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NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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OUT, IDLE WORDS!

By Edwin Newman

Will America be the death of English? I'm glad I asked me that. I think it will. The outlook is dire; it is a later point in time than you think. The evidence is all around us:

We in the news business — “media folks,” Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago called us in July, 1968, when he rejoiced over the prospect that a strike by electrical workers might hold up installation of communications facilities and lead to “a good old-fashioned, old-time Democratic convention, with the delegates in charge and maybe without you media folks all over the place” — we folks in the media interest business must be careful about what we accept. The reason is that what we accept we pass along to the non-media folks at home.

The war in Indochina produced a host of terms that media folks accepted at their peril: protective reaction strike, surgical bombing, free firing zone, interdiction, contingency capability, new life hamlet, which in sterner days was a refugee camp, and many more. Money paid to the family of a family of a South Vietnamese civilian killed by mistake was a condolence award.

What makes the incorrect more attractive than the correct? Gresham's Law tells us that the less valuable currency will force the more valuable out of circulation. That, however, does not explain the case; it merely states it. There is at work here the desire to be up with the latest in thing. But that leaves the question of how the latest in thing came to be. People say, “Hopefully, something will happen.” They could, as they did for so long, use the simple and straightforward, “I hope.” They don't say “Hopelessly, nothing will happen.” Why should James Reston write in the Times “we are left to our instincts and emotions, and hopefully, to our common sense?” Maybe in the scramble of daily journalism there isn't time to catch these things. But why should Robert Alan Aurthur write “. . . if the city fell apart from a simple power failure, soon hopefully to be repaired, what would happen in the event of a real disaster?”

In the early days of American involvement in Vietnam, after Lyndon Johnson had faced aging Mao-Tse-tung eyeball-to-eyeball in the Gulf of Tonkin and had shown him to be a paper tiger by making the Chinese leader blink — blinking in such confrontations being the infallible sign of paper tigerness — I remarked on the air that an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Johnson and Mao must have been difficult to arrange, given their differing heights and eye shapes. An academic in

California at once wrote, accusing me of a racist attempt to whip up anti-Chinese feeling. I blinked.

I took part in a television program in which Senator Henry Jackson, describing the somewhat faltering progress of the detente between the Soviet Union and the United States, described the situation as half an eyeball to half an eyeball. Presumably, if things improved, the half an eyeball confrontation would give way to confrontation by peripheral vision, and finally, on the bright sunlit uplands of peace, the two parties would not be looking at each other at all.

Eyeball-to-eyeball, though it came close to burlesque even at the beginning (for example, when hard-nosed private eyes are private eyeball-to-private eyeball, does eye or nose prevail?) was once a fairly graphic phrase. Because of overuse, it has been devalued. American journalism has a way of seeing to that, of fastening on words and sucking them dry. Controversial is such a word, because it is applied to almost every issue that arises in politics, and because reporters feel obliged to tell us that issues that are resolved in the Senate by votes of 51 to 49 are controversial. Again, as anyone can discern from book jackets, scarcely a book appears that is not controversial, even when it is also witty, warm and wise.

I went on the Today Show one morning to say that I was tired of ethnic jokes and would like to hear no more of them. I mentioned Polish jokes, among others. Letters came in praising me for "sticking up for the Poles," and I was asked to go on again to tell about the record of Polish-Americans in Pennsylvania in volunteering for military service in World War Two. Since I had said that all that Polish jokes amounted to was that Poles were stupid, I was accused of saying that Poles were stupid. So much for the influence of the electronic medium in shaping the nation's dialogue.

I believe that the decline in language stems in part from large causes. One of those causes is the great and rapid change this country went through in the 1960's. Take the environment issue. It raised questions that challenged the fundamental assumptions of American life. Is it sensible to consume as much as we do? How do you calculate a standard of living — do you include quality of air and water, for example, and the amount of time you spend in traffic jams? Is economic growth necessarily a good thing? What social obligations does a corporation take on when it puts up a plant to earn profits?

Another aspect of that change was that people who felt themselves oppressed by society organized to enforce their demands either for the first time or with greater success than ever before — Blacks, Indians, Chicanos, women, homosexuals, lesbians, prison inmates, welfare recipients.

One reason is that in language, changes can be registered quickly and passed along literally by word of mouth. Another reason is that the language people use is a ready guide to the side they are on, and correct language was widely abandoned by those in revolt. Finally, language lies to

hand not only as a symbol of change, but as its instrument.

I do not want to overstate the case. The rules of language cannot be frozen and immutable; they will reflect what is happening in society whether we want them to or not. Moreover, just as libraries, which are storehouses of wisdom, are also storehouses of unwisdom, so will good English, being available to all, be enlisted in evil causes. Still, it remains true that since nothing is more important to a society than the language it uses — there would be no society without it — we would be better off if we spoke and wrote with exactness and grace, and if we preserved, rather than destroyed, the value of our language.

* * *

A desire for weightiness creeps into the language of television weather forecasters. In Denver one night, after the local newscaster had said that something had been done "as best as possible," he referred to an "alleged shoot-out," which was not merely alleged but had taken place, with three people killed. The alleged probably was intended to cover the fact that there was a dispute over who should be prosecuted for it. With that, however, our newscaster reached familiar ground, turned brightly to the weatherman and asked, "Will we have more major thunderstorm activity?" The weatherman spotted the cue and, with equal spontaneity and an unerring instinct for the lively phrase, replied, "You better believe it, Ron. That is the prospect," he continued, "as of right now."

I long ago stopped wondering why major thunderstorm activity is preferred to major thunderstorms. It is because of the national affection for unnecessary word activity. Once upon a time, weathermen spoke of showers. (I heard one of them say, "We may have a scattered shower.") Showers were succeeded by shower activity.

More recently, the shower area has taken over. This is because we love to pump air into the language, and make it soft and gaseous. Newsmen borrow the style from those they consider authoritative, such as the Air Force general who spoke one day about the nuclear deterrent and how well it deterred. It deterred so well, the general said, that the Russians were not in a position to attack us with any confidence factor. The general did not say that the Russians lacked confidence. They lacked a confidence factor.

In the same way, headwinds no longer delay commercial airliners. Headwind components do. They don't blow at any more miles an hour than headwinds do, but a wind is only a wind, while a component is knowledgeable and has know-how. Psychologists no longer speak of children playing but of children in a play situation for the same reason. My daughter, when she was doing social work, heard it said of a child that he had "not mastered the reading situation."

The British have taken over the personality weather forecaster, but he is an employe of the Meteorological Office, not of the television network. He is understandably cautious, but conversational, so that he may say,

"I'm going to use a broad brush tonight and not be very exact," and he may note, "There's a bit of fog about," and instead of the old stand-bys, bright periods and sunny intervals, he may speak of gleams of sunshine or the odd chink of blue. But while he is sympathetic and homely, he does not smile, and when forecasts are belied, he does not laughingly take personal responsibility for unexpected storms and icy patches on the roads or explain that his weekend, too, was ruined. This is just as well. Hearty humor about wintry showers, freezing fog and gale force winds would only make things worse.

* * *

Meaning no disrespect, I suppose that there is, if not general rejoicing, then a sense of relief when the football season ends. It's a long season.

I have an additional reason for watching football fade out without much regret. That reason is a protective interest in the English language. The phrase "pretty good," as in "He hit him pretty good," and "We stopped them pretty good," and "He moves pretty good for a big man," gets worked out pretty good from late September to mid-January. After which, it should be given a pretty good rest, or allowed to rest pretty good, or at any rate left to basketball, where they hit the backboards pretty good.

Basketball, of course, cannot be played without referees, and generally they do the officiating pretty good, but not always. Said K. C. Jones, coach of the Capital Bullets of the NBA, explaining why he would not comment on the officiating in a playoff game against New York: "No sense in risking a \$2,000 fine. To hell with it. They read the papers pretty good for our remarks."

The interview before the World Series closely resembles the spring training season interview. Again, it is a two-character affair. The sports writer is named Buck, and the manager is named Al. Buck's first question is, "Well, Al, how do you think you'll do this year?" Al is not thrown by this. He says, "Well, I think we'll do pretty good. I think we'll do all right."

Buck follows that up like a hawk. He says, "Well, are you predicting the pennant, Al?" Al replies that well, they won it last year, and the other teams are going to have to beat them. He knows one thing: they are not going to beat themselves.

The interview has been underway for about a minute at this point, and nobody has said anything about the name of the game. This is now remedied. Buck asks Al where he thinks his main strength lies, and Al replies that scoring runs is the name of the game and his boys can get the runs home. Buck then says that some people think that pitching is the name of the game, and Al says that it is, it is, and he thinks his pitchers will do pretty good, but he still has one outstanding need, a reliever who can go at top speed for a full inning without tiring. He has such a man on the roster, a Cuban named Felix Miguel Arbanzas Lopez y Puesto, a real flame thrower, but there is some question about Castro letting him out and the

FBI letting him in.

There is no way to measure the destructive effect of sports broadcasting on ordinary American English, but it must be considerable. In the early days, sports broadcasting was done, with occasional exceptions such as Clem McCarthy, by non-experts, announcers. Their knowledge of the sports they described varied, but their English was generally of a high order. If they could not tell you much about the inside of the game they were covering, at any rate what they did tell you, you could understand.

Then came the experts, which is to say the former athletes. They could tell you a great deal about the inside but — again with some exceptions — not in a comprehensible way. They knew the terms the athletes themselves used, and for a while that added color to the broadcasts. But the inside terms were few, and the non-athlete announcers allowed themselves to be hemmed in by them, also — “He got good wood on that one,” “He got the big jump,” “He really challenged him on that one,” “They’re high on him,” “They came to play,” “He’s really got the good hands,” and “That has to be,” as in “That has to be the best game Oakland ever played.”

The effect is deadening on the enjoyment to be had from watching sports on television or from reading about them, and, since sports make up so large a part of American life and do so much to set its tone, on the language we see and hear around us.

There is one sports announcer who does not go where the former athletes lead him. That is Howard Cosell. Cosell is a phenomenon, or as some have it, phenomena. Nothing can shake him away from his own bromides, of which the supply is unlimited. Cosell can range from a relative paucity (“Despite the relative paucity of scoring . . .”) to a veritable plethora (“Let’s continue on this point of this veritable plethora of field goals.”) without drawing a breath, and there is every reason to believe that when he says “relative paucity” and “veritable plethora,” he is not kidding; he means it.

Only Cosell would have described the mood of the crowd at the Bobby Riggs-Billie Jean King match as “an admixture,” or remarked that for Riggs, “It has not been a comedic night.” Only Cosell would speak of a football team “procuring a first down,” or say that a fighter was “plagued by minutiae,” or that the cards of the referee and judges, made public after each round in a fight in Quebec, “vivified” the problem facing the fighter who was behind. During a Monday night football game, nobody else would say, “The Redskins have had two scoring opportunities and failed to avail themselves both times,” or that “The mist is drifting over the stadium like a description in a Thomas Hardy novel.” At any rate, we may hope that nobody else would say it.

I am far from arguing that the language of athletes and former athletes never adds to the gaiety of the nation. Jake LaMotta, the old middleweight, interviewed long after his fighting days were over, told his

questioner that he had no fear of the future because "I got too much growing for me." Another middleweight, Rocky Graziano, during his fighting days was pleased with his reception in the Middle West. He said, "They trutt me right in Chicago." An old ballplayer, Joe Hauser, had the same sort of genius. Near the end of his career, badly slowed down, he was retired on what should have been a single to right. He said with some bitterness, "They trun me out at first."

Harry Truman used to say irrelavant and stress the third syllable in incomparable. But Mr. Truman never had any trouble getting his points across.

As a veteran, I was in an Army hospital in 1947 and a fellow patient asked me what another patient did for a living. I said he was a teacher. "Oh," was the reply, "them is my chief dread." A lifetime was summed up in those six syllables. There is no way to improve on that.

* * *

Bobbs-Merrill, publisher of Edwin Newman's forthcoming, STRICTLY SPEAKING book, granted permission for reprint of the foregoing excerpts. The book will be published in October.

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* * *

EDWIN NEWMAN has covered news events in 25 countries since joining the NBC News Bureau in London in 1952. Based in New York since 1961, Mr. Newman has been a regular on the TODAY show and the drama critic for WNBC-TV. The Overseas Press Club honored him in 1961 for his foreign correspondence. He has also won an Emmy for his interview series, SPEAKING FREELY. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin.

* * *



UNIVERSAL TELEVISION TAKES PRIDE IN CONGRATULATING ITS EMMY AWARD WINNERS

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"THE EXECUTION OF PRIVATE SLOVIK"

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"THE MASK OF LOVE"

DOUGLAS D. KELLY

Outstanding Make-Up
"THE MASK OF LOVE"

GOD AND MAN — WILL THEY EVER MEET ON SUNDAY TELEVISION?

By William B. Gray

The media world is full of paradox, but consider this one: Television's best, in some cases its only, religious programming arrives on Sunday morning. And where is the audience most likely to understand and respond to these offerings? Attending church services, of course.

Religion, per se, is not highly valued as subject matter for TV. Program directors are given small parcels of time in the early hours of the Sabbath. Budgets are low. Religious institutions complain that they do not receive a fair share of "public service" time. Networks and local stations say they do the best they can, going to great pains to produce quality programs they know will draw audiences too small to be measured.

It's a difficult situation and it has occurred to this writer that the churches may be partly at fault. They do not, in all cases, make the best use of the time afforded them.

With murmured thanks, the churches and synagogues have accepted these "ghetto hours," hours before the average viewer is up or after he has gone to bed. One New York station offers a brief good-night sermon at 3 A.M.

Television, the clergy sometimes feel, gives low-response periods to religion simply to keep license challenges and complaints from the devout at a minimum. Adding to the problem is the general apathy in the land toward religion. This translates into a small pool of potential viewers. Though surveys show a high percentage of the public claiming belief in God, all polls point to a declining interest in organized religion.

There will always be a certain conflict inherent in the term "religious programming." Should holy services and seminars on faith ever be concerned with, "How does this program play? Is the viewer hooked with the first Alleluia?" And how do you define religious programming? Is a Billy Graham rally to be regarded as being on a level with *Lamp Unto My Feet* or a Mass from St. Patrick's Cathedral? Would a re-run of Charlton Heston as Moses draw an audience at 10 'clock Sunday morning?

And how should we classify a revival meeting by Oral Roberts? Or a jazz concert in a Harlem church? Would *The Greatest Story Ever Told* hold the devout in thrall on Sunday morning?

Sometimes a decidedly secular movie can be strongly religious. For example, *The Night of the Iguana*, with its touching study of human relationships as viewed by Tennessee Williams. Would this commercial film, produced originally as entertainment, draw a Sunday audience if it were advertised as a religious film?

We may debate this question on an academic level. But of one thing we can be sure: the policies of the networks and local stations would not permit the showing of a Tennessee Williams film during the "church time" on Sunday morning. When films of this sort are shown, they are shown late in the evening, with continuous interruptions for commercial messages.

Some local television stations do sell time to religious groups, often pre-empting the far superior network productions. Go into the hinterlands on a weekend and you may discover that *Look Up and Live* has been dropped into the 6 A.M. slot, while a Bible thumping preacher and a home town Gospel choir is on at 10 A.M.

Evangelical programs, with their promises of salvation, can make slick and compelling viewing. But the format is fixed in amber: chorus, solo, sermon, solo, chorus. The references to sin and eternal damnation may pall after a time, too. But there must be money in this sort of religion, since there are a number of TV stations now in the hands of religious groups, and a new Evangelical radio station seems to be opening somewhere every week.

If the sorry state of religious programming is to be turned around, the impetus will probably come from the churches, not the broadcasters.

Churches might band together to ask for the midnight to dawn hours, starting at 12 o'clock Saturday. In this way, the churches might provide a ministry to persons who are alone out there in the dark night, many sick and troubled, unable to sleep, unable to summon strength for another tomorrow.

The church might also become a militant pressure group, using whatever influence it has to lobby for more air time, for less violence and decadence in general programming. There is a case to be made for the church as a social prod. It should rally to the TV industry when it needs support against government intimidation and the demands for censorship. The name Everett Parker is anathema to some broadcasters, but he has been effective in improving employment practices and racial balance, as well as in the wider perspective of religious broadcasting.

The church could push for better programming throughout the TV spectrum: better children's entertainment, more documentary presentations of ethical issues confronting the public today, more drama that raises the human predicament to new levels.

Pulpits could promote audiences for good programming if church leaders were occasionally invited to advance showings. Particularly, advance showings of programs projecting social concern. It doesn't cost much to be a pressure group. It costs dearly to produce fine television programs. The church has no vast endowments for the latter. In consequence, a high percentage of today's religious programming is talk shows. Round-table discussions on faith, ethics, art, sex and the human condition. Eventually, these shows may talk themselves into oblivion.

When religious groups, on their own initiative and with their own money, have ventured into production the network response has not been open-armed. The Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches produced a fine and touching drama a few years ago, "Sit Down, Shut Up or Get Out!" It was aired twice, on Sunday afternoon over NBC-TV. Nothing in it identified the production as "religious" except the BFC credit line at the close.

The drama concerned a clever, precocious child who was rebuffed by teachers because nothing in their training had prepared them for such a quick young mind. They preferred the average child and simply could not relate to one so gifted. The problem is not rare or improbable. Many talented youngsters are regularly put down and humiliated by insensitive teachers.

Why did this fine program not receive more attention? We may blame its time period, to a large degree. Had the drama been shown in the evening, sponsored by Gulf Oil, say, it certainly would have won greater acclaim.

A program that created a great stir this year was the CBS production, "The Catholics." It was beautifully filmed in a village on the rugged coast of Ireland. Its conflict centered in the Mass. Was it offensive to the faithful to hear this ancient ritual in English rather than in Latin?

The issue was projected as so grave, as to be tearing the Church apart, an arguable thesis. The film did not offer the traditional happy ending. The old abbott, who confessed that he could no longer pray, was still unable to pray when the drama closed. Would such a program, one wonders, be acceptable fare on Sunday morning? Must the Sabbath day always accentuate the positive? Shouldn't religion be viewed not as a solution to man's ills but as part of the continuing struggle for peace and serenity?

Another area in which television appears to have slighted religion is in the matter of news. What is the Church up to? What is currently on the agenda of The National Conference of Christians and Jews? Newspapers and such magazines as *Time* and *Newsweek* have for years chronicled religious news on a special page. There are persons with expert knowledge of religion in their editorial departments. Some even have theological training.

But how many television networks — or stations — have even one

person specializing in news of religion? Men and women in religious programming are, of course, knowledgeable in a general way. They enjoy wide acquaintance in the clergy. They know of the "activism" of certain religious groups. They are invariably sympathetic to church problems. But they are never called upon to provide religious news for regular TV newscasts.

But consider how many social and political questions now involve the church.

When the Roman Catholics attack the laws legalizing abortion, an alert religious editor or reporter would recognize that the issue needs ventilation on a regular newscast. When issues become emotional, the public tends to lose sight of the basic facts. Television could be immensely helpful in seeking out differing opinions, opening up new vistas for viewers.

When the Protestant churches oppose government aid to parochial schools, another church vs. state issue is in the fire. A continuing dialog is essential lest opinion harden into destructive prejudice.

Ideally, news programs should give time to the churches' response to such current topics as pornography, Watergate, prison reform, even the film, *The Exorcist*.

In the matter of regularly scheduled religious programs, the networks have made a high-minded effort to give more than lip service. For 25 years, Pamela Ilott has produced excellent religious programs for CBS, many of them award winners. There have been times when I advised my congregation to watch a particular *Look Up and Live* or *Lamp Unto My Feet* even at the expense of attendance at Sunday service.

Sid Darion has made *Directions* an important Sunday interlude on ABC-TV. Doris Ann has produced some significant religious specials for NBC during her distinguished tenure. The NBC arrangement does not provide the continuity that CBS has established with its Sunday sessions. But NBC specials do attract attention. A recent one dealt with, "Is the Church Relevant?" and featured a panel of prominent churchmen.

A glance at the Sunday viewing schedule in New York also lists: *Maryknoll World*, *Christopher Closeup*, *The Jewish Scene*, *Faith for Today*, *WNBC Sunday School*, *Worship for Shut-Ins*, a revival meeting by gospel preacher Oral Roberts, a Catholic Mass and a sermon titled "The Devil" by Rex Humbard.

The Public Broadcasting System has also shown an interest in religion — but not a very deep one. This season's *Religious America* deals primarily with the conflicts of the inner man.

Locally, special mention must be made of a new WNBC-TV program, *The First Estate*. It treats social problems, such as penal reform and capital punishment, from the point of view of religion. It has a rating of one, and is building a following.

Chief drawback of *The First Estate* is that it is all talk and talk

sometimes rambles, gets away from the moderator or repeats itself. The occasional interpolation of film would be welcome.

The traditional practice of dividing religion into three faiths — Protestant, Catholic and Jewish — has not been entirely wise. The Christian faith is splintered. Southern Baptists, whose state of mind could easily be called secessionist, refused to come in under the heading *Christian* in NBC's program plans. It is now considered a special religion unto itself.

Similarly, the Jewish faith divides itself into Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed branches. Orthodox shelters many special sects. Latter Day Saints and Christian Scientists are often given special programs in deference to their special dogma.

Once upon a time the broadcasting industry suggested that the three faiths set up a central office, a liaison, as it were, for religious programming. The Southern Baptists refused to come in under the BFC, which is part of the National Council of Churches. Somehow, the plan failed to prosper.

A question to be considered is: Why must religious programming be so sharply segmented? If faith, tolerance and good works are the desideratum, does it really matter that one denomination draws more TV time than another? Is not the same cause being served in every case?

The dialog between organized religion and the television industry must continue. Relations are good but they could be better. It is time religious programming was lifted out of the Sunday ghetto. It is time religious news was accorded the respect shown business news, theatre news and such. Eventually one hopes to see all these problems resolved.

Meantime, television goes on performing its quiet miracles, bringing us programs that do awaken the conscience of man (I am suddenly reminded of *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*) and remind us all that custom, morality and love all weigh heavily in any study of the human condition.

* * *

THE REV. WILLIAM B. GRAY is Director of the Office of Communications for Trinity Church Parish in New York. He holds degrees from the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and the School of Journalism, University of Missouri. A native of Augusta, Ga., he has worked on a number of newspapers in the South.

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THE SIGN OF GOOD TELEVISION

“THE BRITISH DO THESE THINGS SO WELL”

By Cecil Smith

LONDON — When *Upstairs, Downstairs* won the Emmy as the year's best dramatic series on American television, the victory was hailed here as a “major breakthrough” for British television. Cyril Bennett, program director of London Weekend TV, where this saga of servants and masters in a manor house in Edwardian England is produced, said the real significance of the prize was that “so uncompromisingly English a series could have such critical and public impact in America.”

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. To the British, who built an empire on exports from this tight little island, exporting quality television has suddenly become a booming business.

At the BBC, Peter Dimmock, head of BBC Enterprises, said gross export sales for the year ending March 31 had shot up over 40% from the previous year. This was hardly confined to the American market. Such choice BBC products as *The Six Wives of King Henry VIII* and *Elizabeth R* were playing from Antigua to Zambia, from Peru to Poland, Israel, Iceland and Saudi Arabia. *Civilisation* had come with equal impact to Bangladesh and Venezuela, Ethiopia and Singapore, Trinidad and Chile. *The Search for the Nile* is watched on the banks of the Nile.

“But the prime demand is for quality product,” said Dimmock. “It's as if suddenly the whole world developed a taste for quality programs. It's *War and Peace* they want and *The Ascent of Man* and our *Man Alive* documentaries, not light entertainment . . .

“I suppose it began with *The Forsyte Saga*. That was our showcase; it showed the standard of quality that was possible. But the real breakthroughs, I think, were *Six Wives* and *Civilisation*. Their success in America spread around the world. South America is now a major market for quality programs. We've just edged into Asia with *Civilisation* in Japan . . .”

The European edition of Newsweek magazine hit the stands about the time *Upstairs, Downstairs* was being judged in the Emmy competition with an issue devoted to television around the world. It came to the inevitable conclusion that the finest television we have is British.

“If any nation” reported the magazine, “enjoys the Platonic idea of ‘good television,’ it is Great Britain. British TV does more to inform its

viewers and enrich their lives than any other national system . . .”

The month I've spent in England underscores this conclusion. It is the rare night that at least one program of extraordinary value is not available on the tube, whether the Royal Shakespeare's production of *Miss Julie* with Helen Mirren or a chapter on that fight for women's rights in the new series, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, or an exhaustive and detailed report through prime time of the bombing deaths in Dublin.

Nor was such quality confined to the public channels of the BBC. Some of the finest work from Britain has lately come from that strange assortment of 15 commercial networks that share a single channel: ITV. *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *The World at War*, *Country Matters* are products of commercial companies. So is the most absorbing series I saw last month — a series of dramas called *Childhood* from Granada TV, each detailing in frightening perspective a segment of this uneasy world as seen through the eyes of a child.

The two current prime candidates for the world market — neither yet seen in England — are from commercial companies. The first is the exquisite \$5 million, 13-part *Edward VII*, produced by Cecil Clarke for Sir Lew Grade's ATV network, which has been purchased for America by CBS for the coming season and which stars Timothy West as the playboy King Edward with Annette Crosbie as Queen Victoria and John Gielgud as Disraeli; the second is the seven-part *Jenny* from Thames TV with Lee Remick as the exuberant beauty Jenny Jerome, mother of Winston Churchill, which is being produced as part of the commemoration of the Churchill centenary Nov. 30 and which has reportedly been bought for America if network time can be cleared.

Meanwhile, 13 new plays on *Upstairs, Downstairs* will be underwritten on Masterpiece Theatre by Mobil Oil, beginning Nov. 3. Mobil is also making possible next fall on PBS the 13-week series of Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*, BBC's sequel to *Civilisation* detailing the evolution of man through his ideas rather than his art, including technologic and scientific achievements though more concerned with discovery itself than what is discovered. It's an acknowledged masterpiece which took three years in the making.

Perhaps that's the secret to the quality one finds in British TV — the gift of time. Three years went into *Civilisation*; more than two into *America*. There were two years of research and script preparation for *Edward VII* before the first foot of film was made — and 13 months were devoted to making the 13 50-minute episodes. Dick Cawston, whose department at the BBC produced *The Search for the Nile*, is now involved in an examination of the religions of the world which is already sold to Xerox for American distribution though it will not be complete until 1977!

For quality you need time. It's nice someone cares.

* * *

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Born in Marlow, Oklahoma, he is a graduate of Stanford and UCLA Universities.

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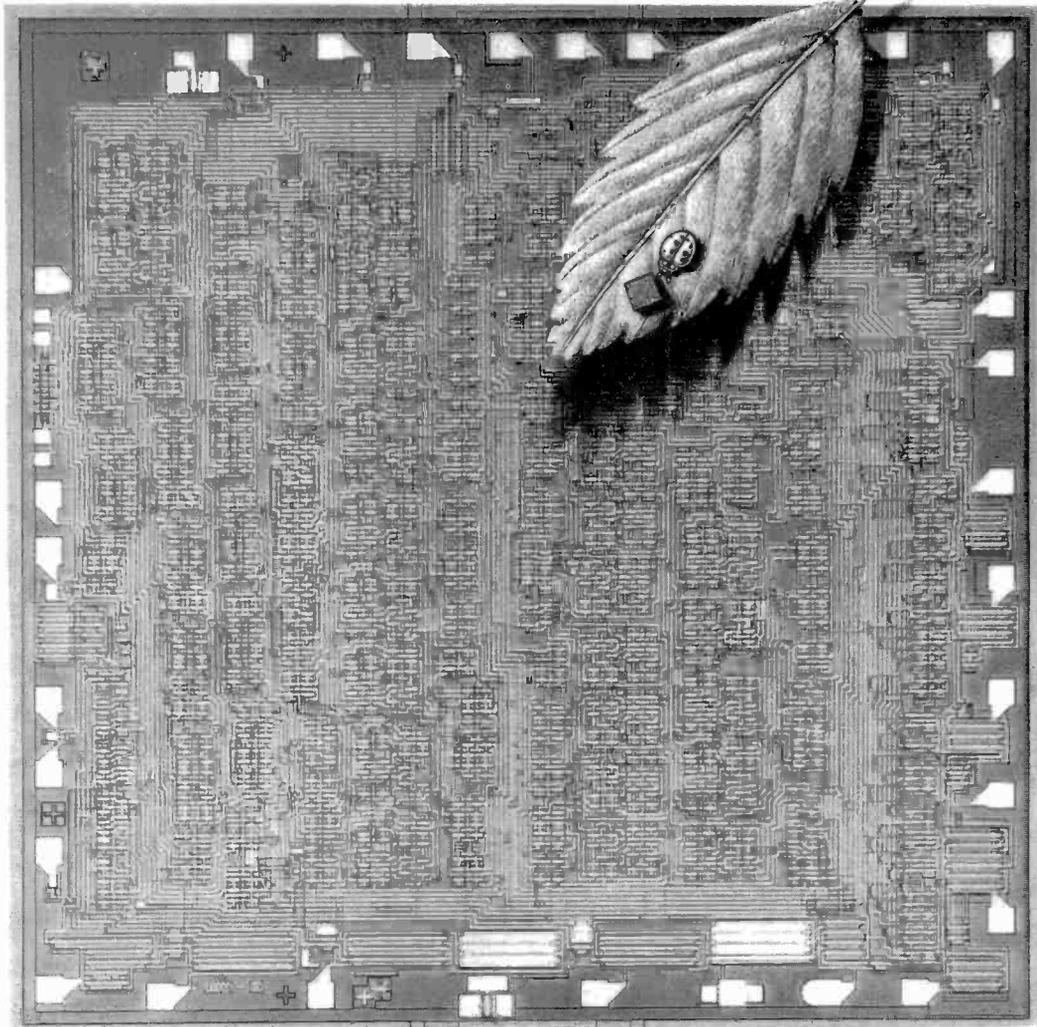
PIECE OF MIND. That little chip on the leaf next to Ladybug is the brain of an electronic watch. It's an RCA integrated circuit with 1,300 built-in components.

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LOCAL NEWSCASTS — A CONTINUING IDENTITY CRISIS

By Gabriel Pressman

At a Television Academy Forum some years ago, a prominent producer offered his definition of news. "News," he intoned, "is what interests me, as a producer."

As a long-time reporter, I begged to differ. "News is what interests them, as an audience," I remarked.

That exchange took place in the late 1950's and the debate is still raging. It is at the root of television's never-ending identity crisis. It's the burning question asked repeatedly by everybody from President Nixon to the disenchanted viewers who learned from Spiro Agnew a new word, "media." Media, plural, but emerging singular in such sentences as, "You can't believe a single thing the media says any more!"

Though I do not accept the charges of distortion and misrepresentation brought against television news by such critics as Presidential aide Pat Buchanan, I still feel we have no cause for complacency. We have not yet arrived at a hard maturity in our news standards. There is arrogance and confusion, a desire to stun, to dazzle. And at the heart of the problem remains that exasperating question, What is news?

The giants in journalism have offered varying answers to that question.

To William Randolph Hearst, news was lurid stories, murder, disaster and seamy scandals. To Charles Dana of the old New York *Sun* news was "a new kind of apple, a child crying on the curb, the exact weight of a candidate for President . . ." To Joseph Pulitzer, whose *World* is still revered, news was the exposure of fraud, chicanery and imposters.

Last winter, Caryl Rivers, a teacher at Boston University, criticized television newsmen for being self-satisfied. TV executives seem to regard criticism "as a deadly germ to be stomped on," he wrote in *The New York Times*. One executive, he reported, had declared that he and his colleagues had "earned the right to make decisions about what the public will or will not see, because they are professionals."

There is some truth to Rivers' criticism of us. But the problem has less

to do with smugness than with insecurity, insensitivity and plain incompetence. From the day I entered television journalism 19 years ago, our news standards, particularly in local reporting, have been somewhat uncertain.

In my neophyte days the medium was a neophyte, too, and I was the only reporter covering for radio and television on a daily basis. This, mind you, in the nation's largest city. The camera crews worked hard and so did I. But the producers suffered from what might be called wire-service malaise. If a story didn't come clacking over the wire, it hadn't happened.

I well remember rushing to a fire in Brooklyn early one morning to find that an entire family had burned to death. There were eight bodies in the street. I called the desk man back at NBC and told him I was prepared to do a radio spot on this family disaster. He was skeptical. "I haven't seen anything about a big fire on the wire," he said. And until he had, of course there was no fire, no bodies in the street.

Desk men are smarter nowadays. But there are still news executives who place more faith in the printed word than in their own reporters calling in a big story. What the *AP* or *The Daily News* covers is news.

The men who assemble the news, deciding what is vital and what is trivial, have a naive faith that something big and exciting is bound to come out of a press conference. Any press conference. "Councilman X. is holding a press conference at 10. No, I don't know what it's about — but go cover it!" To be sure, a public official should have access to the media. But he forfeits that access if he has nothing of consequence to say. There's a nice distinction between an honest, important statement and a self-serving line of chat. Politicians are very good at distorting truth for their own benefit. Television reporters should be wary.

The first requisite for good local coverage is a corps of experienced, fair-minded reporters, backed by knowledgeable, sophisticated editors. News coverage is a sensitive business and there is no room for hacks or amateurs.

Let's say the Mayor or the Governor announces he's taking action on some serious problem. He states his new policy. But the experienced reporter knows there's far more to the story than the official is saying. Let's say the action has been delayed for weeks and only now, in response to heavy pressure, is the official yielding. If the reporter has his facts in order, he should inform viewers of the background to this story. To see a story clearly and to see it whole, that's a TV reporter's function. And he must learn to tell it quickly, getting in all the essentials, if he can.

News coverage is dangerous and slippery ground for an ingenu reporter or an inexperienced desk man. Their errors, their immaturity deprive the people of one of their basic rights: the right to know what is going on in their town.

In too many local news operations the so-called reporters do little more

than hold the microphone while the Mayor or the Police Chief or the mother of two children just drowned in a skating accident speaks a brief piece. And back in the news room there is too much concern with wire copy and film clips stitched together in a last minute rush to fill time.

Television news needs more bosses who have come up the hard way from the newspaper business, more bosses who spend their days or nights actually caught up in the excitement of the news room, not sequestered in an executive office with three TV monitors.

The Watergate scandal, by far the biggest story of our time, was at first sloughed off by TV newsmen. It was dismissed as a "caper." Late in the game, as the '72 election was approaching, one network (CBS) began offering special reports on the story of the *Washington Post* was putting on page one every day. Not until the Ervin Committee opened hearings — an event made for television — did the country begin to grasp the full and terrible significance of Watergate. Since that time, TV news has done a superb job in reporting and interpreting the Constitutional crisis we are in now, and may remain in for another year.

With all due credit given for recent achievements, the sorry fact remains: TV, with all its resources, was not the original digger that unearthed the story. For the feat, credit the *Washington Post*.

Investigative journalism is a tedious business that does not generally lend itself to dramatic film. But that hardly excuses us for not carrying out more investigations. Building up staff for this sort of reporting is as vital as buying the latest technological equipment.

When a natural gas tank exploded in Staten Island two years ago, killing 40 people, New York's TV crews did a splendid on-the-spot job. Viewers saw the agony, the chaos, the bitterness of the survivors. But neither the press nor TV set out to discover the reason for the explosion. It was a Staten Island district attorney who ultimately brought to book two men on the government board that permitted the construction of the gas tank in a residential area.

Now and then we do come upon a story that plays on camera as if it had been written for the movies. One such story involved a Deputy Fire Commissioner, given to flashing his badge to gain free tickets to Broadway theatres. One evening he was told, "No seats tonight," whereupon he conducted a full fire inspection of the house, disrupting the performance.

When I heard that Mayor Wagner had received a report on this bullying action by the fire commissioner and had been sitting on it for months, I paid a visit to the commissioner's office. I walked in with the cameras rolling and asked for an explanation of the incident.

Flustered and angry, the commissioner denied the incident, shouting, "I don't need \$20 worth of tickets to a show. I have all the money I want!"

Greatly agitated, the official then proceeded to empty his pockets under the camera's X-ray eye. Out came more cash than most of us had

ever seen: large bills, hundreds, fifties, a total of more than \$3,000 in cash. Here was the stuff of drama. The audience was shocked and the Mayor was enraged. He fired the commissioner.

News is made up of so many things. Certain individuals' taste and style play a considerable role in what viewers see on the screen. Where but on Channel 5, New York, (my home base) would you see a Roaring Twenties costume party given by one of the reporters for the WNEW-TV staff? Where but on Channel 4 would you encounter a film critic (Gene Shalit) and a sports reporter (Dick Schaap) whose attitude toward their subjects can be fairly described as total irreverence?

But style becomes a dirty word when it over-rides content. This has been particularly apparent since the "happy news" fad swept the country. On a recent edition of *60 Minutes* Mike Wallace described the competition among San Francisco stations to produce the most salacious, sensational news coverage. ("Male sex organ found on railroad track!" was a recent headline. "Stay tuned").

Reports lately suggest that the hard-hitting, prurient shows, with their emphasis on crime, sex and the jolly pranks in the studio are not as welcome in the home as they once were. Audiences who tune in for news are beginning to insist on news, and never mind the phoney dramatics and the cheap "hooks" to pull in the customers. With the world in unremitting crisis, what news show needs jokes or hooks?

This is not to say that crime and sex should be excluded from news broadcasts. The subjects are valid, and people are curious about them. To exclude stories about rape or violent death would be censorship by snobbery. But a balance must be struck. Serious news about politics, accidents, disasters must be offered simply because that's the natural stuff of news. People must have information if they are to understand public issues. Unfortunately, when a station finds its news ratings slipping its instant response is to put fancy bows on the package, not to improve what's inside it.

There have always been news executives who feel that the way to improve a station's coverage is to bring in a new — preferably handsome and ever-smiling — anchor man. It's an insulting word, "anchor man," demeaning to a news operation. Let the pretty boys "anchor" the game shows.

Gimmicks have no place in newscasts. But now we have gimmick merchants. That is, marketing consultants hired to "beef up," as they say, the local newscasts across the land. Most of them look upon news shows as nightly vaudeville. They encourage merry asides, quips, laughter and 20 second stories with punch lines. One consultant is said to have assured his clients that viewers preferred the news "slanted" rather than straight. Slanted, one imagines, toward law and order, clean living, happy talk and lots of laughs.

"Give light," says a famous newspaper slogan, "and the people will find their way." The converse of that, we may conclude, is "Don't give light and the people will be lost and confused." Slanting the news to please local viewers, sugar-coating the hard truths of our time, is a crime against viewers and against our democracy. To be self-governing a nation must know what is going on — and why.

Putting aside all our other shortcomings, real and alleged, the most serious charge levelled against television news is that we are biased. Spiro Agnew charged us with liberal-left leanings. He also said that the men who controlled and shaped TV news were all Easterners. A head-count, widely publicized, showed that Easterners were a tiny minority. In origin and background, most TV newsmen are unashamedly Middle Western.

As for our being liberals, yes, many of us are. We are caring people, concerned with poverty, oppression and injustice. Such sentiments are part of the great tradition of American journalism. Greeley, Pulitzer, Jacob Riis, Heywood Brown and other giants were liberals. Men are drawn to journalism by their compassion, their wish to contribute to a better world. When the conservative Henry Luce was asked why he had so few Conservative writers on the staff of Time, he replied, "It's the liberals who know how to write."

I have, over the years, encountered cases in which ideology took precedence over journalistic responsibility. I remember an anti-Nixon man who always chose unflattering stills of the President to accompany any story about him. I also remember a news producer, sympathetic to the anti-war movement, who said he saw no news value in the actions of a small band of pro-war demonstrators.

The denunciations of television news during the early Nixon years were vehement. People whose local press had not kept them up to date, or interpreted for them the great social change of our time, considered TV news distorted and unpatriotic. We showed them a nation they were not prepared to accept.

Many of our viewers were deeply disturbed by the TV coverage of the police riots at the Chicago Convention in 1968. They were similarly horrified by scenes of campus protest, by the sight of ruined villages in Vietnam. They preferred to ignore the moral and political problems facing the country. Worse, they continually confused the message with the messenger. If TV insisted on stating unwelcome truths, obviously TV was lying. The view on the screen did not accord with the ideal in the mind.

In one week, during the New York teachers' strike of 1968, I was struck by eggs aimed by the anti-teacher faction and kicked in the shin by a group of outraged teachers.

No reporter who went forth into the streets in the late '60s could escape the wrath of a public grown distrustful of "the media." We were the lightning rod that absorbed the hostilities.

Looking back, it sometimes seems to me that our worst crime was our failure to report the frustrations and anxieties of the so-called Middle Americans. They had grievances, too. But we had an excuse: the story wasn't obvious and glaring, like riots in the street or the burning of draft cards.

Adequate coverage would have involved spending hours in ethnic neighborhoods, listening to the small home-owner tell why he feared the blacks, why his property — all he owns in the world — had been reduced in value, why he felt alien and despised. This would have involved making a sociological survey, filming interviews, drawing conclusions. No very dramatic film would have come out of such an enterprise. But we might have made the "ethnics" feel more valued and closer to the mainstream.

Ultimately we come back to our original query, What is news? By accepted tradition, it is disaster, tragedy, crime and those sentimental vignettes known as "human interest." It is politics and diplomacy, war and the negotiations that end war. It is the women weeping outside the caved-in mine and the plane wreckage strewn over the mountain. It is elections and inaugurations, weddings and divorces, birth and death. Any small town editor would instinctively endorse these definitions. But in our troubled age, news is also the social revolution, our changing life styles and the turbulent economy. These matters are far more difficult to cover than a tenement fire or a royal wedding.

We have virtually ignored the plight of the blue collar workers, the white ethnic minorities. We have failed to probe deeply the facts behind the continuing inflation, the oil crisis, the refusal of Congress to enact campaign reform, to equalize the tax laws and to reform the machinery of Congress itself. These may not be riveting stories, guaranteed to hold audiences spellbound. But we ignore them at our peril.

We should also remember that stories about the way we live, the tensions in our society, are stories with which we can "identify." The agony and puzzlement of social change, the dislocations in American life are matters concerning all of us. In these exciting and difficult times, social change is newsworthy and we in television are a part of the change. We must live with it, move with it and at the same time report it. This is our sacred obligation.

* * *

If instant recognition spells fame, then GABE PRESSMAN is the most famous reporter in the history of New York journalism. His voice and his face have been familiar to metropolitan viewers for the past 19 years. During that time he has been on the air every day and every night, first for WNBC which he joined in 1955 and, more recently for WNEW-TV. He is a graduate of New York University and first distinguished himself as a reporter and feature writer for the now defunct World-Telegram and Sun.

* * *

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

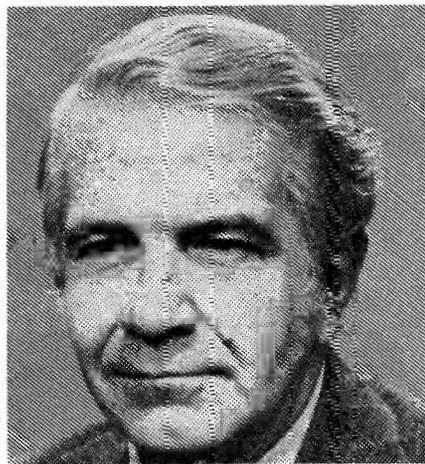
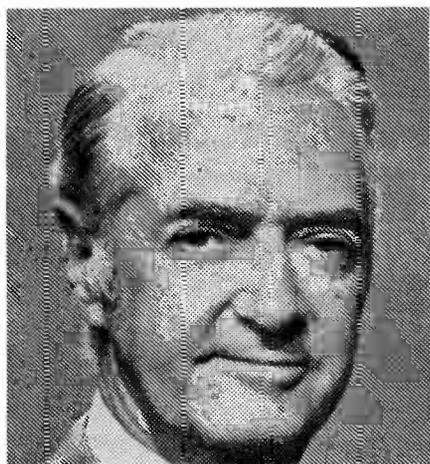
“The possibility of any major source consistently distorting or misusing its function in the face of all these other competing forces for enlightenment is virtually non-existent. This pluralism constitutes the strongest safeguard that a free society can have against abuses of freedom of the press.

“. . . A free people just does not tolerate persistent bias if it has such a wide range of choices. And never in the history of communications has a medium been as wholly susceptible to watch-dogging by the entire population.”

— *William S. Paley*, Chairman, CBS, Inc.
Address at Syracuse University,
Newhouse Communications Center

* * *

**On the ABC Evening News
the facts speak for themselves.
So do the commentators.**



**The ABC Evening News
with Howard K. Smith
and Harry Reasoner**

Weeknights



YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A JOHN-BOY

By Michael Russnow

We were comparing rejection slips one day, my friend, Tony Kayden and I. We marvelled at the almost identical phrases publishers had used to advise us that our novels weren't much good. Our spirits sagged. We now knew that our Pulitzer acceptance speeches wouldn't be needed for a year or two.

But writers we had to be. The dream wouldn't die.

We were 27, graduates of UCLA Theatre Arts and eager to get a toehold on that ladder of success. Television seemed our best prospect. We'd grown up with it; we knew the idiom. Since writing teams were much in style, we decided to collaborate.

To my mind, there was only one show worthy of our maiden endeavor. *The Waltons*. Tony agreed. The series was new then and the ratings were not high. There were those who said John-Boy could not last the season. But the critics liked the show. It had integrity and a kind of innocence the world seemed to have forgotten. Our egos demanded that we begin with a quality show. Then, if we failed, our failure would be understandable. (Can you imagine being turned down by *Adam-12*?)

We devised a story with an Unforgettable Character. He was an elderly gentleman loosely modeled after the late Socialist leader, Norman Thomas. When he is invited to speak at the local school, an Italian immigrant farmer, remembering the very different Socialism of Mussolini, objects.

The controversy is referred to the Charlottesville School Board, and John-Boy gets into the thick of it. He, after all, is a writer. He believes in freedom of expression. He argues that the Socialist must be heard.

We set forth a seven page treatment, and figured we had dynamite. Now, all we had to do was to convince Lorimar Productions, producers of *The Waltons*.

I placed a call to Earl Hamner, creator, story consultant and narrator of the series. He was not in. The second time I called, he was expected. Would I like to leave a message? I hesitated, remembering how many messages I had left at countless production offices, all unanswered. But, what the hell? I took the fateful step and left my name.

The hours ticked by. No word from Earl Hamner. This was what I

expected. Weren't we, after all, in Hollywood? Cold, rude, uncaring Hollywood. I began preparing an indignant speech to be delivered when the voice of Earl Hamner finally came through. Anticipating his "Sorry, it won't do," (as seems always to be the case when you have neither credits nor an agent) I would accuse him and his staff of the rankest hypocrisy. The show, after all, is about a sensitive kid trying to become a writer. And here you are, rich and mighty in your success, slamming the door on two young writers! How can you sleep at night, Mr. Hamner?

That evening, at approximately 8:25, the telephone rang. I answered it, and heard a distinctly southern voice ask for "Mr. Roo-se-now," then apologize for taking so long to get back to me. This was it. I forged ahead, explaining in a rush that I was a new writer who loved the show, and had worked out a script idea with my partner. Could we show it to him?

Astonishingly, the voice expressed great interest. My caller said that he was helped along the way by many people, and would be most happy to help some young writers if he could. But would I be kind enough to wait about three weeks, and then call again? I hung up the telephone, and sat in stunned silence for at least 30 seconds.

Then, I called Tony to tell him the news. He reacted in disbelief, wondering if it were not a practical joke from one of our friends. The next night, when *The Waltons* came on, I carefully compared voice patterns of the narrator with what I recalled from my telephone conversation. I was convinced. My smile was epic. Could it be, I wondered, that there really is a John-Boy?

Over the next three weeks, Tony and I came up with three additional ideas: an episode where John-Boy meets President Roosevelt; one in which Grandma faces the prospect of growing old; and one in which John-Boy befriends a retarded child.

Bold with confidence, I called Hamner, and before long, we were in the man's office signing a release pledging not to sue Lorimar, and remarking to each other that Earl Hamner doesn't look a bit like Richard Thomas. Then, again, we waited.

About that time, I had enrolled in an acting class which was held at the Burbank Studios. I reasoned it would give me something constructive to do while waiting for my big break. There was another intriguing aspect to it. *The Waltons* was filmed at the same facilities.

Twelve days after Tony and I had turned in our stories, I dropped in on the set, and there was Hamner. He seemed pleased to see me, and of course I excitedly asked if he had read our stories. A pained expression crossed his face. "Yes, but it doesn't look too encouraging." I was crushed. What did it mean? Our conversation was interrupted by the buzzer signalling the shooting of the next scene.

I retreated to the back and waited, hoping that at the end of the shot, he would come over to talk with me. He didn't. Anxiety began to gnaw at

my innards. After ten minutes or so, Hamner walked off the set, saying that he planned to meet with us soon to discuss the stories. It wasn't rejection but it wasn't a summons to glory, either.

Eventually, we got together, but not for over a month. In the interim period, the writers went on strike, and Hamner was out there picketing with everyone else.

Then, we read that Lorimar had signed an independent deal with the Guild. I quickly called Hamner only to learn that he had flown to New York. I was convinced he was avoiding us. (But going all the way to *New York?*)

A few weeks later, a meeting was arranged. Tony and I were ushered into Hamner's office where he introduced us to his assistant Carol McKeand. Candidly and gently, they explained why our stories could not be used. The Socialist story was too controversial. The network, it seemed, did not like to take chances with such subjects. The Roosevelt meeting was not believable. Grandma's story was not solid enough. And the retarded boy show was too similar to a program they had done about a deaf girl.

Their interest in us was genuine, though, as they proceeded to instruct us in the methods of writing for *The Waltons*. We might have been attending a seminar: "How to write for *The Waltons* 1-A," at Lorimar College. They told us not to worry about ideas with social relevance, but to stick instead to themes revolving around the relationships of the Walton family, and those who came into their circle.

Wisely, they now discouraged visitors from afar. The device had been over-done in many of the first year's episodes. "It's getting so that some people think we have an airport at Walton's Mountain," said Hamner, "and the Waltons' home has become a holy shrine like Lourdes — a place to be cured of whatever ails you."

We were encouraged to come back with some more ideas.

"But you'll have to dazzle us," he said.

It was back to the drawing boards for Tony and me. But now at least we knew what they were looking for. During the days, Tony worked at his job at NBC, and I attended my acting course. At night, we bounced potential ideas back and forth. Earl and Carol (we were now on a first-name basis) had told us that they were planning a few sequels to bring back characters featured in the episodes of the past season.

One of the plots concerned the marriage of a local blacksmith to a city lady who strove to pattern her life after her favorite movie stars. We decided it would be interesting to take a look at the couple a year later. The woman would be a terrible homemaker, realizing her fantasies through the Sears catalogue, and consequently using up her husband's hard-earned savings.

Another idea dealt with a local girl's desire to break out of the mold her parents had cast for her, and head for the city to pursue a career in fashion

design.

Still another, gave John-Boy a friend. We could not recall any previous episode in which he had one, and we felt sure they would appreciate our giving him one.

We were ready to dazzle them. I called Carol, and she advised me to bring the stories in immediately. Earl was leaving town again to serve as grand marshal in a parade back in his native Virginia.

A week later, Carol told me that we had apparently hit with our first story. Earl was going to recommend it to the producer, Bob Jacks, as soon as he got back. We should hear from them next week. I was on Cloud Nine, as the cliché has it.

Well, no one called us the next week, nor the week after. Depression set in again. It was getting harder to eat lunch at the commissary, knowing that I might occasionally run into Earl or Carol.

Now the Emmy awards were fast approaching, and Tony and I assumed that, with 12 nominations, the Lorimar people would be preoccupied with their own anxieties. We decided not to bother them until after the telecast. We wanted them to win, but our neuroses forced us to consider that with too much success, the show might be reluctant to take on two new writers.

On Emmy night, *The Waltons* took just about every major award in its category. In the following week, our stomachs further tightened, as we continued to hear nothing from anyone at Lorimar.

Finally, Tony telephoned Earl who gently told him that they had bought all of their shows for the coming year, but might still be able to work something out under a development deal with CBS.

That afternoon, Carol called. This was it. She'd tell me that they didn't want to keep us waiting any longer. She said, "Sit tight. Earl and I have been in with Bob Jacks, and he promised to read the stories as soon as possible."

The next day, she called to say that Bob loved one story, and called CBS to make the arrangements. We were called in for our first story conference the next week, and seriously accepted as writers by Bob Jacks. We were also introduced to some of the peculiarities of the television business. After all the hard work to come up with wholesome, old-fashioned stories that would entice Lorimar to take us on, we were informed that they wanted us to try a stronger angle on the blacksmith script. Instead of the plot we had devised, the woman would learn that she could not bear children, and come to grips with the fact that she would have to tell her husband.

It was suggested that we bring in a child — an orphan from the Jefferson County Home — who is staying with the Waltons. Somehow, we would have to devise a way to get the child and the couple together.

Our work was done in four phases. First, a 12-page treatment; next, a full outline, dividing the show into four acts, with scene breakdowns; next,

the first draft teleplay; and finally, the second draft polish.

After each phase, a meeting was held to debate whatever revisions were deemed necessary. It was decidedly democratic, sometimes a verbal free-for-all between Carol and myself. Then Tony and I would adjourn to grapple with the problems while advancing to the next stage of the script.

At one meeting, Earl asked us to soften a line in which Ann Norton dismisses the notion of adopting by saying, "I don't want anybody else's cast-off. I want my own." He felt that there were probably a lot of orphans watching the show who might be hurt by such a remark.

We had also wanted to make our orphan, Stevie, a child of the depression. His parents had not died, but had been forced to give him up for lack of funds to support him. The Lorimar people felt we were getting into areas which were too heavy for the show, and it was decided that Stevie's parents would be presumed dead.

After writing a "second-draft polish," our work was done. We were informed that more changes might be required by the network brass, but the Lorimar staff would be responsible for any further re-writes.

Now, it was on to other matters. Armed with our script, and newly acquired Writer's Guild card, we found a top literary agent to represent us. Now we have written another script for *The Waltons* and one for *The Streets of San Francisco*.

Yes, we're professionals at last. But were it not for Earl Hamner and the Lorimar staff, we might still be collecting rejections. There aren't too many people who will take a chance on new talent. That's the biggest problem — getting through the front door. But Earl Hamner opened his to us. It took time. Indeed, from our point of view, it was hard to consider that Earl had anything else on his mind but us. Now that we know him, and realize the tremendous pressure of his workload, I suppose it's remarkable that he was able to keep us on his mind at all. We're glad, Tony Kayden and I, that we decided to start at the top.

* * *

MICHAEL RUSSNOW received his B.A. degree in political science in 1966 from City College, New York. He also holds an M.A. in theatre arts from UCLA. Currently a free lance in Los Angeles, his writing credits include The Waltons and The Streets of San Francisco.

The dramatic episode, The Fulfillment, described in the foregoing article, will be repeated on The Waltons, July 25 over CBS.

* * *

WARNER BROS. TELEVISION



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TO MAKE VIEWERS READERS

By Leonore Silvian

About the mass audience that watches television, there's one unequivocal statement to be made. Most of them haven't read any good books lately. And most of them never will.

Were you to list our national virtues — love of country, love of children, and all the rest — love of books wouldn't rate a mention. Even among the leisured and the affluent, the reading of books is not a prime pastime. Nobody except the literati registered any great shock when the *New York Times* reported, a few years ago, that one of the Astronauts had no books in his expensive Houston home. What normal, red-blooded American needed a houseful of books?

A Gallup Poll disclosed in 1969 the shaming fact that 58 per cent of the population has never read a book. Never. And one book seller has estimated that regular book buyers come from six per cent of the population.

But readers and non-readers watch television. Their taste and their thinking are influenced by what they see. And what they see, with increasing frequency, is authors talking about their new books. Not surprisingly, television has become the foremost medium for book promotion. A book can languish in the book store for months, its cover lifted only occasionally by browsers. Then a single television appearance by the author can clear out the book seller's stock in a single day. Is it any wonder that the first question asked by the 39,951 authors published last year was, "Am I going to be on television?"

No doubt the question was answered, "Yes, if —." Yes, if the talent coordinator of such shows as *Today*, *Tonight* and *Tomorrow* finds your book interesting and you telegenic. And telegenic in this sense does not mean beautiful, sexy or witty. It means having an interesting story to tell, being able to "project," to hold an audience.

Authors who do well on talk shows often become regular visitors to the show. Dr. Irwin Stillman, who wrote a book on the glories of drinking water, turns up almost too often on the Johnny Carson show. So does Dr. David Reuben, the sex expert.

Some cynics would have you believe that the best way to break into television is to earn an M.D. degree, then write a book about sex or diet. Or maybe sex *and* diet, thereby doubling your appeal.

Curiously, book promotion on TV did not begin with appearances by authors. Steve Allen, on his old NBC show, made a point of mentioning new books he had liked. "This is a great book," he would say, carefully holding it up. And next day there would be a modest flurry in the book stores as late evening watchers came in to demand "that new book Steve Allen talked about."

Television historians attributed the first calculated and successful book promotions to Bernard Geis. More merchandiser than publisher, Geis had a pitchman's instinct for what would sell on the air. While at Prentice-Hall, Geis had bought Art Linkletter's first book, "Kids Say the Darndest Things." Linkletter mentioned the book several times on the air and sales zoomed upward. In two years, 40,000 hard cover editions were sold, and two million paperbacks.

It was not precisely a coincidence that when Bernard Geis set up his own publishing house, his backers — and first authors — were all from television. Among them: Groucho Marx, Ralph Edwards, and producers Mark Goodson, William Todman and John Guedel.

Bernard Geis also published Jacqueline Susann's first novel, "Valley of the Dolls." In a short time Miss Susann and her husband, Irving Mansfield, raised book promotion to a saturation art. No show was too small for their attention. They toured the country, running from an all-night radio disc jockey to an early morning interview by a TV newsman. Miss Susann became a "personality," immediately recognizable, amusing and provocative. Even after "Valley of the Dolls" was the top best-seller in the land with a one and a half million dollar movie sale, the tireless author continued to play the TV circuit. To date, "Dolls" has sold a record breaking 14,800,000 copies.

At first, publishers and authors tended to look upon Miss Susann as a "show biz" person, not particularly graceful in her metaphor, and not at all intellectual. But the sales of all three of her novels have risen in response to her hard-sell promotion on the home screen. Today most publishers recognize the value of television as a sales weapon, even paying the travel expenses of the author.

Only a few short-sighted publishers question TV's sales value. One of these not long ago refused to approve round trip bus fare for a Washington author to travel to Philadelphia to appear on the top-rated local program. He is not a notably savvy publisher.

When Erich Segal's sentimental novel, "Love Story," appeared, the author was not far behind — on every television show that would accommodate him. Being a Yale professor, he talked well. For a little while, he was as famous as Ali MacGraw.

"Love Story" was published by Harper & Row and Erich Segal's television promotion was handled by Lisl Cade. It was owing to the huge success of "Love Story" that the TV tour became a standard promotion

strategy at that staid old house.

Television may also be credited with the stunning success of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull." Sales of this small inspirational volume were increased 24 times over when, 18 months after publication, author Richard Bach was heavily booked on TV by Macmillan's brilliant promotion director, Connie Clausen.

When Bach made his debut, over WEWS-TV in Cleveland, his impact was not brilliant. Miss Clausen sensed exactly what was wrong and began a series of office rehearsals in which she alternately played Johnny Carson, Dick Cavett, Mike Douglas and other interviewers. Having been an actress, a model and a successful author, Miss Clausen had astute advice to offer. She asked leading questions and when the answer failed to please, she would say, "You are boring me."

Deflated, the author would try another tack, another anecdote, until, finally, he achieved a sharp, well-paced routine to perform on television. "You must learn to edit yourself," Miss Clausen advised Bach and any other author who would listen. Don't take so long getting to the point."

When his new routine was well in hand, Bach appeared on a daytime interview show in Pittsburgh. Within 24 hours, local bookstores sold 1000 copies of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull."

Thanks to artful use of television, "Seagull" went from a sale of 75,000 copies in 1970 to more than two and a half million in 1973. A paperback sale and a profitable movie deal have made Richard Bach a millionaire.

Unless a book shows promise in its first two months, most publishers are reluctant to invest in further promotion. Macmillan did so in the case of "Seagull." Bobbs-Merrill, my home office, and a few other houses maintain a back list and continue to promote a book long after the first blush.

Other factors in Richard Bach's success were Miss Clausen's careful priming, advertising in other media and the cooperation — again credit Connie Clausen — of television interviewers.

A conscientious publicist once told her boss that a certain Mr. X., whatever his literary skill, was a less than enchanting personality on the air. It would be best, she advised, not to stick a certain TV show with such a guaranteed dud. "Are you working for us or for the - - - show?", countered the boss.

What publishers, agog over TV's sales potential, tend to forget is that the PR department must maintain good working relations with the talent coordinators and producers of all TV talk shows. This can be done only through total candor. If a man comes off a fool or a dullard on the air, let the producers be so advised. If they know the publicist as an honest person they'll respect him (or her) when a call comes, saying, "I've a marvelously witty man for you"

In general, book publicists rate high with television's booking agents. Jane Murphy, program coordinator for the *Today* show, says, "Book agents

rarely try to 'con' me. They realize that if they did so they would lose their believability."

Miss Murphy also has some definite views on the charms of authors. "They're dreadful when they press to be funny," she says, "or when they are too eager to push sales. There is nobody less attractive than the author who prefaces all his remarks with, 'As I say in my book . . .'"

Authors are interesting guests, Miss Murphy continues, because they know their subject thoroughly and they can discourse with great authority. She warmly endorses Connie Clausen's view that a priming session before the show is a great boon. Specific questions are not offered in advance by the program but an author should be aware — and usually is — of which sections of his book best lend themselves to TV discussion.

Actors who write books are — naturally — much sought after as TV guests. They usually talk well and they strive to give a good performance. David Niven, whose autobiography, "The Moon's a Balloon" became a best-seller, prepared for his TV promotion tour as conscientiously as he would prepare for a movie role. In preparing his stock of anecdotes, he made sure that competing programs did not receive the same material. Though interviewers clamored for the retelling of certain highlights of the book, Niven tried hard to vary the routines.

Niven may have established a record with his TV book tour: 37 interviews in five days (radio and TV) in New York and Philadelphia alone.

As in the theatre, it is the first class people who suffer from stage fright. Authors who display a certain smugness about their ability to talk usually give a poor performance.

A book promoter also learns to be wary of the prima donnas who insist on choosing — as if all the world were clamoring for them — which interviewers they will honor with their presence. One author, who arrived late for a taping, stalked out when he learned that the program's regular host was off that week and that a guest star was filling in. Word of such behavior quickly gets around, to the detriment of the author and his book.

William Baker, producer of the *Morning Exchange* show in Cleveland, recently listed (in *Publishers' Weekly*), the qualities a program host hates to encounter in visiting authors.

"Plugging too hard" can be offensive, writes Baker. "Our show does well at selling books," he adds, "but we like to do the selling."

Mr. Baker also loses patience with the author who writes a glib, fascinating story and then forgets it — or is bored by it — by the time he goes on the air. "It seems ludicrous," he adds, "but we have had authors whose subjects we knew more about than the author was able to remember."

Sometimes an author's lapse of memory is purposeful. This happens usually when a controversial book by a scientist, a doctor or lawyer is attacked in the press by experts who refute its facts or question the

author's ethics. Then the author begins denying his own writing ("I really didn't mean that . . .") and the interview disintegrates. Book sales are hardly stimulated by this sort of interview.

The producers of talk shows are always grateful when the author or publisher provides "visuals." Nonfiction of a personal sort best lends itself to picturization. A world traveller, an animal expert, an artist, photographer or collector is always a welcome guest.

Michael Jacot, author of "The Last Butterfly" is currently on tour with a Nazi propaganda film shot in a concentration camp. The novel concerns a species of "Potemkin village" — a bogus camp — erected by the Nazis to beguile an International Red Cross inspection team into believing that prisoners were being treated with exemplary respect and decency. Jacot somehow obtained footage from this film and it runs on the screen as he describes the action in his book.

All this makes for splendid television, of course, but few authors bring to the home screen anything more compelling than their own personality and anecdotes. In some instances, this is sufficient. But some authors, being shy or inarticulate, need all the visual help a publicist can arrange.

While the hosts of talk shows may have a variety of complaints about authors, there is one standard complaint by authors of their hosts. It is the unending, "He (or she) never read my book!"

With five shows a week (in some cases) and a busy off-camera schedule, television hosts cannot be expected to read all the books brought to their attention. They should try, however, since audiences have a sure nose for fakery.

Some hosts have reliable assistants who read the book, write a brief summary and then devise questions that will lead the author into lengthy answers. Hosts who do not read and have no proper briefings usually look foolish and are a great annoyance to the author.

George Eells, author of "Hedda and Louella" says, "There's nothing more discouraging than the glaze that suddenly comes over a host's eyes when he doesn't know what you've written or why you happen to be sitting there with him."

Both authors and book publicists have other complaints, though it may seem churlish to mention them in view of television's role in spurring sales. We hate to be cancelled at the last minute. And we do not appreciate being brought on five minutes before the show ends and cut off in mid-sentence.

A lesser grievance but one worth mentioning is the bad manners backstage. An author who arrives at the studio on time and is totally ignored until a production assistant pushes him into a chair facing the camera rarely begins an interview with a feeling of pride or relaxation. A pleasant reception, a handshake from the star, a cup of coffee and a comfortable chair can do wonders for a nervous author's ego.

There is no formula for building an unknown author into a national celebrity. But it can happen. And when it does happen we who beat the drums for books feel enormously grateful to television.

* * *

A veteran publicist who has worked for CBS, ABC and Look Magazine, LEONORE SILVIAN is now publicity director for Bobbs-Merrill Publishing Co. She is a native of Duluth and is a graduate of Northwestern University, where she also earned a Master's Degree in Journalism.

* * *

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"It was an American TV reporter, Mr. Morley Safer of the Columbia Broadcasting System, who put his finger nearest the true pulse of British tolerance in *The Public's Right to Know* (Thames), Kenneth Griffith's sprightly canter along the corridors of censorship.

"'Could you think,' Mr. Safer asked, 'of anything on television, short of somebody deliberately stepping on a poodle, that could incite this country?'"

London Sunday Times

* * *

"Documentaries dealing with social problems usually seem painfully obvious to literate middlebrows, and those who make them must be tempted to win approval by introducing oddities and amplifying every vestige of humor available."

— *Bernard Hollowood,*
Television Critic, PUNCH

* * *



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WHAT NEEDS BE DONE

The Memoranda of Fred Freed

Assembled by David G. Yellin

EDITOR'S NOTE: When Fred Freed died this Spring, television lost its most gifted and dedicated documentarian. Many of his private papers now repose with his friend and biographer, Prof. Yellin of Memphis State University. Herewith, arranged by Prof. Yellin, are some random but ever pertinent thoughts from Mr. Freed's long and distinguished career at NBC.

In writing "Special," Fred Freed's career biography, I deliberately did not include many thoughts he had about his role in the future of the television documentary.

Now Fred is gone. I must add a final chapter that tells his vision of what, to Fred, was inseparable: his life and the television documentary.

What follows are Fred's own words. Sometimes they are rearranged, condensed, or amplified to clarify interpretation. They are a composite of his hopes for the future, as he told them to me in our many on- and off-tape sessions, as he wrote about them in several memos to NBC News executives and for publication (including TVQ), as he spoke about them in speeches at colleges and award dinners, and as he commented on them in his "Think Book," his collection of periodic memos to himself.

MEMO

It's a new ball game.

People are angry, and our reporting, especially our investigative reporting, supplies them with scapegoats. But it's deeper than that. Deep-down they're bewildered because the system's not working. The old institutions that did the job, don't anymore. Documentaries need to get into that. Documentaries need to help us live in this time when anger and blame are not enough. We have to give the people "survival information."

Some people would as soon we did nothing at all. They feel we've talked too much now about what's happening.

I think they're wrong.

I think it can be argued we've talked in the wrong way sometimes. But I think we have to do more, not less.

I don't think that is entirely a self-serving thing to say.

People get the news from us. We shape the way they look at the world, sometimes not the way we mean to, but we shape it. I believe people should know *more*, not less. I believe people are entitled to know more. I believe they are better able to decide how they want to live, if they know more.

At a time when everything is happening, we're being not more, but less, interesting. I think most of our documentaries are boring, not because they are bad, but because they are predictable.

It is time now to consider fresh approaches before the future catches up with us and passes us by.

I think our major failure is this: People don't have any respect for us. They don't believe us. I don't mean just conservatives and blacks and kids. I mean everybody.

They don't pay any attention to us. They don't take us seriously. They don't talk about and think about what we show them.

I think our second major failure is with opinion makers. They see us as tools to use. They don't listen to us. They listen to the *New York Times*. They try to use us to get "the people" to listen to them. They have contempt for us.

We have to find ways to make the people and the opinion makers pay attention, to take us seriously, to think about what we show them. We must not let them continue to be bored, tired, discouraged. Not when it looks like the future may see the breakdown of the machinery of our society, when the future may be the coming dark age.

We are concerned here with nothing less than saving the human species. No race or class or creed or sex. But saving all of human kind.

Overall, I simply don't feel we spend enough time thinking about programming. We don't have enough time. The executives who have to make the decisions on what documentaries we do are so tied up with administering their huge and complex News operations that they can't do much more than deal with crises as they occur.

I think we need a planning apparatus. Too often we conceive programs at the last minute under great pressure. Too often we have to find a program to fill a time slot. It ought to be the other way around. We ought to have programs we feel *have* to get on the air. We should be pushing all the time to get them on. When a time period opens up we should have to choose among "must" programs. We ought not to have to rush in to fill that hour at the last minute.

The key question is how do we arrive at what we want to put on the air. How is it conceived? Is it what we ought to be doing? Who is going to do it? Why? How?

No one can *know* the answers. But I think we can do things we're doing now to help with those decisions.

We have a limited amount of air time. We do not have an unlimited number of subjects. We don't have the same role we once had. Our function is not to cover everything but to be "special." The point, it seems to me, is to use that, to turn that to our advantage.

We have to make each hour count. Each has to have special impact and importance. It has to be something different. It has to justify the word *Special*.

The quantity is not as important as the quality . . . the look, the feel, the intent. Character. Our documentaries have to have character. Nobody is talented enough to win every time on the air.

But character wins points in an honorable way. It makes you count. It gives you an identity that people can remember, respect, recognize. You don't have to start over with every program, people will know they can count on us because we have character. A network that has the best news operation has always had the most prestige, esteem, class — you pick the word. A network can get along when its entertainment programs fail. But not when its news programs do.

First, we need to develop a better process for keeping our people alert to what is going to happen in the world by getting them together with people whose ideas may be useful in planning our documentaries. The great brains of the world in regularly scheduled conversations — small, informal, and not institutionalized — with key documentary people.

Each of us knows some things. It would be better if all of us knew more things. We tend to rush into programs, to become instant experts. We need to be better educated. We need to know what the influential thinkers are thinking, if only to be able to discard their ideas with confidence.

Second: I think documentary programming ought to be planned in a much more sophisticated way than it now is. It ought to be supervised full time by someone. It ought to be a continuing process. I think we ought to devote more effort to making our own stories, to being ahead of the news. I am pretty tired of seeing *Newsweek* doing the stories I wish I'd done. This requires planning ahead. It requires thinking about, not next week or next month, but six months from now, a year from now.

In planning our programs we ought to use every tool available — experts, surveys, reports, scholarly works, public opinion polls, etc.

MEMO

You can't do 38 great shows a year, or even 38 that get attention. You surely can't expect to win 38 times in a row. But you can do a series that gets attention as a series, and some that make news, and a few shows that get attention for themselves — special Specials.

But one program at a time, unrelated to others, with no sense of an overall idea, is no good. No special is special unless we do something to make it so.

There are great issues facing mankind today:

1. We are in a time of plenty being replaced by scarcity. Running out of fuels. Running out of raw materials. Famine throughout the world, overpopulation, millions are going to die of starvation. What are we (U.S.) going to do about it? Environmental breakdown. Pollution is still a matter of choice? Or is it?

2. The new male-female relationship is shaking up the whole social system. Roles are no longer clear. How to define a man? A woman? What kind of society are we going to have?

3. The failure of the old institutions — school, church, government, family, etc. What will take their places?

4. Justice?

5. What's happening to America? America the have not.

6. 1984 minus 10 . . . How close are we?

* * *

We should do only six, possibly only four of these hard specials a season. That'll all we can get real attention for. These can be done as one three-hour and three to five one-hour shows in prime time. They might be sponsorable. Might not. We would give these a big build up and put only these few under some umbrella title. Might bring back the old "White Papers."

These would be special specials. People would turn them on because they know they would be something out of the ordinary. These can't be anything you might see somewhere else. The style, approach, has to be different. The content has to be different, the way it is best for the subject, taking its own angle of vision, would have a cohesion of style. The same character.

In addition to these four to six "White Papers," we should use the rest of our 38 time periods this way:

1 News making. Shows about the nation's future, about survival information.

2. A series that we can get mileage out of *as a series*, possibly a new magazine-type show.

3. Investigation. Repertorial as opposed to think pieces.

4. News follow-ups. Specials on a semi-instant basis that come out of Nightly News stories.

5. Experiment. We can blow it honorably and not care.

* * *

Third: We should have many programs in various stages of research. We ought to make an effort to create more flexibility so that a program can more easily be dropped if it doesn't turn out to be what we hoped it would. Too often producers respond to the pressure of "getting it on in time" and sometimes at the expense of "getting it right." If we had more programs in

the works and greater flexibility in scheduling, we might better handle our great, great enemy: time.

Fourth: There should be some exchange between the areas of hard news and specials. Each has things to tell the other about how to do programs. Relations are now about like Moscow's with Peking. Also, there ought to be exchanges between producers and executives on a much longer range, much closer basis.

Fifth: We ought to do some talent hunting. We ought to find ways to try out new young people. We ought to find ways to attract young people. I don't mean experimental film makers. I mean people who are going to become part of the News operation. Some kids who will show us how News can use all those new tools we have. How we can use them in a new way to do what needs to be done.

Sixth: We ought to work out a system of post program evaluation. We ought to talk about what was good and what was not, what worked and what didn't. Not in general terms, not as we pass each other in the hallway or when we run into each other at a cocktail party. Not just as a reaction to what John O'Connor or *Variety* said about it.

The program we did was important. It must have been, the network put it on the air. Spent \$200,000.00 for it, maybe even lost another \$200,000 for the time.

A lot of dedicated people spent many months working on it. The critics don't know very much about whether it was good or bad. We do. NBC News is interested in more than simply filling an hour and not getting into trouble. An evaluation is one way of indicating this. In a practical way it could be used to improve future programs. It seems to me important to keep setting standards and to keep insisting on standards.

Finally: I think the News department needs someone who will be responsible for these things. For this kind of planning and evaluating. For looking for better ways to do things. Not an administrator. An executive producer for specials.

That's the job I want.

David G. Yellin has been in broadcasting and the theatre for more than 25 years, working as director, writer, producer and lecturer. His articles have appeared in Harper's, Show and The Saturday Evening Post. He is currently Director of Broadcasting and Film at Memphis State University. His book, "SPECIAL: Fred Freed and the Television Documentary" was published by Macmillan Co. in 1972. The preceding article is excerpted from a new closing chapter Mr. Yellin is preparing for the Revised Edition of his book.

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FACTS AND FABLES ABOUT CABLE TV

By Anne Rawley Saldich, Ph.D.

City-owned cable systems (COCS) are unthinkable, unworkable and un-American. A baker's dozen have already infiltrated our 3000 commercial systems, rankling the hearts of businessmen who view this sinister force as a danger to "their" markets and profits. Government should govern, they say. Business knows what the public wants!

Clay Brown, Assistant City Manager of Palo Alto, California, is not convinced. His basic assumption about cable is that it will profoundly affect people's lives. He asks, therefore, who ought to be in the driver's seat? Should it be the people who are involved, or should it be a general manager and board of directors in New York? Palo Alto's elected councilmen have decided it should be the people.

Commercial television once promised to bring about a renaissance in culture and serve the public interest. Some observers feel that this promise has gone a-begging to the public sector where PBS has nurtured it, with great spirit if no overwhelming success.

Broadcasting's history of lost dreams and unfulfilled expectations is worth considering when thinking about alternative services.

Once upon a time there emerged a marvelous invention called community antenna television (CATV) whose potential power can easily be measured by those who opposed its development: all other media.

Despite unconscionable sums spent on campaigns to destroy it, the newcomer rooted itself on mountain tops and spread throughout the country like crab grass in high season, while newspaper, magazine, film, television, telephone and radio executives marveled at its tenacity and growth. Eventually they accepted the inevitable and soon a lot of their very own "smart money" was invested in CATV on the trite but true theory that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Hardware for the new technology developed rapidly while its promoters promised that the humdrums of life could be all but eliminated with broadband communications.

Cable, they said, would revivify democracy in America, introduce us to our neighbors, allow eggheads to have decent entertainment in their own homes. We were told that ordinary banking procedures, most mail, retrieval of library materials and data from computers, credit verification,

shopping of all sorts, security measures, Pay-TV and a myriad of wonders would be available via cable. That most of these services were a decade or so downstream was not emphasized. Rather, a completely blue sky was cablecast.

Systems multiplied like rabbits and CATV became a glamour industry; "sexy," to use the current jargon. Multi-systems operators (MSO's) were thought to own money machines. Then, as if there had been no writing on the wall, the bottom dropped out. Energy got short, credit got tight, telephone poles got expensive; the FCC got started regulating with a vengeance; the "smart money" withdrew and long-term investors such as insurance companies got in; freewheeling pirates faced copyright problems (which the Supreme Court eventually solved), local origination got to be a requirement; cable's East Coast behemoth got caught in a financial crunch and the trade journals got prophets of doom to write about impending disaster.

Indeed, things looked bleak at the end of last year. Then the Office of Telecommunications Policy published its laissez-faire document which looks backwards into the future. Using 18th century economic theory, it issued a proclamation that government should get out of cable so that the "free" marketplace could regulate itself. Cheers from the industry and astonishment from Adam Smith who had not expected to be resurrected in 1974.

Meanwhile, no one in cable was doing much about content. Certainly the systems operators did not want to get into the sticky business of programming with its attendant headaches: libel, indecency, violence, right of reply, access and, most especially, the costly financial infusions that programming requires. What they want is profit, the sooner the better.

It is a charming fairy tale. Whole sub-industries sprang up as suppliers, like so many courtesans, but when you come right down to it, the Emperor wears no clothes. How exciting to have a new medium! But the medium is not the message, though it may be the massage. Input must come from somewhere and there, of course, is the problem. End of Fable.

If cable is to offer more than a repetition of commercial television's banal programming, steps should be taken now to experiment with content. Since MSOs are reluctant to do more than rely on the re-transmission of broadcast signals, there is an obvious vacuum, which could be filled by others whose primary concern is social rather than financial.

Public interest organizations are tuned into this problem. They are monitoring cable's development, gradually arming themselves with technical, legal and production know-how. No one knows exactly how many grass roots groups have sprung up on the periphery of cable but they are in the hundreds. They are beginning to make themselves known by demanding a piece of the action. Not simply interested in recognition or access, they want a say in policy making and in financial control.

Aside from the media activists there seem to be few true believers in locally originated programming.

Commerce does not want it, and existing city-owned systems have shown no greater concern than their business counterparts. The result is that service in each system remains disappointing, while subscriber rates stay artificially high. Palo Alto, however, intends to explore the full potential of local origination when its city-owned system is installed.

Some people are deeply disturbed by the mix of government and media. These commercial advocates believe that television now reaches the public without cost, and that it gives the people what they want. The first statement is highly dubious, since American broadcasting is financed by its viewers. We pay a hidden surcharge on each product we purchase if that product is advertised on TV. This is inevitable. The advertiser must pay for the air time, the talent, the production costs.

Viewers in America might be surprised to learn that they pay more in covert costs than Europeans pay in TV taxes. (Each set in use is taxed). You will also meet American viewers who feel that their annual donations to Public Television buy them better entertainment than they see most nights on the networks. It's all a matter of taste. There's a public that loves Archie Bunker and there's a public that prefers "Upstairs, Downstairs."

Cable, by its very nature, will short-circuit this problem. There will be a staggering number of channels. The Conservatives say 60 to 80, the blue sky promoters say the number will be "infinite." Anyway, we are promised something for everybody, for square swingers, egg-heads, toddlers and the freaked-out.

Asked whether Palo Alto's motivation for demanding a city-owned system is simply revenue, Clay Brown replied that he sees this as a minor consideration. But the Council no doubt anticipated a healthy revenue when it voted for CATV in 1971. While Brown does not recommend city-owned cable to every community, he believes that Palo Alto has certain special qualities that virtually insure success.

As always, tradition is the keystone. Palo Altans have always had a close relationship to their government. Civic projects are financed with local money and not "matching grants" or loans. This is not unique but it is unusual.

For instance, a new child care program takes \$200,000 from the budget, as does a drug abuse project. Brown believes that cable TV will be regarded in a similar light, an essential service to the community.

Why is enthusiasm for community TV so high? It's not the prospect of a sharper picture. Reception is good in this area. What stirs interest is the prospect of using the community's extensive cultural and recreational facilities to impart grace and style to these local entertainments.

The demographics are favorable, too. They reflect the presence of Stanford University, its renowned hospital and a community of scholars,

artists and humanists. The space and electronics industries have drawn skilled technicians to the area. In short, there's an educated public that should be automatically concerned with cable television. It could be very much theirs.

Among the 56,000 citizens of Palo Alto, 3000 are living at the poverty level. Average family income is around \$17,000. "Cabling up" — wretched expression! — the poor families would present no serious problem since they are dispersed rather than concentrated in social pockets which could be bypassed.

With all its advantages, Palo Alto needs intra-mural communication. There is but one newspaper, the Palo Alto *Times*. There is no local radio or TV station. *The Times* is regional in tone, not focussed on the community. There's a wide information gap that cable TV should immediately fill.

There are signs, of course, that *The Times* already regards the embryonic cable system as a threat. The paper recently refused to publish the notice of a public meeting called to discuss CATV. A city councilman, Alan Henderson, bought space in *The Times* with his personal funds to advertise the meeting.

In technical matters, Palo Alto is most adept. Public utilities have been city-owned and operated for 75 years. They run nicely in the black. This is seen as a good omen for the cable system.

Naturally, there are those in the community who feel that the city should not involve itself in cable TV. Brown believes that cities are far better risks than corporations, which may be less than solid. The city government is solid, familiar and rooted.

What about city-owned cable being turned into a propaganda mill for special interests? A valid worry, Brown concedes, but not serious. Palo Alto will own its system but will not operate it. Censorship and propaganda will be outside its province. A non-profit organization will probably be in charge.

It is not amiss to remind ourselves here that no branch of the media is totally unmindful of the government.

The Nixon Administration spends \$150 millions annually to produce audio-visual materials. Fifteen governmental agencies are involved and \$50 million is allocated for TV clips. In most of these endeavors it is difficult to distinguish valid information from sheer propaganda.

In our society, a melange of government and media is perhaps inevitable. The chief consideration is that government should not control the media or limit access to it.

No doubt there will be special government regulations for cable TV. Broadband communication offers greater power. Are we to believe that the power will not be abused if it is in the hands of entrepreneurs instead of the government? Not likely.

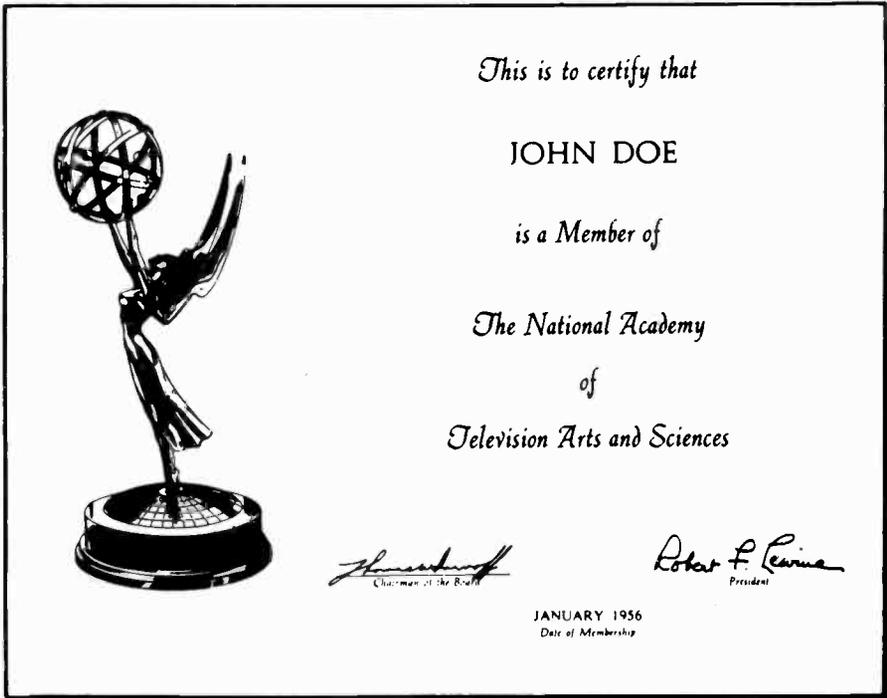
The problems of CATV are almost too thorny to be set down in orderly fashion. Palo Alto is about to embark on a great adventure. The experience will be instructive to audiences as well as to the men and women in charge. There is no guarantee of success. There is only hope and a great deal of faith.

* * *

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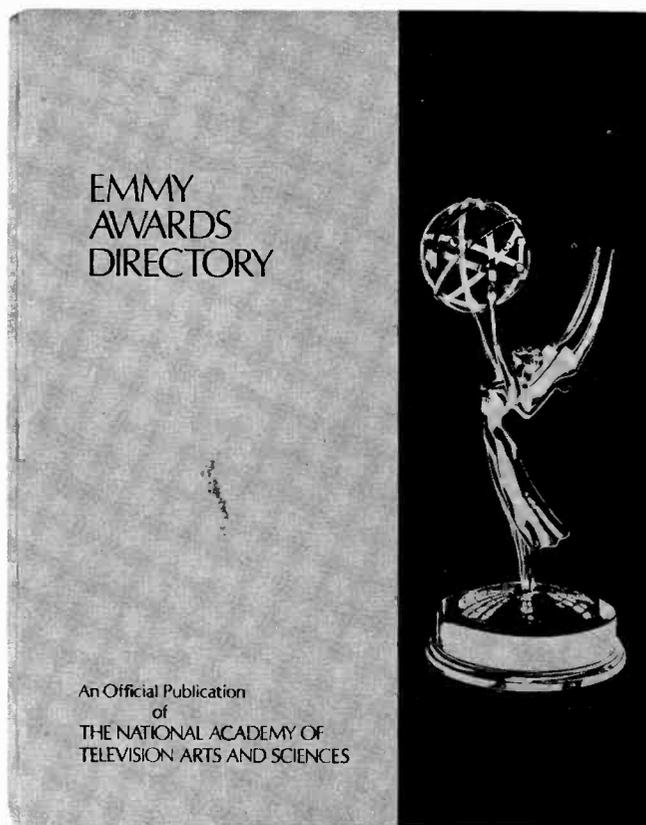
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IT'S EVERYBODY'S FREEDOM

By Julian Goodman

Getting people to come on the air was a problem 25 years ago. But television has proven to be very important to those who want to be seen on it — as well as to those who want to see it. No medium has ever been so attractive to those who want to reach and persuade the public. And politicians are no exception.

The medium has become the public's primary and most relied-on source of news and information. But that has proved to be a mixed blessing.

The coast-to-coast access to the population that television provides came at a crucial point in American history. Right at the start of more than a decade of radical social change — a crisis in race relations, the assassination of three national leaders, a debilitating war, dramatically changing values and lifestyles, and the events that fall under the semantic umbrella of Watergate.

All of this has created turbulence, confusion and even fear. And all of this was revealed to the public by the news media — most vividly by television. The events would have occurred without the media. But the media — and particularly television — have offered the perfect scapegoat, the bearer of bad news. We've seen some of the nation's leaders try to turn public confusion and uneasiness against television and the press. We were vulnerable, and we were injured in the public eye by the attacks of public officials.

Just at a time when too many Americans were willing to believe the media alone were responsible for the troubles in our society, we learned about Watergate.

Today, two years later, the public opinion polls report that popular confidence in the media is at a record high. The American people seem to appreciate and respect what the media have been doing in exposing an enormous scandal. The press has come forward free and vigorous. But there is no reason to believe that attacks and pressures on the news media will let up. And once pressures are applied they become hard to check.

It seems to me that this is the time — right now — to set the legislative and regulatory course for a free press — printed and broadcast — that will guide this young nation over its next two hundred years in the same way

the founding fathers guided us through the first two hundred. This is the right time because we are now more acutely aware than ever before that only the tenacity of the free press has protected the interests of the people against the abuse of political power by those to whom the people gave it.

Just a few weeks ago, White House speechwriter Patrick Buchanan made a speech of his own, which he advocated that advertisers use what he termed "economic leverage" against broadcasters whose coverage of the news they do not like — or, perhaps more accurately, that he doesn't like. He also suggested that viewers encourage such an effort with their own boycotts. Mr. Buchanan also, on more than one occasion, has advocated the use of the anti-trust laws against those broadcast companies which do not tell the news as he thinks it should be told. He is always careful to say this is his personal opinion — as though that could insulate it from the fact that his salary is paid by the taxpayers, and that his office is in the White House.

My response to Buchanan's latest speech — when a reporter asked for it — was that Buchanan's moral philosophy, and apparently that of too many people around him, was that the machinery of government should be used to punish your enemies. To me, one of the more discouraging aspects of this discouraging year is that Buchanan and people like him have learned nothing from Watergate and its related activities — nothing at all.

That's why I think this is the right time to make sure that our laws are reinforced by the courts and the legislatures to make sure that freedom of the press means just what it says, and cannot be changed or modified to suit the self-interests of changing Administrations.

Hostility, secrecy, manipulation of public opinion, and harassment of the media may seem to have reached a high water mark with the current Administration. But they have been a fact of increasingly centralized government power for years. They have been present in one degree or another through many national administrations, and at various levels of government.

The major challenge to the freedom of broadcast and print journalism does not come from White House special assistants. The real threat is and has been a gradual accumulation of regulations and restrictions on what journalists can and cannot report.

The trouble, as Ben Bagdikian wrote recently, is not just in Washington and New York — and I quote him — "but in cities and towns throughout the country where obscure officials are moving against obscure journalists to restrict their freedom to publish and broadcast."

Reporters are being kept from covering open court cases. They have been subpoenaed and jailed for declining to reveal their confidential sources of information. They are accused of malice, irresponsibility, character assassination and reckless abuse of constitutional privileges. And the very role of the press is continually being reviewed by the courts

and in public debate.

The stultifying effect of the government's hand in the editorial process has been only too clear to NBC in its lengthy and costly proceedings before the FCC, and now on appeal, over a 1972 NBC News documentary, "Pensions: The Broken Promise."

The program was a responsible report on the failings of many private pension plans. Acting on one complaint, filed under its Fairness Doctrine, the FCC ruled that the program did not devote enough attention to the pension plans that are sound. It found a controversial issue where none exists, because there is no controversy over the point the program addressed — that many pension plans in this country suffer from serious defects. In effect, the FCC is asking that an investigation of a significant social problem be converted to a presentation that will balance criticism with praise. That would be comparable to requiring that a report on the failings of mass transportation give substantial attention to the planes and trains that arrive on time.

No one is against fairness. It is a threshold requirement of respectable journalism. But to be required to present extraneous sides of important issues does not serve to enlighten the public on those issues. And if such restriction and second guessing, which have complicated the job of broadcast news, are applied to the print media as well, they will have an inhibiting effect on any editor who knows he may run up a large legal bill by presenting any story that is likely to be challenged, by however small a body of dissent.

We must make the public aware that its stake in a free flow of information is more important than the common but absolutely incorrect assumption that more and more controls mean greater protection and stability.

I have been deeply involved in the affairs of NBC News and broadcast journalism for 28 years now. I have seen stations and the national networks giving more air time, larger budgets and greater management attention to news and information programming. And it has been encouraging to watch audience interest in broadcast news grow accordingly.

Since 1963, when the networks expanded their evening news programs from 15 minutes to a half-hour, the three-network nightly news audience has grown at a rate 20 percent above the increase in prime-time entertainment viewing. And I believe that television will continue to attract larger and larger audiences to its information services.

The two-hour local news program has made its appearance, and there will be more of them. KNBC, the NBC owned station in Los Angeles, established such a program six years ago, and it has been highly successful. WNBC-TV in New York started two-hour evening news last month. At both stations, with their other news periods, this is some five hours of news a

day — more than 25 percent of their total daily broadcast schedule.

Recent advances in the technology of television news are also sure to stimulate and improve the broadcast news service. The networks and a number of major market stations have been accelerating their use of the new portable electronic color cameras that give us much greater access to live, on-the-scene news coverage. This will add more immediacy to the news and the opportunity to get many more stories on the air that wouldn't normally make a regularly scheduled newscast.

News is an integral, essential and improving part of broadcasting. It has helped make ours the best informed nation in history. I am sure it will continue to do that — if the people who are responsible for reporting the news continue to fight any limitations placed on them by those who put their special interests ahead of the public interest.

It was an undoubtedly wise man who once asked, "What good is freedom of the press if there isn't one?" We should think about that question. And do all that we can to defend that freedom.

* * *

MR. GOODMAN, a frequent contributor to this journal is a former newsman, now Chairman of the Board, National Broadcasting Company. The preceding article was an address Mr. Goodman delivered in May to the Associated Press Broadcasters Association.

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THE BOOB TUBE AND THE GRIDIRON GAME

By Harvey Frommer

(Editor's Note: An essay denouncing football as "a Fascist game," savage, stupid and harmful to the young, appeared in the Spring issue of Television Quarterly, setting off a small storm. What follows is a rebuttal to the views expressed by Frances Taormina)

To lampoon professional football on television, imply it's a fascist sport, and to hunger for the good old days when television was not "besotted with a blood sport" is to ignore the fact that television is a cultural mirror of society, and that professional football shares an isomorphic relationship with the electronic medium. (This article is not as much a defense of the game on television as it is an explication of the television-football marriage.)

The view was put forth that massive projection of televised football is a perversion of the medium's potential. . . . "for bringing beauty and merriment into our homes. . . ." (Frances Taormina, "Football — A Fascist Game," *Television Quarterly*, Spring, 1974). No mention was made of the insipid youth-oriented and contrived serials, the perversion of inane cartoon programs, the banal made-for-television movies, or the padded, self possessed news shows. Televised/college and pro football is a poor whipping boy and an inappropriate target when lined up against the pathetic plethora of projection that passes for merriment and beauty.

Americans watch ten to twelve hours of sports each weekend. It has been made clear that no element in American life has prompted sports interest as much as television. Television income to professional football in 1951 was \$50,000. By 1960, the figure had leaped to seven million dollars. Today, the revenue to the sport of professional football approximates fifty million dollars a year. The fault, if there is one with this situation, as was wisely observed long ago — is not in our stars, but in ourselves. If there is Saturday and Sunday football, and Monday Night Football, and the summer nights of the World Football League — someone is watching. And the millions of someones watching are in effect paying the bill. What they see may perhaps be television's finest moments.

Football on television is a fireworks of technological skill: instant replay — slow motion — isolated cameras — directional microphones — blimps — color — teams of announcers working behind superimposed graphics and film — all of these and more combine to bring the game of football to the viewer in an intelligible and exciting manner that in the view of many rivals the real event at the stadium. National Football League Commissioner Pete Rozelle acknowledges this skill: "I get a hell of a lot more out of pro football watching it at home on television. Television does too good a job. . . ."

The sport on television is a paradigm of Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message." A news story develops while the audience is being entertained. There is violence, but there is also beauty and merriment and spectacle. The well thrown pass, the acrobatic catch, the breakaway runner, combined skills of many men against the clock, the special talents of the kickers and the men on special teams — these are some of the reasons for the success of the game on television.

Football has its flaws, but so does American society and much of television. To paint the sport on television with a fascist brush is to taint the millions of viewers with that same brush. The game survives because it televises well. It has continuous and intelligible action, intervals for reflection accommodating instant replay well. It has inherent in its nature — cooperation, expertise, competition, specialized skills — elements in our culture that Americans apparently respect and like to observe on television.

The sport has survived the ostentatiousness of a Joe Namath shaving off his moustache for \$10,000, the too much cavalcade of holiday games that seems unending, the editorials attacking it in *The New York Times*, and the clubhouse confidential type books that fall under the category of commercial expose. The real message of television and football is not violence or fascism — look to the cartoons or the made-for-TV-movies — but a glamour game, showcased well, that has an attraction for millions of Americans.

* * *

DR. HARVEY FROMMER is Assistant Professor of Communications Arts at New York City Community College. He was recently awarded his Ph.D in media ecology at New York University. His dissertation focused on the ramifications of professional football as a television diversion.

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IN MEMORIAM

This has been a momentous year. . . . A year tense with crises and pregnant with history. It was a year in which we needed all our good men, all our tender and courageous women. But it was a year in which we of the television industry lost four of our best. It is only fitting that we pause briefly tonight to mark their passing and remember their valor.

Chet Huntley was a man of earth and sky, as big in his way as the great plains of his native Montana. Chet loved his country, his profession . . . and he cared deeply about the problems of the ordinary man. He had the gift of "seeing life clearly and seeing it whole." And he reported what he saw with fidelity and compassion. We shall miss him.

Among documentarians, Fred Freed was a giant. He had vision, courage and great style. He never turned out trite or trivial programs . . . and he never sullied the truth to serve the hour. His last documentary, "The Energy Crisis" ran three hours and warned us about the oil shortage many months before it happened. In his years with NBC, Fred won five Emmys, two Peabodys, two Overseas Press Club awards . . . and the unwavering admiration of his colleagues. We shall not look upon his like again.

Frank McGee was once known in the corridors of NBC as the man who never went home. He was the ideal, all-round newsman: steady, fluent, amiable, with the good reporter's vast store of general knowledge. Frank could explain every detail of a rocket launch or preside, in his warm and reassuring way, over an instant special full of death and disaster.

In great pain during his last years, Frank McGee still looked calm and serene at 7 each morning on the *Today* show. His passing leaves a great void in all our lives.

Irene Ryan, the spunky wonderfully funny Granny of *Beverly Hillbillies* had a heart to match her talent. Big, warm and wise. She cared about television, about the theatre and, most of all, about young people. Irene began her career at the age of 11 in San Francisco vaudeville. Her early years were an endless struggle and she knew poverty and despair. Somewhat to her astonishment, Irene discovered in 1971 that she would be leaving an estate of — roughly — a million dollars. And she had no family, no legal heirs. Accordingly, she set up a foundation to provide 15 annual scholarships to talented youngsters enrolled as drama students. It was her hope that these grants would become known among students as Granny Awards.

Chet, Frank, Fred and Irene . . . valuable citizens, great troupers and fine human beings. Bless you all!

H.V.H.

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