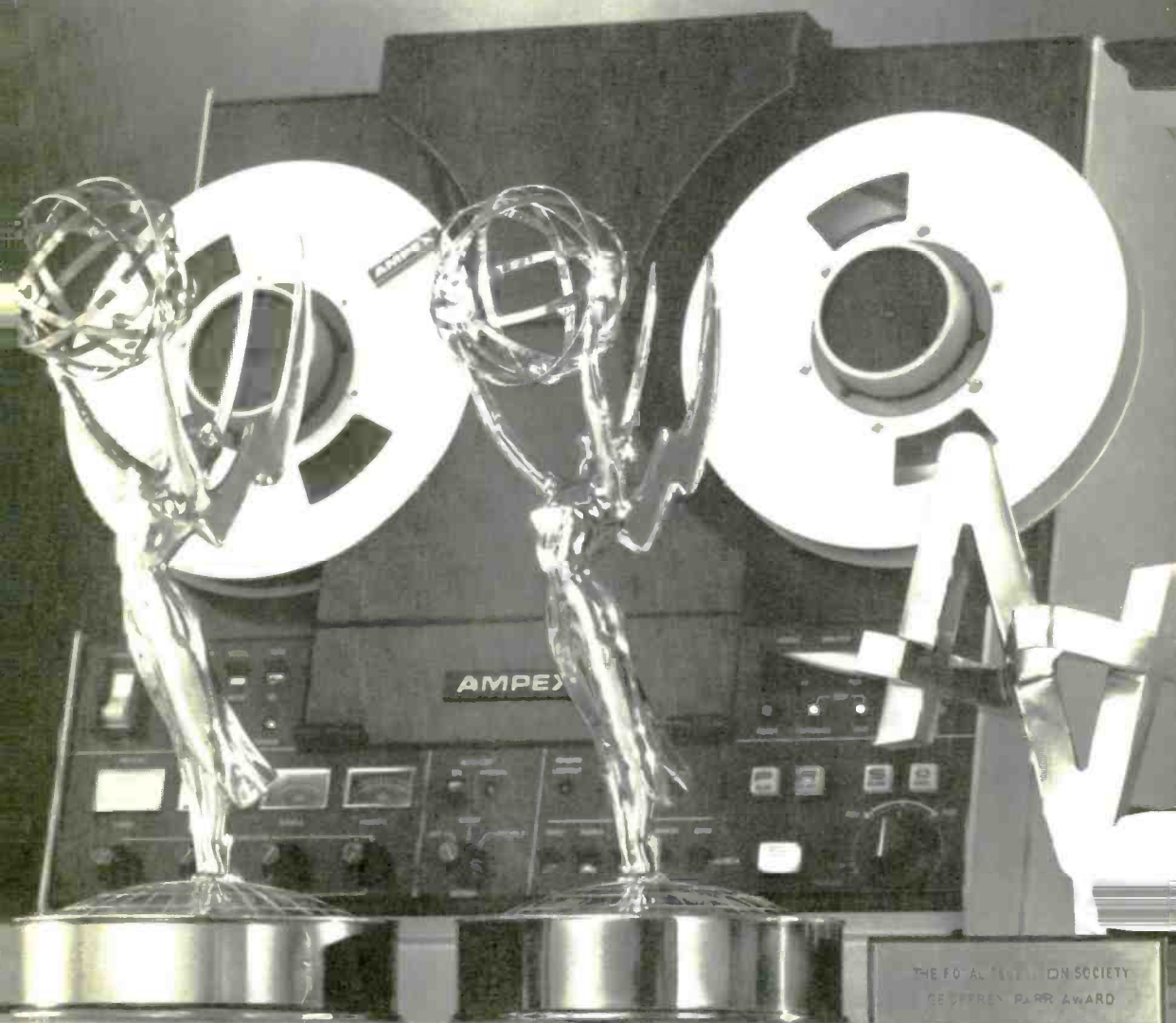
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- The Royal Television Society of U.K., Geoffrey Parr award for the AST system development team.
- National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, joint Emmy award for the development of SMPTE Type C format VTR's.

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