

# TELEVISION

VOLUME XI

NUMBER 2

WINTER, 1974

# QUARTERLY

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THE JOURNAL OF THE  
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF  
TELEVISION ARTS  
AND SCIENCES

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TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES

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## CONTENTS

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The Compleat Television Critic <i>Charles Steinberg, Ph.D.</i>	5
A Conversation With John J. O'Connor of the Times <i>John Carden</i>	13
Not Quite Total Recall — An Erstwhile Critic Remembers <i>John Horn</i>	19
A Bit of Sadism After Luncheon <i>Benjamin Stein</i>	25
Changing Portrait of the TV Critic <i>Cecil Smith</i>	29
Cinema Verite and Television — Some Reflections on Frederick Wiseman's Juvenile Court <i>Joy Gould Boyum, Ph.D.</i>	32
Such Were the Joys — An Excerpt From How the Golden Age of Television Turned My Hair Silver <i>Kenneth Whelan</i>	38
TV and Crumpets <i>Robert G. Deindorfer</i>	46
On a Clear Day You Can See Wildwood, Pa. <i>Thomas V. Sobczak, Ph.D.</i>	52
Remarks for a Mature Audience <i>Robert D. Wood, President, CBS TV Network</i>	57
Letter to the Editor	62

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# THE COMPLEAT TELEVISION CRITIC

By Charles Steinberg, Ph.D.

At a recent "think tank" seminar, involving television executives, academicians and journalists, three critics of the media attempted to set up an aesthetic standard for evaluating television programs. All three confessed failure. As powerful and all-pervasive as television is, it simply is not amenable to aesthetic analysis, as films, plays and books are.

This situation is not due to television's enormous dimensions, but rather to the absence of fixed canons of excellence. The medium rarely gives evidence of striving for genuine excellence without concessions to popular prejudice. Thus does serious criticism become an exercise in frivolity, if not futility.

Addressing an Industry-Faculty Conference, sponsored by the International Radio and Television Society, Neil Hickey of TV Guide said that television, like film, is fiction — but it is also many other things. Among them: journalism, sports, vaudeville and games. Critical effort can only be proportionate to creative effort. There is greater creative art in a few dozen lines by Dylan Thomas than in half a dozen episodes of, let's say, "All in the Family." Television precludes *serious* criticism because it is not a *serious* medium. It is a commercial enterprise controlled by competitive corporations whose goal is to increase profits through advertising. The greening of television, Mr. Hickey believes, is still in the future.

Other impediments to a "television aesthetic" were presented by Bosley Crowther, for many years the distinguished film critic for The New York Times. During his tenure as critic, Mr. Crowther found that the movie people were engaged in a constant debate over what constituted film art. Not so with television. The criticism is not what is aesthetic, but what will become a commercial success. Furthermore, the areas where critical judgment applies are limited. Critical judgment is not relevant, in Mr. Crowther's opinion, to news documentaries, because these do not convey that "sense of experience that is beyond ordinary, common place experience." Finally, the television receiver is in the home, an environment not conducive to concentration or absorption and punctuated by the ubiquitous commercial.

John O'Connor, television critic of *The New York Times*, perhaps came closest to the core of the problem when he expressed concern that most television criticism tends to take a personality approach. This is because many critics are also reporters "forced to fill up space every day in their newspapers

and to interview stars and starlets." This may make for lively journalism, but it is hardly generative of reflective judgment.

Nevertheless, television has not suffered from lack of criticism. It is probably the most totally dissected and badly mauled of all the communications media. But the criticisms have been political or sociological, not aesthetic. The Administration criticizes television for lacking balance. The professors flagellate the medium for not living up to its educational potential.

No less a cultural historian than Arnold J. Toynbee laments that this marvelous technological hardware is wasted on childish tastes. And John Kenneth Galbraith scorns the commercialism of television for creating spurious needs, contrivances that do not meet genuine public needs.

But these are not aesthetic norms nor value judgments. Television, in its twenty-five year growth as the most potent of communications media, has not generated critics of the calibre of a James Agee on film, a Robert Brustein or Brooks Atkinson on theatre, an Edmund Wilson or Lionel Trilling on literature. This owes partly to the commercial base of the medium, but also to the orientation of those who write about television in the press, and to the attitude of their publishers and editors.

The television page of the daily newspaper is the second most avidly read section in the paper. But the reader rarely is presented with a critique comparable to those on the book, theatre or film pages. Television reviewing has essentially developed as reportorial journalism, and only rarely does it involve aesthetic judgment. Until a few years ago, in fact, critics were not permitted to review programs until the morning after they were on the air, with the results that the public had no advance notices and viewed programs by what industry spokesmen term the democratic process of random selection. This led Jackie Gleason to quip that television critics were people who reported traffic accidents to eyewitnesses. However, after hearings before Senator John Pastore's Subcommittee of Communications, CBS, and later ABC, agreed to allow critics to pre-review programs in advance of showing on the air.

Despite the fact that the reader of the print media regularly follows the television columns, little is known about the people who cover this most popular of media. The industry obviously believes they are influential as publicity outlets, if not as serious critics, for the networks spend large fortunes on the care and feeding of TV journalists, including annual junkets to Hollywood where new programs and personalities are showcased in the most luxurious of possible environments. To the credit of the reviewers, it must be said that these blandishments rarely, if ever, influence a "good" or "bad" notice.

In the course of the past year, television critics on newspapers in major cities across the United States were asked to reply to two related questionnaires. One series of questions was designed to present in coherent form the background and the responsibilities of the TV critics and, at the same time, to determine how these critics and/or editors look upon their calling in terms of influence, prestige and effect on relevant government agencies, broadcasting industry executives

and the viewers who read their columns. The second questionnaire, comprised of four succinct queries, asked pointedly what opinion the critics had of Clay Whitehead's accusation against network news broadcasts as purveyors of "ideological plugola" and of Whitehead's proposal of five, instead of three, year licenses for TV stations. Mr. Whitehead's own opinions, incidentally, may not have changed, but recent Congressional Committee action has certainly not enhanced the goals of the Office of Telecommunications Policy which Mr. Whitehead heads on behalf of the White House.

Since the statistical results have been amply publicized, there is no need here to analyze the study in terms of each discrete question and answer. It would seem to be of greater significance to summarize the basic findings and then essay an interpretation of them in terms of the present impact, and the future potential, of television criticism in this country. Relevant, too, are some of the comments the critics themselves have made regarding the questionnaire.

Briefly, here is a recapitulation of reaction to the survey itself. Seventy three newspaper critics received both questionnaires. Fifty eight replied to the first; fifty six to the second. These are startlingly high returns, indeed almost unprecedented in any opinion study. The percentages are 79% for the first study and 77% for the second. At this juncture, the query may arise, why the figure of seventy three critics? Apart from the fact that there are limits to the scope of any study of this kind, the selection was far from fortuitous or capricious. Every Nielsen City was represented. Beyond these markets, however, there was another pragmatic parameter. The critics surveyed are probably the most active and influential. They cover the medium regularly, they participate with equal regularity in the multiplicity of network and independent press junkets and conferences and they are in constant touch with network and station information facilities.

Several critics proffered comments on receiving the study and appended these comments to their replies. From one, for example, came these observations: "I don't think the difference between 'hard news' and 'critical judgment' is the important thing that separates good TV columns from bad ones . . . most good critics indulge in both." This pundit goes on, "what does separate the wheat from the chaff is the basic professionalism, intelligence and sense of purpose on the part of the individual critic . . . he *does* need an acute awareness of what's going on in the nation at large, so he can determine how TV reflects this. Most critics see themselves as nothing more than chatty, name-dropping voyeurs in fantasy-land. They just don't grapple with problems of access, censorship, standards of commercials, quality of news, communication laws, license challenges, the values that underlie the ratings system, broadcast profits or a hundred other issues that are vital . . ."

This discerning critic concludes — properly, most would agree — that the burden rests with newspaper editors and publishers to take television criticism as seriously as they take the coverage of politics. Unfortunately, this canny observation is not taken up by other critics, most of whom have a penchant for

placing the blame, not on the standards of the press, but solely on the network executives for failing to accord the television critics the awesome respect which many feel they deserve and don't get.

Another respondent points out that "a television critic is his, or her, own best judge of what is good, bad, or indifferent . . . it seems to me much better to give the reader a broader understanding of what is on the air tonight or tomorrow, who the stars are, what it's all about, and so forth."

Still another comment: "I try to cover the television institution, rather than television solely as an entertainment medium, that is television the political football; television the business; television and the courts; television the informer; as well as television the entertainer and the soporific . . . TV criticism hasn't had much impact because most newspapers don't know how to cover it . . . too many see themselves — consciously or unconsciously — as extensions of the network flack departments." The critic concludes that a great many editors simply "don't allow the television writer to write in depth TV news."

A critic on the distaff side of the profession offered the following comment: "It seems to me that if most of TV critics were good reporters, the American public would be far more enlightened. I really don't see any difference between the two, except that it is far more prestigious to call yourself a Critic than a Reporter."

And another woman editor observed: "If newspapers like mine ever admit the importance of TV and give it the space it deserves, maybe we'll be tougher and gain more influence with the viewers."

One more peripheral comment, this one added to the questionnaire, is worth noting. To the question, "Do you think the newspapers should send reviewers to the coast, instead of the networks?," this editor replied, "Absolutely not." And went on in another postscript, "If one's soul is for sale, what difference does it make who buys it?" He continues, "I write as honestly as I can and always shall, no matter whether the network or the paper pays for the junket. But, since networks do receive a certain amount of free 'advertising' i.e. promotion, by having junkets, of course they should pay the tab."

These are, of course, unsolicited comments, but they are interesting amplifications of the thrust of the questionnaire. From the results of the survey, however, it is possible to structure a fairly comprehensive portrait of television critics in terms of their respective backgrounds and influence. From replies to the query concerning preparation and qualifications, one gleans the following: half of the respondents have been writing about television for a decade or more; a third have covered the medium for fewer than five years. About half cover television exclusively, while a fourth have assignments in many other departments of the newspaper. Less than a third (28%) view their function *primarily* as critics, while about a third (33%) prefer to be known as "reporter."

Educational backgrounds vary widely. Sixty-four per cent have a college degree, about half of these in journalism and a fourth in English. The rest range over a wide spectrum, from psychology to political science to speech. Two-thirds

have had no previous experience or preparatory training in the mass media — either professional or academic. Many were recruited from departments that were far removed from broadcasting — city desk, re-write, politics, police beat, even the White House. Two-thirds were arbitrarily assigned to cover television, while one-third asked to be assigned to cover the medium.

How do the critics view their job? While admitting many frustrations, slightly more than half of the respondents believe that their position is a prestigious one. A large number (65%) feel, however, that they would have benefited from special training in criticism. Three-fourths believe that motion picture reviews have greater impact on public opinion than television criticism. Yet, three-fourths are convinced that pre-reviews of network or local programs offer a service to the viewer.

At the same time, however, only 3% — a singularly frustrating admission — believe their criticism has any effect on program executives, and slightly more than half are not convinced that favorable reviews can sustain a low-rated program on the air. Most critics feel that what they write has little influence on the Federal Communications Commission. More encouraging is the 45% affirmative response to the query “Do you feel that your column has effect, in terms of taste, on the viewer?”

In summary, certain salient findings emerge. Most television critics have had little background or training in criticism or aesthetics, yet many feel that such a background would be helpful in their profession. Most feel a sense of futility and even irritation about the lack of their influence, but paradoxically view their job as high in prestige. Most accept invitations to junkets, but many would prefer to go independently i.e. under the auspices of their paper — if the publisher would underwrite the trips.

The most illuminating data emerged from the responses to Clay Whitehead’s observations and proposals. There is overwhelming — 80 per cent — disagreement with Whitehead’s characterization of network news as “elitist gossip” and “ideological plugola”. Slightly more than half also do not agree with the proposal to license stations for five years.

What interpretation can one draw from the responses to these questionnaires? Some of the critics themselves, upon receiving the results, made observations, either in their columns or by letter or phone call. Clearly, nearly all feel an acute sense of frustration that they have so little influence on the decision makers — the program executives. There is some vexation expressed, too, about the lack of “clout”, such as drama, book and movie critics enjoy. Many feel demeaned by their constant reliance on network publicists for news. One critic, noting that in many cases there were replies of “No opinion,” asked: “How could anyone writing a TV column have no opinion on the questions asked? They *must* be insecure!”

A woman respondent lamented the fact that most of her colleagues “feel themselves ineffectual as critics.” But the problem, she writes, “stems from our view of television as primarily a medium for the masses. That is the way the TV

programmers, executives and production centers see it. That is the way the Federal Communications Commission sees television. The air waves are public, and let's not offend anyone under threat of severe punishment."

A comment such as this, it seems to me, illuminates the difficulty of structuring any serious aesthetic norms for television criticism. Does not the very pervasive nature of the medium, the need to be all things to all viewers, prove abortive to critical standards of excellence?

Beyond aesthetic judgment, however, there are other aspects of television which are present in no other communication medium.

First, the medium is licensed. That means, quite simply, that it labors under restrictions which may be no more than implicit, but are nevertheless a sword of Damocles. It is also, as the NAB Code points out, a family medium, cutting a wide demographic swath not found in theatre, books or cinema. Its informational function is inextricably involved in the political process, and in a way that does not apply to the print media which — at least until now — have had no ambiguous provisions of equal time and fairness with which to contend. And it is, finally, a medium which necessarily places the highest premium on entertainment for the masses, having found, with rare exceptions, that neither superlative cultural programming nor lyrical critical notices pay off in Nielsen or ARB ratings.

The aesthetic dilemma, then, may not be so much in the limitations or quality of the critic, but rather in the limitations of the medium itself. Yet — as most critics will agree — television has been responsible for superior programming. At times it has manifested cultural diversity, creative force and even a glimmer of nobility. What remains for the medium is to develop an art form of its own, an "aesthetic" indigenous to television, not derivative of plays, or motion picture techniques, and not adapted from books. The nature of the medium itself — its profound reach — along with its need to achieve circulation has not attracted, or long held, genuinely creative writers and directors.

The necessary, but unfortunate, presence of rigid program practices, special interest groups and political pressures have not been a stimulus to cultural growth. Nor has the attitude of the network affiliates.

Newspaper publishers and editors have also failed to provide any stimulus or incentive. Most critics are not encouraged to render aesthetic judgment. Many, in fact, are urged to write at a level of inane interviews with stars and to develop Hollywood color features and biographies. But this, too, is now showing a sign of change.

A TV critic, *mirabile dictu*, last year was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for criticism which went far beyond the vapid interview or a simple round-up of Best Bets for Tonight. It is this kind of recognition, along with the growth of underground video, cable TV and the constantly expanding courses in college and universities in television criticism, production and broadcasting problems, that offers the best hope that the medium will eventually merit the presence in the press, not of former police or city desk reporters but of a trained, sensitive corps of discerning — and influential — critics.

\* \* \*

*CHARLES S. STEINBERG served as CBS Vice-president, Public Information, from 1959 until his retirement last year. He received his B.A. degree, summa cum laude from New York University's Washington Square College, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was awarded a Ph.D. by the Graduate School of Education, NYU, for his thesis on mass communication. He is the author of three books, the most recent being, "The Communicative Arts: An Introduction to Mass Media".*

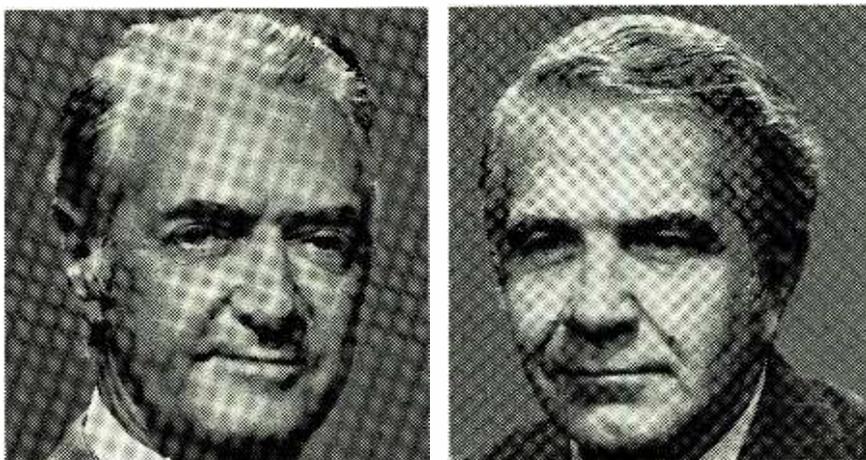
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# A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN J. O'CONNOR OF THE TIMES

By John Carden

Q. In this issue of *Television Quarterly*, Cecil Smith says a television critic must be highly knowledgeable in the areas of drama, music, sports, current events, history, art, advertising, marketing, and, indeed, all aspects of the broadcasting industry. Do you agree?

A. Completely. For a critic in any field, the more knowledge he has about different areas the better. Television, however, is a special case in point. When I was at the *Wall Street Journal*, the paper created for me the position of arts editor, in which I had wide leeway in covering any of the arts. I also handled special features and book reviews, in addition to some reporting and a lot of traveling. Now I discover I'm using all of that experience and knowledge as a critic for the *New York Times*.

Q. Then, along with Smith, you would include a knowledge of marketing among the requisites for a television critic?

A. Well, there are only so many hours in a day, and a critic has to spend a lot of time in front of the television set. I find myself watching television seven days a week, sometimes as much as nine hours a day. Obviously, I can't sit down and go through marketing reports carefully, but, nevertheless, I have to keep up with the trade aspects of television. When I'm reviewing a specific program that's good, but going to be cancelled, I've got to know something about *why* it's going to be cancelled, something about the give and take of the market place.

Q. What effect do reviews have on the success or failure of a new television series?

A. This is a very sticky and controversial matter. There are some areas in which reviews do have some effect, and others in which they have no effect at all. In regard to ballyhooed 90 minute specials, pilots, or what have you — if they're being considered for a series the following season, and they get very good reviews, plus at least decent ratings, the combination works.

On the other hand, there are certain shows, including the Sunday morning "intellectual ghetto" programs, which a favorable review alone really helps. Here in New York, for example, if I write a laudatory pre-review of the CBS program "Camera Three", I get feedback from readers who thank me for

alerting them. And I believe the CBS network show “The Waltons” was aided by good reviews.

Q. Is it conceivable that a bad review would ever cause a network to cancel a series?

A. No. But a bad review along with poor ratings would result in a cancellation.

Q. What is your feeling about television junkets for critics — trips to California and London, for example, paid for by networks or sponsors?

A. Both the *Times* and I are totally against junkets. I am convinced that American critics should have a chance to move around, and, of course, view foreign television. The more travel the better, in that sense; it’s good for comparative purposes. But I don’t see how one can expect the networks or sponsors to pay for these trips without doing violence to the critic’s objectivity. If the papers want their reviewers to travel, then the papers themselves should finance the trips. I hear from the networks that too many papers aren’t willing to do this, yet are quite willing to have their critics go on junkets. This practice is entirely compromising, and should be eliminated.

Q. Can a television critic remain at his job indefinitely, without getting into a rut . . . going stale . . . or coming to loathe his work, as John Crosby appeared to eventually?

A. I don’t think *any* critic can stay at his job indefinitely. Perhaps what should be done is to give him either a sabbatical or a new assignment for a year. Focusing on any one particular area for a long time makes anybody stale. Moreover, there’s a danger especially peculiar to a television critic — he’s always writing about other people, particularly in the news area, and he tends therefore to become a commentator on his own. Because he’s commenting on the commentators, so to speak, the temptation is to forget about his subject and take over as commentator himself. I believe this is what happened not only to Crosby, but to many others as well. Ironically, Crosby, to me, has never been as effective since as he was as a television critic.

Q. So you say the tendency to become stale applies more to television than to dramatic criticism?

A. Yes. Not that it doesn’t happen to a drama critic. I was one for a couple of years at the *Journal*, and after going night after night to the theatre, I sensed I was moving in that direction, so I quit the New York Drama Critics Circle. As I said, there’s more of an inclination for the television critic to get into kinds of commentary that do not necessarily concern the drama critic.

Q. How do you feel about the so called “new permissiveness” in television series, as revealed in such shows as “Lotsa Luck,” “Maude,” and “All in the Family”?

A. I don’t like the term “new permissiveness”. In many cases these programs deal with subjects that have been in the public arena for years. The old type of situation comedy in which Mommy burned the roast the night Daddy was having the boss to dinner was most unreal. I do like the idea of any

program, whether it be situation comedy or action-adventure, dealing at least with something contemporary and provoking some sort of response in the realm of ideas.

Q. Is the quality of entertainment programming going up or down?

A. It's going up in some areas, staying about the same in others. The situation in the defined area of cultural programming is improving. Even though Joe Papp is no longer around at CBS, the fact that CBS even made a deal with Papp and put on two of his productions is significant.

ABC is coming up with various 90 minute specials dealing sensitively and provocatively with themes that would not have been allowed on television two years ago. Perhaps one of the reasons for this turn-about is that the American networks have been shamed by the excellent reviews accorded some imports, especially the BBC's *Masterpiece Theatre*. The network *have* to respond in some way. As regards action-adventure series in prime time, the shows so far this fall are about on the same level as last season's. One reason for this might be the recent writers' strike. A lot of network executives claim the scripts are coming in late, and there's no chance to rework or update them.

Q. Do you notice a lessening of violence in these action-adventure series?

A. No lessening, but I have noticed a new awareness about certain types of violence. The tendency is to still deal with violent subjects, except now they may not be on camera *directly*. You might see someone shooting a gun, but you don't see the person shot until a little while later. This, I believe, is a kind of spurious approach; there isn't much lessening in the actual *content* of violence. In some respects, it's difficult to know what to think of violence on television. Last season, NBC showed *West Side Story* in two parts. Now ordinarily, I would be the last person in the world to object to this movie appearing on television. Yet I received a call from an assistant principal of a junior high school in New York, and it turned out his kids were in an uproar after these showings. They had split up into the Jets and the Sharks, and some had been found with knives in their pockets. What for most people had been an entertainment was for these students something else altogether. They were influenced by the film in a direct and not altogether beneficial fashion.

Q. Has children's programming on commercial television networks and stations improved, in your opinion?

A. If there's been any area of improvement, most of it has been restricted to local stations. The Saturday morning lineup on the networks is worse than ever. A couple of years ago the networks held seminars and issued announcements on the wonderful shows they had in mind for kids. Several efforts were made, didn't get much of an audience, and were quickly dropped. They weren't competitive with the cartoons. This fall the networks are back — almost exclusively — to a cartoon schedule between 8 a.m. and noon. Some worthwhile shows have been broadcast in the afternoon, but then, of course, most kids go out of the house. The ABC once-a-month afternoon specials are good; let's hope that such programs will be encouraged.

Q. Do you agree with some women's organizations that commercials in children's programming should be outlawed?

A. Yes—but I don't know if this policy could be implemented. After all, commercial television is still dependent on advertising. Everyone will agree, however, that the barrage and the quality of commercials confronting children must be bad in some way. Some studies indicate that children are becoming cynics about the American free enterprise system at the age of six or seven. This sort of thing hurts everybody.

Q. Since the commencement of the Watergate affair, have you sensed a new boldness in the network reportage and analysis of current events?

A. Yes. Last year there were indications, when our late Vice President was riding high, that there might have been a slight holding back. But, since then, Watergate and subsequent events have restored all the confidence that most broadcast journalists will have if given the chance. There are, of course, certain things that these journalists can and can't do. For example, such matters as the Constitutional crisis and the Nixon tapes cry out for truly expert analysis and commentary. Now, television newsmen generally are not experts in specific fields. They're shifted from one job to another, from the White House to Vietnam. They do have a chance to organize seminars, but they don't really enjoy doing that, nor do viewers particularly care to watch seminars in great numbers. Nevertheless, something has to be done. The newspapers have expert analysis and commentary on their editorial pages, and it's time television developed something of a corresponding nature. Also, the absence of a regularly scheduled news hour in prime time is worrisome.

Q. Are you in favor of direct governmental financing of news and public affairs on public television?

A. No. I don't believe anyone is in favor of direct governmental financing of anything. Machinery should have been set up for long range financing of public television to make it as independent as possible — somewhat along the lines of the BBC. That might have been one solution, but then Lyndon Johnson became preoccupied with Vietnam, and by the time this Administration came in, it was not about to give a public broadcasting organization any degree of independence.

Q. In the last issue of *Television Quarterly*, Eugene McCarthy, speaking of television, stated: "I believe you must look to other forms of communication to give the affirmative and positive thrust to the improvement of society. I don't think you can get much from television, even with more public service programs." Do you agree with his point of view?

A. I'm not quite sure what is meant by a "positive thrust." I *don't* think Mr. McCarthy was talking about the power of positive thinking. But television can exert a positive and beneficial influence on society. While some programs have stimulated violence, others have stimulated the acquisition of knowledge. It's just a matter of encouraging the right kind of programming. In the field of entertainment, I think "The Waltons" falls in this category. Whether it's

nostalgic or whatever, the show deals strictly with the old values, and it seems to appeal, surprisingly, to an awful lot of people.

In the field of news documentaries, NBC produced a program about Vietnamese orphans that provoked a huge amount of mail and positive response; that's positive programming. Certainly the same approach can be extended to other fields. The very transmission of news, if well done, is positive, because it makes for an informed public.

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# *NOT QUITE TOTAL RECALL*

## *An Erstwhile Critic Remembers*

*By John Horn*

Critics having been so often characterized as assassins — and worse — it may come as news that one of the species believes that whatever good a critic may contribute lies not in negative acts of assault but in positive acts of discovery and appreciation.

John Crosby, one of the best of the night watchmen, once confessed that it was far easier to write negative notices than laudatory ones. This writer concurs. And the law of averages, plus the fallibility of networks, makes it all even easier. The bad programs outnumber the good, and always have.

Sifting mountains of dross is a critic's usual job. But he must do it — and this is the trick — without dulling his senses, losing his marbles or blunting his curiosity. He must always hope to find some moment, some passage that may encapsule the wonder of life. He seeks, in short, the touch of an artist. And if he finds it, the critic's joy in discovery knows no bounds. For his drudgery has been alchemized, as surely and nobly as that of the stone cutter who realized, in a single blessed moment, that he was building a cathedral.

Criticism, you may say, fulfills a man's ego. But does it help others? I like to think so. A critic remembers his fan mail for years. I can recall the producers who wrote to say how much they appreciated the stimulus, whether warm or cold, of an outside appraisal. They needed critical evaluation of their work by one who took them as seriously as they took themselves.

I have never been certain that "critic" is the precise word for the newspaper writer who assays television's offerings, night after night. To my mind, the word "critic" conjures up Hazlitt and Kant, Edmund Wilson and Ralph Nader, Walt Kelly and Jonathan Swift. An exalted definition of a critic was once offered by Anatole France: "One who recounts the adventures of his soul among masterpieces". A man in a hurry, pounding out 500 words for tomorrow's paper, his space at the mercy of late-breaking news, is not, by these standards, a critic. He is a reviewer. But let nobody sniff at the term. In the hands of an honest craftsman, it's honorable work.

Even so, the distinguished Brooks Atkinson once called drama reviewing "an ignoble profession". That careless remark fell from his lips in wartime,

when he was making the difficult change-over to foreign correspondence. The mind that saw every detail, sensed every nuance in the theatre proved just as agile in the news field. Mr. Atkinson won a Pulitzer Prize for his overseas reporting.

An important point about an honest television critic — or reviewer, as Mr. A. and I prefer to call him — is that he is his own man. His constituency is the public and his conscience is clear. The critics who rail against such reviewers usually represent vested interests. They respond to an unfavorable review somewhat as the White House responds to the Washington Post editorials.

But I digress. Looking back over two decades of reviewing television shows and, later, working in the industry, I find that only the joys remain. The miseries have died away like an old cowboy show.

The reviewer as assassin? Nonsense! More like Pollyanna the Glad Girl.

In the beginning, there was Milton Berle. And before he became a drag — in drag — he was good, rough-house fun. He was helped by supporting players often much funnier than himself, such as Arnold Stang. Goodman Ace introduced Berle to the word “humility”, and even tried to persuade him to laugh at himself, a painful exercise for an egotist of Berle’s dimensions.

The pleasures of television’s early days were considerable. The gloss of newness was everywhere. Incredibly, one of the medium’s first smash hits was a puppet show. *Hand* puppets, at that. *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* came on at the dinner hour — in the time slot now sacred to the Evening News — and nobody who was a Constant Viewer in those early, coltish days will ever forget them.

Like Burr Tillstrom’s puppets, Paul Tripp delighted both children and adults with his *Mr. I. Magination* shows. And Helen Parkhurst brought understanding, sympathy and human pride to tough neighborhood kids. A children’s program was not a sales gimmick then, nor an electronic tutor.

Comedians were a notably happy breed throughout the 1950’s. Topical humor was gentler then. The quick blackouts and easy barbs of “Laugh-In” were still to come. Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca were king and queen of comedy, and their work compares favorably with anything on view today.

From the day of his debut on a local show in Philadelphia, Ernie Kovacs was a television genius. He was the medium’s first surrealist, a master of camera tricks, a daring innovator and a most endearing man. Who can forget the Nairobi Trio (musical apes who never missed a beat) or Percy Dovetonsils in his concentric eyeglasses reading his sentimental verse? And does anybody besides me recall *The Cough*, pitiful and wracking, coming from deep inside the pages of “Camille”, as the book was opened on camera?

Critics loved Kovacs. He stirred their imaginations, took them a little beyond themselves as, indeed, he took audiences outside their normal viewing experience. Ernie understood the medium as few performers ever have. We shall not look upon his like again.

If ever there was a perfect situation comedy, it had to be “Mr. Peepers”. The late Wally Cox found fame in the role of the shy, ingenuous school teacher

and Tony Randall — it was his first brush with fame — made an ideal foil. Marion Lorne, also among the dear departed, set a fashion for fluttery, foolish ladies of a certain age. She went on to other shows, always playing the same role. But never did she seem as fresh, as funny and original as in the wonderful adventures of Mr. Peepers.

Viewers in the 50's loved Lucy, Gleason, Carney, Godfrey, the Hallmark specials and any show featuring live animals. It all seems so gay and carefree now. We laughed a lot. When I think of the 50's, I often think of Nic Kenny, a man who never found out how funny he really was.

Nick was radio-television editor of the old New York Mirror but he liked to refer to himself as The Old Sailor. He had difficulty with the language in both prose and verse. When he appeared on television he had difficulty with the cue cards. He often forgot celebrities' names but he never failed to list their birthdays in Uncle Nick's Birthday Box.

Nick was a species of critic, too, but his reviews were necessarily truncated to make room for his Patty Poems. He also wrote Motherhood poems and sonnets to the first snowfall, beautiful stuff he once described as "God's dandruff."

Readers rarely tarried over Kenny critiques — if one may use the term — new television shows. But his poems were quoted by all of us who toiled in elevision. Holidays stirred him to conspicuous heights. Mother's Day once brought forth a heartfelt tribute beginning, "By a fireside there's a rocking chair with it's arms around the one I love. . . ."

When depressed, Nick wrote poems about the futility of it all. Each poem was explicitly titled, "Futility Poem."

Other critics of the Golden Age wrote literate copy and took themselves every bit as seriously as Nick. But he may have been more widely quoted, even in his Futility Periods.

In the field of drama, a name that stood for excellence was Fred Coe. He produced *Mr. Peepers* and the best of the Goodyear-Philco Playhouse series. Some of us can still remember reviewing — with pride and joy — such shows as Paddy Chayevsky's "Marty," Horton Footes's "A Trip to Bountiful" and N. Richard Nash's "The Rain Maker." With these plays, the medium began to come of age.

Coe assembled a stable of first-rate writers, and he brought beauty and honesty to the small screen. His was one of the medium's first success stories. How had he done it? By educating everyone, he said, especially sponsors. Ratings, he demonstrated, do not necessarily plummet at the appearance of quality. Fred Coe was, and remains, a hero.

*Playhouse 90* came along in the late 1950s and if every drama was not superb — and superb was hardly the word for an interminable drama about Manolete and bullfighting — there were towering achievements. None of us who wrote the overnight notices will ever forget Rod Serling's "Requiem for a Heavyweight" or J. P. Miller's "Days of Wine and Roses." The Golden Age of

television did not guarantee a smash hit every night. But there were distinguished shows and brilliant performances. It was a creative climate of high reach and great grasp.

One of the hit shows of the 1950s had its reviews on page one. That was the Senate Crime Committee hearings, under solemn, courteous Estes Kefauver. We learned more about crime than the gangbuster shows had told us.

“Reality” became one of television’s specialities, once the coaxial cable was complete and the nation began to buy TV sets by the millions. We critics covered the political conventions in 1952, ’56 and ’60 and we gained, along with the audience, a new insight into the stage-managed hoopla that legitimizes the backroom deals. Television news coverage attained new stature during those conventions.

Much that happened on the home screen in the 1950’s lingers in the mind agreeably. I remember NBC’s *Conversations with Elder Wise Men*, *Victory at Sea*, Leonard Bernstein’s masterful lessons in music appreciation, the Army-McCarthy hearings and, all honor to his name, the documentaries of Edward R. Murrow.

I doubt that the team of Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly will ever be equalled. Their reign was long, as television reigns go, starting at the end of the 1940’s and ending in the early ’60’s. Their work was bold, pioneering, trailblazing. They championed lost causes, they instructed the people. Theirs was the unshakeable conviction that America had to be informed if it was to survive. In television, they found the matchless instrument for opening the eyes and heart of the nation.

Oftentimes, it took sly maneuvering and brilliant guerrilla warfare to move their programs past network roadblocks. They tried, in a sense, to force greatness upon CBS and the American people. Both exhorting parties declined the honor.

Television critics, to their credit, understood the mission Murrow and Friendly had in mind. They were steadfast in their praise. The death of Ed Murrow is still mourned.

A final burst of documentary excellence, notably on the part of NBC and NET, marked the later ’60’s. I am thinking especially of the work of Ted Yates, Fred Freed, Lou Hazam and Warren Forma. “Actualities” dominated the medium as comedy and drama declined. Then they, too, declined as outer space, Vietnam and tragedies at home absorbed and agitated the folks at home. Great change came on swiftly in those years.

Television made us one people, heads bowed, hearts troubled, in the terrible weekend of President Kennedy’s assassination. Who can forget the shock and trauma of those days? And a critic would have to say that television rose with dignity to the needs of the nation that weekend.

Time passes . . . the medium changes. Were I reviewing television today I hope I would be charting the change in a broad sense, not reviewing individual programs.

Television continues to reflect the values, if not precisely the image, of our society. The medium is no worse than the nation. As citizens we have much to be concerned about, and television has helped to inform our concern. We have learned of America's duplicity in Southeast Asia, we have faced the delusions of "peace with honor", we know that the war on that torn and bleeding segment of earth still goes on. This past summer we watched the Senate Watergate hearings and learned that men in high places are capable of low and cunning crimes.

It should give us pause that only since television — called "the greatest means of communication ever devised" — have Americans been so bitterly divided on political and social issues. Perhaps the less informed, the people who have led rigid — however contented — lives were given too much information too fast. So much that happened on the screen jarred their complacency, made them question old values.

Professional viewing and reviewing ended for me in 1968. Now it's highly selective viewing, with less to praise. What's good, however, is very, very good. From "The Forsythe Saga" to Akira Kurosawa's film masterpieces, such as "Seven Samurai," it's a new style in entertainment. And who would have thought, back in the '50's, that old movies would one day provide the very best reason for turning on the television set?

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# *A BIT OF SADISM AFTER LUNCHEON*

*By Benjamin Stein*

"These people, dressed as they are, have come from all over America to try to make the deal of a lifetime. And now, here's the man who makes the deals, MONTY HALL!"

With the announcer's words, the camera scans an audience of people dressed as hot dogs, popcorn and animals of all kinds. The people clap hysterically and laugh uproariously. Onstage walks a man of medium height, of medium build, in fact of medium everything, perpetually tanned, every hair neatly placed, wearing a double-knit sport jacket, on his face a look somewhere between a sneer and a leer.

Each weekday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. EST, while Dad is at work and Junior and Sis are at school, millions of Moms turn on the television for the ABC-TV hour of sadism, masochism and humiliation. "Let's Make a Deal" and its half-hour sister program "The Newlywed Game" are watched by about 13 million people each day, more people than will probably attend any movie or play in all of 1973.

A "deal" consists of Monty Hall offering someone in the bizarrely costumed audience the opportunity to trade something of unknown value for something of known value, or two things of unknown value for each other. This day Monty Hall has three large wallets in his hand, One, he says, contains a thousand dollar bill; the other two contain only five dollar bills. Three contestants are given the choice of taking the wallet or some unknown bit of merchandise hidden behind a curtain.

While the first contestant tries to make up her mind, the audience shouts furiously at her "THE CURTAIN! THE CURTAIN!" or "THE WALLET! THE WALLET!" She picks the unknown object behind the curtain which turns out to be a huge electric oven. Her wallet is opened; it contains \$5. Excitedly, she kisses Monty Hall on the cheek.

The next woman was not so lucky. She chose the wallet. Before she was allowed to open it, the curtain was opened. Behind it was a color television set. Inside the wallet was a \$5 bill. Monty Hall giggled while the audience roared its amusement. The woman looked a little shaken, but she gamely kissed Monty Hall, just like the winner.

The biggest winner of the day was a woman who was so excited that she could not form sentences, but only emitted little cries of pleasure while she

raised her hands up and down.

On "Let's Make a Deal" even the winners are losers. They have not won anything by brains or work, but rather by a combination of panhandling, self-mockery and luck.

Why has the show been running for almost 10 years? It isn't likely that Monty Hall has a large personal appeal, nor are the prizes either large or unusual. The appeal of the show may be, at least in part, the humiliation which the viewers see, enjoy and identify with. There is no need to feel jealous of these contestants. They have no special ability and, unlike the viewer, they have no dignity. The viewer may not have a free refrigerator, but she doesn't have to kiss Monty Hall either. Moreover, the viewer, if she is human, has had her share of embarrassments and blows to her self-esteem, and it doesn't hurt a bit to see others getting theirs, especially on network television.

Also "Let's Make a Deal" may respond to some deep notion of social life in America, such as that wealth and success are not apportioned on the basis of merit, but rather through luck, and that enormous embarrassment is the price paid for trying to be lucky and not succeeding,

But "Let's Make a Deal" has at least an ostensible object — giving out prizes — besides the inflicting of pain on people who crave it. The prizes on "The Newlywed Game" are nominal only, but the embarrassment and resentment generated by the show are the real gifts for viewers.

Bob Eubanks, the "host" on "The Newlywed Game" (in the same sense that Senator Ervin was Jeb Magruder's "host" in the Watergate hearings) first introduces the four competing couples, each married one year or less. A typical group would be one very fat couple, one black couple, one extremely young couple and a fairly nondescript pair.

Smiling archly, Bob Eubanks, whose appearance is so similar to Clint Eastwood's that one expects him to shoot the couples, sends away the wives and poses the husbands a task! "Fill in the blanks. 'My wife cooks like a blank and cleans like a blank.'" The object is to see if the wives can later guess the words the husbands used.

The answers wouldn't make Germaine Greer happy. A black husband's answer is perhaps the most heart rending, on several levels. His wife, he says, "cleans like a maid and cooks like a maid."

The real joy of this show, to those who like to see others in pain, is that the husbands and wives almost never agree on descriptions of themselves. Usually, the wife thinks the husband will be more praising than he is. She is disappointed and hurt. The couple glare at each other during the show, and at the end of the show often look genuinely troubled and upset.

The prizes for "The Newlywed Game" are quite small. There are no screen tests waiting for the winners. There is neither money nor glory. The newlyweds are made to look stupid and alienated from each other, and all they get in return is an appearance on television. But that may be enough.

It's easier to understand why people watch. Compared to the fumbling,

pathetically cruel husbands on the show, a viewer's own husband, no matter how demented, may appear sophisticated and engaging. Compared to the humiliation heaped upon the wives on the show, a wife may see her own humiliation as small, or at least more private.

Both shows have been running for at least seven years. They have more applicants, so far, than can appear. Until a few months ago, they were followed on ABC by an even more grisly caricature of real life, "The Dating Game" — from Hollywood, the dating capital of the World." On that show, in a ghastly exaggeration of the difficulties of real-life relationships, men and women try to persuade each other to like them by asking and answering questions across a screen blocking their view of each other. Inevitably, two out of three contestants on the show, which is still syndicated nationwide, must be rejected.

Where do the applicants come from? At the end of several days of watching, the viewer feels glutted with the spectacle of sad, ordinary people, trading to producers their dignity, their privacy, sometimes even their happiness with their spouses, for a few moments on television. For the viewers and the participants a terrible moment must inevitably come when they realize what an uneven trade it is.

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# CHANGING PORTRAIT OF THE TV CRITIC

By Cecil Smith

Lee Rich, the head of Lorimar Productions, is fond of saying that the nation's TV critics made a hit of *The Waltons*. I appreciate the honor but I think he's wrong. While critics, columnists, reporters and other commentators on the airborne medicine show did call to the attention of the public the obvious values of Earl Hamner's remembrances of things past, most of them would point out to Lee that they also directed public attention to many another worthy project, such as *The Senator*, *The Monroes*, *My World and Welcome to It*, *The Richard Boone Repertory Theater*, and such, with no appreciable effect.

In fact, more than a third of the nation's top TV critics believe they have little or no influence on the programmers of television and more than half (55%) are convinced that no amount of rave reviews can offset poor ratings and keep a program on the air. However, nearly half (45%) feel these days that their judgments do have some effect on view selections and taste.

These figures are from a survey developed by Dr. Charles S. Steinberg, professor of communication at Hunter College in New York. This is not the usual academic log rolling because Charlie Steinberg is hardly the usual ivory tower professor. Until his retirement a couple of years ago, he was Vice-president and director of publicity, or chief press agent, for CBS, his Phi Beta Kappa key and his doctorate and his learned books on communication arts a curious contrast to his job.

Charlie knows the nation's TV press and his study of 73 critics was a careful selection, even though most of them shy from the title of "critic," preferring to be known as reporters or by the title the networks use: TV editors, which implies an administrative rather than literary job, presumably one pasting together network publicity releases. Not a single journalist in the study felt that he devotes his time or column exclusively to criticism, unlike many critics of books, movies and plays.

Dr. Steinberg in a summary of the findings wrote: "Television, the most powerful and pervasive of mass media, has not generated interest in serious criticism either from the industry or the viewer. But critics do see their work as prestigious and, when the medium does move toward developing its own aesthetic, criticism of television may take on a significance comparable to criticism of other media."

The study reveals a much more professional and serious attitude toward the

work than was true a few years ago. A primary reason seems to be the encouragement of reviewing programs in advance. Hal Kanter's famous old crack that "a TV critic is about as valuable as a fag dinosaur on the ark," pointing out that there was such a dinosaur which is the reason we have no dinosaurs, was not all that inaccurate back in the live days when it was made, when shows were always reviewed after they'd come and gone, when the function of the TV critic, in Jackie Gleason's line, was "to report accidents to eye witnesses."

But since Dr. Frank Stanton, then president of CBS, developed the advance review policy at that network, which was immediately adopted by public television, later by ABC, but not NBC, which still is back with the dinosaurs, a different kind of cat had come into the TV pages.

Instead of someone who wanted to get off the farm desk and onto the TV junkets, young men and women deeply interested in the vast potential of television are entering the field — not as a way station to other things, such as reviewing movies or plays, but as a goal in itself. And why not? After all, a TV critic this past spring was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for criticism: Ron Powers of the Chicago Sun-Times.

Significantly, though some 66% of the current critics had no previous training or experience in the field or in making aesthetic judgment, most of them (65%) felt special training or credentials should be required, as with doctors and lawyers.

Dr. Steinberg's purpose was to create a portrait of the "complete" critic of American television. Larry Laurent of the Washington Post, long one of the top men in the field, offered just such a portrait some years ago:

"The complete television critic begins with a love for the excitement and impact of the combination of sight and sound, pictures which can be viewed and words which can be heard by millions of people at one time. He must be something of an electronics engineer, an expert on governmental processes, an aesthetician; he must have a grasp of advertising and marketing; he should be able to evaluate all the art forms, comprehend each message conveyed on every subject under the sun. He must be absolutely incorruptible, a firmly anchored man of objectivity in a stormy world of special interests and pressure groups. He should stand above the boiling turmoil, yet plunge into every controversy as a social critic and guardian of our standards . . ."

And when such a paragon can be found, he is permitted to pass judgment on *Lotsa Luck*.

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THE SIGN OF GOOD TELEVISION

# *CINEMA VERITÉ AND TELEVISION*

## *Some Reflections on Frederick Wiseman's Juvenile Court*

*By Joy Gould Boyum, Ph.D.*

Why, on every hand, are we suddenly encountering the term "cinema verite"?

Although the concept, "cinema of truth", dates back to 1922 and the theories of Soviet film maker, Dziga Vertov, this particular style of documentary had to await the advent of television for a full and widespread development.

Reasons for this are readily understood. Aiming at what Vertov called "life caught unawares", and reducing the camera's manipulation of its subject to a minimum, cinema verite has had to sacrifice much of the traditional film medium's eloquence. This has been an asset in television. Film's large vocabulary of shots, formal arrangements, angles, even movement, are put aside to produce images that will — in the words of theorists — "reveal" or "redeem" reality.

To watch cinema verite in a traditional environment — a darkened theatre with a large screen — is to have our expectations dramatically challenged. We may feel our vision starved, our desire for motion frustrated. Our senses do not, however, make such demands of television. We understand, with or without Marshall McLuhan's help, that television, by its very nature, must make small statements. It cannot articulate large scale actions, panoramic vistas, long distanced views or subtle shadings of light and dark.

Since we are aware of television's cramped visual definition, its intimacy, its narrowness, we see no incongruity in cinema verite on the small screen. The static and unarranged imagery seems altogether natural.

Still, it is not owing entirely to their inherent limitations that television and cinema verite seem meant for one another. Television has greatly enriched the techniques and the technology of cinema verite. The journalistic potential for Vertov's cinema of truth was always there; television gave it instantaneous communication.

Necessity being the mother of invention, television developed, early in its

history, flexible, mobile, low cost equipment. Such tools have proved ideal for cinema verite. The hand-held camera, we now know, can capture as much truth as the huge and costly equipment that's synonymous with Hollywood.

But perhaps most meaningful of all, in explaining the coherence of the medium and the method, is that television's most powerful resource is identical to that of cinema verite. That is, the ability to involve us, immediately and intimately, in any scene. We are made to feel that *this is how it is*, that this is precisely the way we would see and hear this scene were we eye-witnesses to the truth as it was happening.

Cinema verite, then, is television at its most natural and most compelling. It is factual, not an artistic arrangement. It is life, as it is being lived. Alone among the networks, the Public Broadcasting System seems to have recognized this special form.

If you watched the nightly replay of the Senate Watergate hearings, you were watching cinema verite. The footage was unedited, of course, but there on the screen was living history. Nobody was play-acting but it was as incisive a set of characterizations as history has ever given us.

We saw many weeks of cinema verite in that astonishing study of domestic culture, *An American Family*. The camera recorded real people, acting out their loves and hates. In a very short time they forgot all about the camera and the microphones. This was *verite*, in the fullest sense.

But the programs that best embody the cinema of truth concept are those from film maker Frederick Wiseman. The seventh of these, *Juvenile Court*, was shown over Public Broadcasting stations last October.

Here, as in his earlier works (*Hospital, Law and Order, High School*) Wiseman trains his austere camera on an American institution. With neither commentary nor direct interview nor explanation of any kind, Wiseman leads the audience to a shattering *knowledge* of that institution.

Inevitably, the knowledge, the understanding will be a partial one when the institution itself follows certain baffling rules and traditions. The norms of the routine in a Memphis, Tenn. court room are not the norms we had expected. But if we are confused and troubled before the law, our responses accurately reflect those of the children and parents we see in the film. Presumably, these are the responses Wiseman intended us to have.

We must not mistake the film maker's spare style — his often stationary camera, his incredibly long takes, his stark, newsreel images — for anything like total objectivity. All artists are selective in their techniques.

This point is a crucial one in light of the criticism raised against earlier Wiseman films and against cinema verite in general. Significantly, a similar criticism has frequently been levelled against the television newscasts.

The charge is that these works have betrayed an attitude, a point of view, while "pretending" to be neutral. One can only wonder at all the fuss. Of course, Wiseman has a point of view, as does any cinema verite producer, or, indeed, any human observer.

Without a point of view, you can't see anything. The camera has to be stationed somewhere. Naturally, some angles of vision are more balanced, more objective, if you will, than others. But ultimately, no matter how complete the world the camera has captured, the material must be selected, arranged, edited. An unedited film might require an audience to sit, looking, for 50 or 100 hours. A preposterous notion.

Granting that the film maker reveals his taste, and feelings in the way he assembles his final product, we must still bear in mind that the material remains completely *genuine*. Wiseman did not stage these court scenes or give these people lines to speak. He achieves balance in his presentation, however, allowing the material to speak for itself in a straight-forward manner.

But there is something else at work here in our perceptions. We see a film like *Juvenile Court* as objective because we forget we are seeing a film. So literal is the image that we confuse it with the living reality. Then it occurs to us that an unseen hand has chosen the angles, the footage and the speeches. We are seeing and hearing the truth in this judicial hearing but it is the truth Frederick Wiseman wished us to see and hear.

What has clearly struck Wiseman as typical of this court and revealing of the court procedure is the overriding sense of uncertainty. Not only do we see bewildered children and their uncomprehending parents, we also note that the judge and the social worker are forced to make decisions on the thinnest, barest evidence. They doubt, they guess, but one thing is sure: their words will determine the course of a young person's life.

Should an 11 year old prostitute be allowed to remain with her working mother or should she be placed in a foster home where she will receive firmer supervision? The mother remains silent, the daughter cries uncontrollably at the prospect of their separation.

Should a little boy who has been brutally beaten by his prospective stepfather be returned to the mother and her intended, or would he fare better in a foster home?

In the first case, a social worker recommends separation from the mother. In the second case, a psychiatrist states that the child will be better off with his natural parent. A viewer may disagree with both edicts but this is the *verite* of the court room that day.

Our emotions are further torn by a case involving a teen age boy and the quirky mother of a three year old girl. Hired as a baby sitter, the boy, according to the mother, sexually molested the child. Her evidence was a "passion bruise" on the child's neck, and the complaint of the baby's five year old brother that he had been barred from his sister's room while the older boy was "sitting", whatever that word encompassed. The court recommended lie detector tests and psychiatric treatment for the boy.

Watching these encounters, we keep wanting the kind of knowledge we would get from fiction, the discovery of what actually happened, a feeling for consequences which would let us know if the court's decisions have been the

right ones. But reality offers no such assurance and our frustration is as great as our involvement.

Nothing here is black and white. There are no images of authority's brutality and cruelty such as we have been given in other Wiseman films. But while everyone here seems well-meaning, they also seem at times surprisingly lacking in sensitivity. The youth accused of assaulting the infant girl is told by the judge that the crime is so serious that the maximum penalty for it is death in the electric chair. We feel outrage for a moment. Hasn't this child (like the others) been frightened enough, victimized enough by parents and — as we discover in the film's final sequence — by a system in which they seem to have no rights?

A 17-year-old boy, charged as an accessory in an armed robbery, claims that he acted "under stress and duress" and begs to be tried in criminal court together with the 19-year-old he claims forced him into the holdup. His lawyer, introduced to the case on the morning of the hearing, enters into plea-bargaining with the judge.

They agree that the criminal court might deal the youngster a 20 year sentence. Ignoring the boy's wishes, the lawyer enters a plea of guilty to a reduced charge of simple robbery. The judge then sentences the lad to a short term in a "training school". The youth cries out: "I'm innocent. I feel I've been trapped. Isn't there any justice for me." It is a chilling moment and we find it difficult to agree with the judge and the lawyer, despite the sincerity of their belief that they did "the best thing" for the boy.

They also assure the boy that the sentence "can be erased". From the record, perhaps, but never from the boy's mind.

Both the court room and cinema verite can be hard on their victims. Complaints have been filed by the parents of children who appeared in this film and there have been rebukes from the American Civil Liberties Union. This legal to-do has prevented the repeat broadcasts of the film. By its nature, cinema verite always risks the embarrassment of its subjects. As we watch *Juvenile Court*, we feel at times that these people have been invited to collaborate in their own humiliation. We understand their hurt. Similarly, in some of the more intimate cinema verite productions we have been made to feel that we have been drawn into the game as voyeurs.

But the hard truth is this: cinema verite rarely operates without the subject's consent. It must also have the consent of the viewer. The essential question, then, is why subject and viewer give their consent?

In the case of those being filmed, is it a simple desire to see themselves in the movies? Or is it a simple lack of self-awareness? Is it the innocence that permitted the Loud Family to offer itself as the epitome of the happy, prosperous life in California?

Or, could it be that in revealing ourselves to others we enjoy the happy illusion of intimacy? And, in playing voyeurs, are we snatching at some semblance of relationship and community?

All these thoughts bring us back to the basics of television. Are not the illusions cited above the very ones that television seeks to create? And the deep, psychological needs these illusions imply, are they not the needs television satisfies?

\* \* \*

*A born and bred New Yorker, JOY GOULD BOYUM, Ph.D. received her B.A. from Barnard and her Ph.D from New York University, where she is currently Professor of English Education. Since 1971 she has been contributing a weekly essay, "On Film," to the Wall Street Journal. She is the author of a textbook on film criticism.*

\* \* \*

## QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"I have told the NBC News Division many times, in the most forceful way I can, that no subject is to be considered untouchable as long as we do it fairly; no subject is off limits; no subject needs special treatment because of special interests. . . . Television has the ability to reach people and it has the duty to speak the truth."

— *Julian Goodman*, President of NBC  
Address at the University of Florida  
August 25, 1973

\* \* \*

"Censorship is a dangerous weapon, with whatever good intentions it may be applied. I venture to guess that many of the same station executives who rejected 'Sticks and Bones' willingly transmit the steady run of action melodramas in which all kinds of murders and other vicious crimes are routinely committed."

— *John Beaufort* in the *Christian Science Monitor*

\* \* \*

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# *SUCH WERE THE JOYS*

## *An Excerpt From : How The Golden Age of Television Turned My Hair to Silver*

*By Kenneth Whelan*

In many ways, the Golden Age Television was not as Golden as you might remember. The live dramatic shows that are now discussed with a reverence due only to Shakespeare were often just a step higher than an amateur performance. Thousands of dramatic shows were produced during the era of live television, and very few of them were really good. Older folk, like myself, are always saying things like, "Those were the days when they did *real* dramatic shows! . . . My God, the taped junk they put on the air *these* days can't compare to the old live shows."

When you hear someone make a remark like that, forgive them, because they are remembering a few great, classic shows like "Marty," "Twelve Angry Men," or maybe an exceptional show on *Studio One*. Time makes a liar out of the past, especially in show business. The golden part of the live television era consisted of a few special people who had a lot of talent. the rest of it was rather ordinary.

I'd like to say a few words about a TV show that was heartily applauded by network executives, FCC members, city officials, cameramen, and stagehands. The hearty applause was heard on the day that the show was taken off the air.

In the history of show business there have been many violations of good taste. Carnivals and circus shows had their Geeks. The burlesque show had its vulgar blackout sketches. The old minstrel shows featured white men who blackened their faces with burnt cork, and acted out the lie that all blacks were lazy comedians. Broadway has given us "Oh! Calcutta!" But television was responsible for "Strike It Rich."

My exposure to "Strike It Rich" was short and merciful. I was assigned to the show as associate director for about two months. A man by the name of Matt Harlib was the director at the time I worked the show. When I say "a man" by the name of Matt Harlib, the choice of words is not accidental. I don't know what became of Matt these last twenty years. I doubt if he is still mixed up in TV. I don't know if he was a talented man, because talent was not required to be the director of "Strike It Rich." I don't know any of of these things about

Matt Harlib, but there's one thing I do know. He was a man of integrity. He was the only television director I ever heard of who walked out of the control room in the middle of a live show and never came back.

For those of you who are old enough to remember the program, but find that the image is a little fuzzy, let me help jog your memory. "Strike It Rich" was a daily television show that claimed to help the more unfortunate people on earth to a better life. Warren Hull would prance on stage and tell you that "Strike It Rich" existed only to bring a little ray of sunshine into the lives of a few tragedy-struck people. He would then proceed to the interview area, where he would interview some poor son of a wretch who should never have allowed himself to be exploited on a network television show by Warren Hull.

A typical show would start off with a recent double amputee who needed artificial limbs but couldn't afford them. The second guest might have been a black child from Harlem who had seen his mother and father die in a tenement fire. The third receiver of the show's benevolence could have been a destitute farmer from North Carolina who had lost his home and barn in a hurricane. If he was a good "Strike It Rich" farmer, the hurricane had also blown away his wife, four cows, and two sons. It's starting to come back to you, right?

After Warren Hull interviewed these poor unfortunates, bringing out every sordid detail of their tragedy, he would then invite them over to the "Heart Line Area." (Everything on "Strike It Rich" was an "area.")

The Heart Line Area was a flat piece of scenery with a heart painted on it. The inside of the heart was cut out, and a telephone rested on a small shelf. The Heart Line was the telephone, of course. Various voices would call, offering help to the poor creatures Warren Hull had befriended.

Some of the Heart Line calls were legitimate. A benevolent surgeon might call up, and offer a free operation to a woman with a bad gall bladder. Or perhaps a kindhearted soul would call and volunteer the bus fare back to Alabama for a sharecropper who had come to New York looking for work.

Some of the Heart Line calls were *not* motivated by an urge to help another human being. They came under the heading of a free plug on network television for a commercial product.

. . . "Hello! . . . Warren Hull? Is this the Heart Line? . . . Well, I'm Richard B. Wilson, president of the Sure Glide Wheel Chair Company . . . I would personally like to help little Johnny recover from his terrible accident . . . So, if little Johnny will come down to our show room at 916 44th Avenue, Jamaica, Queens, New York . . . that's 916 44th Avenue, Jamaica, Queens, New York . . . he will become the proud possessor of a Super Delux Sure Glide Wheel Chair . . . The Super Deluxe is our luxury model, and I'm sure little Johnny will enjoy all of its advanced features . . . Good luck, Johnny!"

Besides the Heart Line calls from the general public, there were also the "Inside" calls. These calls were usually the voice of a member of the show's staff. These "Inside" calls were made when the outside calls were not coming in fast enough to keep the show going. I saw nothing wrong with the producers making these calls, because I've always believed in the "show must go on" theory. The terrible thing about the "Inside" calls was the stupidity of some of these Heart Line gifts, and the fact that they had the same commercial odor about them.

"Hello . . . Warren? . . . At this time the producers of 'Strike It Rich' would like to extend a Heart Line to Mrs. Beecher . . . We are giving her a complete set of World Scope Encyclopedias, consisting of thirty volumes . . . World Scope is the most up-to-date encyclopedia set now in print. Its fact-filled pages are generously illustrated with color plates for your education and enjoyment . . . Happy reading, Mrs. Beecher!"

On too many occasions, Mrs. Beecher was blind.

During the time I worked on "Strike It Rich," the most horrible part of the show was the "morning shape-up" for people who aspired to be on the receiving end of the Heart Line. The official way to get on the show was to send a letter telling your story to the "Strike It Rich" office. If your troubles were sufficiently dramatic, you were invited to come to New York and appear on the show, at your own expense of course. Unfortunately, a great many people thought that if they showed up in person, they would have a better chance of being picked. The result was that twenty or thirty of these unfortunate people would show up at the theatre every morning, hoping that they might be the lucky ones.

Although the producers did not encourage this procedure, the hopeful group was always invited back stage, where a member of the production staff would conduct a brief interview session. I never figured out whether the producers were genuinely sympathetic or whether they were afraid they might miss a great participant. Whatever the reason, the results were horrible.

If you have ever been subjected to a mass job interview with twenty other hopefuls, you'll have a slight idea of what it was like. In show business and the modeling profession, this type of thing is called a "cattle call." Among union men on the waterfront, it's called a "shape-up." The cattle call and the shape-up can be the most undignified moment in a person's life, but the interviews conducted every morning on "Strike It Rich" made these experiences seem like eleven o'clock Mass. The applicants involved in the "Strike It Rich" group interviews were not in competition with each other for a job, which is a fairly clean-cut process. Each one of them was matching his own personal tragedy against twenty other personal tragedies for the privilege of appearing on this show. It was grotesque.

Various members of the production staff would conduct these interviews. They rotated, because after one shape-up session, the interviewer would be overcome by a severe case of depression, requiring a twenty-four-hour drink to get out of his system. A typical session went like this:

“Would you all fill out the forms that I’ve just given you . . . On the top line write your name and address . . . I’ll wait . . . How are we doing? . . . Yes, what seems to be the trouble? . . . I understand. Well, don’t you worry, I’ll fill out the form for you . . . and may I say that ‘Strike It Rich’ is very partial to severe arthritis cases. You have an excellent chance of appearing on our show . . . Sir, you seem to be having a problem. Is there any way I can help? . . . You don’t KNOW your name and address? . . . An amnesia victim? How dreadful . . . Well, don’t you worry about it. Just leave the first line blank. In fact, leave the whole form blank. We’ll have to work it out later . . . All right, everybody, fill out the rest of the form, age, occupation, marital status . . . I’ll wait . . . Now, let’s fill out the last question, ‘Why do you want to appear on “Strike It Rich”?’ If I can be of any help, please do not hesitate to ask . . . Yes sir . . . Well, why don’t you explain your case to me, and I’ll fill it in myself . . . I see, you’re a Negro albino . . . Nothing wrong with that, right? Just a quirk of nature, that’s all . . . You say that the black community will not tolerate you because you’re white . . .

And so it went on, every morning.

There was one production assistant who was assigned to run the shape-up twice a month. As far as I know, she never completed an interview session. She would talk to three of the aspirants, and tears would begin sliding down her face. Open weeping would break out a few minutes later, and she would end up sobbing noisily by the time she had interviewed her fifth victim.

Two days before I was relieved of my duties on “Strike It Rich,” Matt Harlib, the director, made his beautiful move. We were doing one of our typical shows. Matt was taking the usual camera shots. Close-ups of weeping people as they exposed their tragedies to Warren Hull, and wide shots of the audience as they applauded the weeping people . . . Just an ordinary show.

The third and last victim on this particular show was a sixty-five-year-old paraplegic who was paralyzed from the waist down. Warren conducted his usual warm interview:

“ . . . So, up until the tragic accident nine months ago, you were a healthy vigorous lumberjack . . . Now, you are a helpless shell of a man, unable to support your family . . . Well, believe me, sir, you have come to the right place . . . STRIKE IT RICH IS HERE TO HELP YOU! . . . (Wild applause from the audience) . . . Now, Mr. Cullen, if you will step over to the Heart Line Area, we’ll make sure that you STRIKE IT RICH!”

Warren Hull then walked briskly to the Heart Line Area, obviously forgetting that Mr. Cullen was a paraplegic. Mr. Cullen stared across the stage at Mr. Hull for a few embarrassing moments. Then, Mr. Cullen realized that something was expected of him. He planted his crutches firmly in front of him, pulled himself out of the chair, and started his slow, painful journey across the stage to the Heart Line Area.

At that moment, it suddenly occurred to me that I was working on a Geek show. The cameraman on camera two grabbed a tight shot of Mr. Cullen's legs as they scraped their way across the stage. One of the bosses standing in the back of the control room yelled, "Take two, Matt! Take two!"

Matt looked at the shot on camera two, and turned to the voice from the back of the control room. On his face was a look of utter disbelief. "You really want me to put that shot on the air?"

"It's a great shot, Matt! A tight shot of the crutches *and* the legs! It's fantastic!"

Matt took one more look at the shot on camera two, then he got up from the director's chair, took off his head set, and walked out of the control room.

He never came back.

In 1953, the experience of putting a live Ed Sullivan show on the air was both glorious and traumatic.

A few months ago I ran into Bob Daily, one of two technical directors I worked with on the Gleason and Sullivan shows. He's now a sports director at CBS. He was a great TD in the early days, and he probably is just as great a sports director. We had a drink together, reminiscing about the good old days. This conversation took place *seventeen years* after we had worked together, yet, when we got to talking about the live Ed Sullivan shows, his drinking tempo picked up, and his voice changed. And Bob was one of the strong ones. It was like that. It was crazy.

On one particular Sunday night in 1953, Ed did a two-minute introduction to Peggy Lee. The lights dimmed, the spotlight appeared on the curtain, the curtain opened, and the stage was empty.

Camera two had the opening shot on Peggy's first song. The cameraman was Pat McBride, the talented cameraman who always knew what he was doing. He dollied in for a loose waist shot, and then he suddenly stopped moving in. His voice came over our head sets.

"I don't see any Peggy Lee. Do you guys see Peggy Lee?"

"No, Pat," answered the director, "we don't see any Peggy Lee."

Marlo yelled into Ray Bloch's mike, "Repeat the music intro, Ray! We can't find Peggy Lee!"

Across the theater I could see Ray Bloch look toward the glass-enclosed control room. Ray repeated the music intro four times while Pat panned his camera all over the stage, searching for Peggy Lee.

Suddenly, Johnny Wray screamed, "Up, Pat! Pan up!"

Pat obeyed the director and ended up with a shot of a guy sitting on a

trapeze. Pat asked calmly, "What's Peggy Lee doing up there?"

"It's not Peggy Lee, Pat! It's the Flying Montoyas!"

"Never heard of them," said Pat.

"Do the best you can, Pat! It's a trapeze act!"

As Ray Bloch switched into the Flying Montoyas' music, Pat said, "I figured that out already."

Incidentally, this mishap occurred because Eddie Brinkman was out with the flu, and we had a substitute stage manager who did not know about the mysteries of the run down sheet.

On another Sunday night, we had the U.S. Army's champion drill team on the show. It was a black drill team from one of the southern Army camps. No one was bothered by the lack of a camera rehearsal, because we were experts at this sort of thing. The Sullivan show had a soft spot for any group of people who could keep in step with each other. We had marchers on the show every other week. Our favorite marching people were the West Pointers, who proved that the ability to march in unison was a major factor in the defense of America. Using this premise, the Rockettes at the Radio City Music Hall were the greatest threat to Communism in the Western Hemisphere. If fifty gout victims had learned to limp in unison, they would have been on the Sullivan show five times a year.

With this kind of experience behind us, we were confident that we could handle the champion drill team without a camera rehearsal. At eight twenty that Sunday night, the curtains opened, the team drilled with great style, and we got the right shots with no trouble at all. Suddenly, the marchers formed a column of four abreast, and headed straight for camera two. Now, this may not sound unusual or frightening to *you*, but for two reasons it became a harrowing experience for the cameraman on camera two. First, camera two operated on a five-foot-wide ramp that extended into the audience from the stage. The second reason was that the cameraman was new and inexperienced.

When the column of black soldiers began marching down the ramp, there was only one thing that the cameraman could do, and that was "retreat." They kept coming at him, doing a crazy manual of arms with their rifles, and he continued to retreat. I looked out the control room window, and saw the cameraman glancing over his shoulder to see how much ramp he had left. We could hear his muttered remarks over the head sets. "What the hell are they doing? Are they crazy?"

"Pull back, Jimmy!" yelled the director. "Pull back!"

Between terrified looks over his shoulder, and even more terrified looks into his camera view finder, Jimmy found time to say, "You've got a steel trap mind, Johnny! Where the hell else can I go?"

With about six feet of ramp behind him, Jimmy turned paranoid. "They're after me! They're after me!" With two feet of ramp behind him, he ripped off his head set, jumped off the end of the ramp, and ran into the lobby of the theater. The sergeant in charge of the drill team barked a command, the soldiers did an

about face toward the stage, and we finished in fine style . . . minus camera two.

Yes, there were several pure nuggets that created the myth of the Golden Age, but most of live television was just plain brass.

It was a growing period. An era that had to be lived through, in order to get to something that was better. . . . And it *is* better these days, believe me, and it will get better every year that it exists.

The age of live television has been dead for fourteen years. It is over and done with, and it will never return. . . . Thank God!

\* \* \*

*KENNETH WHELAN was a staff director and associate director for CBS Television Network from 1951 through 1958. As a free lance director he was responsible for such shows as "The Big Payoff", "For Love or Money" and "The Schaeffer Circle".*

\* \* \*

## QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"The record for the most ourstanding achievement by a football player in the field of testimonials is held by C. K. 'Red' Cagle, a star at West Point in the 1930s. He always used a Royal portable typewriter. 'It is the greatest aid I ever knew in keeping up my grades!,' Red swore. Upon investigation, it was discovered that in a class of 266, the noted Royal portable user was 232nd in math, 207th in English and 239th in history.

"Joe Namath is not in the Cagle tradition with his testimonial starring two bimbos. Noxema asks us to believe that if you use its shaving cream you will have two bimbos in the bathroom whenever you shave. Yet everybody knows the reason girls are attracted to Namath is his Hamilton Beach popcorn maker.

"'We've seen him shave,'" observed Dick Schapp, the Channel 4 sportsman, "'now let's see him pass.'"

— *Marvin Kitman* in *Long Island Newsday*.

\* \* \*

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# TV AND CRUMPETS

By Robert G. Deindorfer

Any adult with an IQ equal to his body temperature installs a television set soon after taking up residence in England. When the set is on, the lounge — as they call the living room over here — feels a lot warmer.

Once our family had settled down in the village of Lower Slaughter, the television set took its place near the hearth. Having seen some of the fine BBC imports on New York's Channel 13, we were prepared for evenings of fine drama, droll comedy and sophisticated discussion of public affairs. Through the long chill winter, we assured ourselves, the little screen would glow with magic.

To date the magic has been somewhat minor. When we write home we tell about the Morris dancing on the green and the pink-coated huntsmen riding across the fields, but we never mention British television. It's not all that different from the television we watched back home.

Of course, there is the occasional drama of high distinction or the occasional brilliant documentary. But both the BBC and the commercial channels offer a standard potpourri of mechanical domestic comedies, noisy game shows, crime adventures and old, old movies, the majority of them American.

During the past summer, British television seemed to be saluting John Wayne. We saw John Wayne, the combat pilot; John Wayne, the cowboy; John Wayne, the construction company troubleshooter; John Wayne, soldier of fortune forever.

The Wayne films were pot-boilers but they could be described as artistic triumphs compared to the average run of American films over here. You'd have to be pretty far gone in homesickness to watch *Tarzan and the Trappers*, *The Gunhawk*, *Untamed* or *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*.

Besides these penny-dreadfuls from the early 1940s, British television is awash with old State-side TV programs. Some evenings more than half the prime time is given over to such laugh-track riots as *Petticoat Junction*, *Streets of San Francisco*, *I Dream of Jeannie* and the assembly line adventures of the FBI. Like certain wines, these entertainments do not travel. They seem tackier here than at home.

Though Americans often criticize the English for their elegant ways, their superior airs, you find none of these qualities in their new situation comedies. I am hard put to single out the most offensive entry but it might be *Casanova '73*, a crude, leering series about a philandering husband. Leslie Phillips, a gifted and

clever actor, is seen week after week trying to seduce some toothsome wench while his peckish wife thwarts his plans.

Then there's *Man About the House*, the bawdy story of a young man who shares his flat with two girls. *Oh, Father!* gives us the old Dagwood cliché: the blundering, stupid male who can barely find his way home in the dark. *Men of Affairs* is all leering slapstick and dumb sex jokes. There's a rather dim variety show called *New Faces* — they're certainly new to us — and *Where Are They Now?*, an interesting account of what famous names of yesteryear are doing today.

Given these surroundings, a performer from the States, such as Elaine Stritch, positively glitters.

But one point must be made about British television. No matter how vulgar, aimless or idiotic the script, the performances are superb. All the acting, in general, strikes us as having more wit and style than our casual American performing, good as it sometimes is. In Britain, even the smallest roles emerge with clarity and distinction.

Away from pure entertainment, the British achieve considerable quality in their documentaries. I particularly admired *The Commanders*, a series that explored the careers of notable World War II generals. The episode dealing with Douglas MacArthur — warts and all — was extremely well done. I had reservations about the treatment of Gen. Rommel (much larger than life) but that in no way lessens the excellence of the series. One hopes that somewhere in American television there will be room this winter for *The Commanders*.

*The Ballad of Henry Ford* was another fine documentary, though one wonders if it will make its way across the Atlantic. Other documentaries have treated such subjects as brain-damaged children, the meat shortage, mortgage societies, the Common Market, and life among the aborigines of Australia. Here we saw British television at its inquiring, illuminating best.

Though it stretched its canvas a bit wide, and indulged in some rhetorical excesses, there was much to commend *The British Hero*, a study of such resident gods as Sir Galahad, Beau Geste, Raffles and James Bond. The telly, we are learning, can be highly instructive, and still entertain.

British cameras frequently fix a merciless eye on life in America. "The Lord is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay" opened with a cheap-trick scene of two homosexuals saying their vows in an elaborate church wedding, complete with nuptial kiss. But thereafter the film settled down to an absorbing and understanding account of California's 'gay' population. Among the unforgettable characters was a bewildered trans-sexual father on the verge of becoming a grandmother.

The film closed with a deeply moving memorial scene honoring gay comrades who died in a fire deliberately set by "moralists" who would outlaw any life style but the straight. This was a sensitive, first-rate program.

By now, millions of Americans are familiar with the best of British TV drama. The Masterpiece Theatre, seen on Public Broadcasting stations, has

shown the great historic series, *Elizabeth R. Marlborough* and a great deal of detective fiction.

A visiting American cannot say enough in praise of *Armchair Theatre*. Each play is beautifully filmed and magnificently acted. There's no experimentation, all the dramatic unities are observed. We have enjoyed *Helen — a Woman of Today*, with its candid look (over 13 weeks) at a disintegrated marriage. Some of the scenes might call for "parental guidance" back home, but the top-drawer dramas handle the new permissiveness with honesty and good taste.

The best of British drama is not coy or smirky about sexual matters. If the script requires that two people be filmed in bed, very well, there they are. The cameras do not focus on the dimmed lamp or the starry sky outside the window. We see the protagonists, speaking naturally. TV is mature over here.

The best of British television makes no concessions to so-called popular taste. It assumes that there are intelligent, responsive people out there, regardless of their education or status. The highly rated four-part drama, *The Brontes of Haworth*, afforded beautiful insight into that gifted tormented family and the bleak life they lived on the windswept moors. Christopher Fry wrote the script for this Yorkshire Television production. It was marred only by an obtrusive musical score in the opening installment.

As we were saying, British television is very like ours in that it can slide from the ridiculous to the sublime in one hour. Our game shows, with their rampant greed, share prime time with high-budget, all-star entertainments done with great skill.

Over here we have superior drama and we also have *Full House*, *House Party*, *Sale of the Century*, *It's a Knockout*, *The Generation Game*, *Whose Baby?* and *Opportunity Knocks*. All what you might call *kitsch*.

For Welsh audiences, there are variations on these parlor games, all with baffling names like: *Heddiw*, *Y Dydd* and *Miri Mawr*.

David Frost, who was all over the American TV dial for a time, is conducting an interview program here this autumn. Surprisingly, the old Frost bite is gone. Rather than leading the conversation into controversial areas, Mr. Frost simply lets it meander.

Both BBC and IBA run three newscasts each evening, timing them how they will. (Typical times are 6:05, 9:25 and 11:20.) The news is presented in a non-committal, uncluttered fashion. There is no discernible point of view, except when military or economic specialists appear to analyze a current problem.

Standard news format is: an opening headline summary, some detailed stories with film clips, interviews and commentary and sports scores in that language you might call British English. (Arsenal, three; Manchester City, nil). In closing, the major headlines of the day are repeated.

Reporters conducting interviews are always proper and restrained. The resulting dialog often reminds me of a Bob and Ray sketch. My favorite unfolded during the suspenseful days in late summer when two men were

trapped 1300 feet under the sea in a midget submarine. A conversation with an executive of Vickers Oceanic Ltd. went like this:

Reporter: Would you say that this is the most crucial phase of the rescue operation?

Man from Vickers: Yes, I'd say this is the most crucial phase of the *entire* rescue operation. (Note that daring interpolation: *entire*).

Reporter: Would the chances be fairly good that the rescue will succeed?

Man from Vickers: I can assure you that the chances are *quite* good that the rescue will succeed.

Though the news reports, to American ears, may seem too dry, too brisk, these qualities can only enhance the weather forecast.

In New York I was always bored by the length of the weather spots. I didn't care about the thunderheads building up in Montana or the scattered squalls on the Great Lakes. All I really wanted to know was: would my small son be paddling off in the rain tomorrow morning? The English, bless them, believe in weather forecasts that come straight to the point. They tell you what tomorrow will be like in one sentence, then give you the temperature range in centigrade and Fahrenheit. Of course, the predictions are frequently wrong, but that happens back home, too.

Unless the news from the States is of thundering importance, it isn't a regular part of the evening news. Many times we watch a full half hour of news with barely a mention of America. During the summer the BBC treated us to excerpts from the Senate Watergate hearings, with a news man offering a fine, balanced commentary. Regrettably, these Watergate tapes were played late in the evening, 11:30 or thereabouts.

The English are great sportsmen and rabid fans. Their television, accordingly, devotes as much time to sports events as does ours. Let a horse show come on, or test match cricket or World Cup soccer, producers simply light up the cameras and leave them on until the last player leaves the field. In season, both BBC and the commercial channels show weekly soccer matches, with great moments enshrined in what they call "action replays".

As the father of a six year old who is allowed one hour of television per day, I've been obliged to watch a fair sampling of television's treats for kiddies. The cultural shock to my son, Scott, has been minimal. He sees in England the shows he used to watch in New York. Among them such cultural milestones as *Bugs Bunny*, *Yogi Bear*, *Scooby-Do*, *Merrie Melodies* and *The Flintstones*. No horizon wideners here, regrettably.

When not relying on U.S. imports, the British are capable of turning out some impressive programs for children. High marks are due such efforts as *Magpie*, *Blue Peter* and *Jackonary*, all classed as "learning programs". Some highly diverting children's serials are on view, all tastefully done. Among them we found our old favorite, *Black Beauty* and a jolly tale about *Dawson's Funny Old Farm*. Adventure series like *Captain Scarlet* and *Lost in Space* might well

terrify very young children. But, in general, it should be stressed that British television is far less violent, far less explicit in its mayhem than the small fry fare back home.

While nothing over here approaches *Sesame Street* — a show I continue to admire despite its deliberate bad grammar — there is a gentle, thoughtful quality in much of the children's fare that we, as parents, find reassuring.

Visiting Americans cannot fail to be impressed by one more feature of British television. The color quality is radiant, sharp and beautiful. But as Americans discovered some 15 years ago, a bad show is a bad show no matter how it is colored.

\* \* \*

*ROBERT G. DEINDORFER attended the University of Missouri School of Journalism, leaving shortly before graduation to join the U.S. Marine Corps. He has been a newspaperman and a free lance writer for the past 20 years. His byline has appeared in Life, Look, Reader's Digest and The Saturday Evening Post. He has written five books and is currently at work on a new one dealing with the Israeli intelligence service.*

\* \* \*

## QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Nighttime talk shows are pervaded with exotic anomalies, and I think someone could write a study of the guests who appear on the 'Today' show. The last time I watched it on three consecutive days I was treated to (a) an interview with a 'clergyman' who had founded his own church so he could be more loving than organized religions; (b) a debate on whether addictive drugs could be legalized; and (c) a seminar on the rights of children against parents and how kids could haul their parents into court if they were abused. All are doubtless worthy subjects, but the cumulative effect over weeks, months and years, is corrosive."

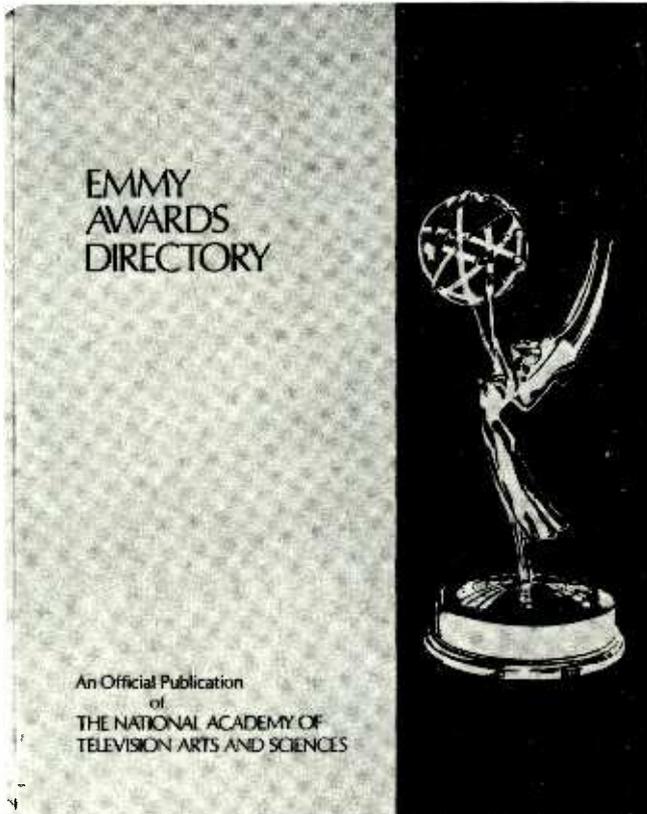
Letter to the Editor, *Christian Science Monitor*  
(signed) *Elia M. Larocca*, Newburgh, N.Y.

"TV is an evil medium. It should never have been invented. But since we have to live with it, let's try to do something about it."

— *Richard Burton*,  
Quoted in *London Observer*  
Actor, shareholder in Harlech TV.

\* \* \*

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# ON A CLEAR DAY YOU CAN SEE WILDWOOD, PA.

*By Thomas V. Sobczak, Ph.D.*

Television rarely bores me. Some evenings, in fact, the richness and diversity is positively dazzling. But I am a specially privileged viewer. My tuning range seems, to my neighbors, almost infinite. It even astonishes me, though there is no great mystery, provided you understand elementary physics and respect the arcane uses of gadgetry.

My viewing begins after dinner at my home in Baldwin, Long Island. On a typical evening I start with *Action News* from WPVI, Channel 6 in Philadelphia. Then I rotate my antenna eastward for an hour of splendid jazz from WXHR, Channel 56, Cambridge, Mass.

As the hour hand approaches nine, I prepare for a theatre interlude. Ah, here we are in Wilmington, just in time for the curtain. It's WHYI, Channel 12, and tonight we're seeing light opera.

After returning home for local news, I decide to check tomorrow's weather. Not the weather in Manhattan, where it differs hardly at all from Long Island, but the weather to the West and the South. Here's Portsmouth, Va., where the Channel 10 man tells me it's beginning to rain. Hurricane warnings are up on the Southeast Coast. Thanks very much, WAVY. We'll batten down the hatches.

None of the foregoing is fantasy. There's hardly a station from Boston to Richmond that can't be fetched in from the skies if you live in a non-congested area and possess the proper equipment.

As a hobby, long distance televiewing is endlessly fascinating. It carries the sense of adventure our elders remember from the old days of the crystal set when, on a clear night, you could bring in KDKA, Pittsburgh. The hobby-viewer's quest for better reception and wider viewing areas has led to the development of chains of pre-amplifiers, attenuators and boosters which rival small "ham radio" transmitters.

The rewards of long distance viewing are marvelous beyond words. One ceases to be dependent upon network programming. New vistas are opened as the home screen delivers educational and experimental programs.

Originally, I believed that the only advantageous spot for long distance viewing was the south shore of Long Island. Then I happened to check the range of stations available from Arden House, the Columbia University outpost at Harriman, N.Y. I found that a student from Virginia could actually tune in

Virginia. Later my belief in the magic ether of Baldwin, L.I., was dimmed somewhat as I watched entertainment from Columbus, Ohio, from my aisle seat in Parkersburg, West Virginia.

Still, were you to embrace long distance viewing as a hobby, I would urge you to move to Long Island's south shore. There you would be in the center of the East Coast Megalopolis which extends, roughly, from Portland, Me. to the Virginia Beach area. Megalopolis is a thin strip, no more than 100 miles deep as it runs down the Atlantic Coast. There are no high mountains to offer interference.

With my antenna rig, most contacts with far-away channels occur over a route that's from 50 to 80 per cent water. Helped by reflection from the water, a signal will sometimes travel 450 miles. For example, by carefully adjusting the antenna for direction, Wilmington, N.C. (80 per cent over water) can be seen as clearly as New Haven, Conn., some 68 miles from my home.

Overland viewing is another story altogether. The absence of reflection limits the transmission. The earth seems to absorb the signal so that the farther away your antenna the lighter the picture. It fades to nothing, leaving you with nothing but the audio.

Long distance viewing, I may state from experience, is affected significantly by both location and season. Some people are lucky enough to live in natural reception areas. That is, areas where nature has, by some mysterious means, concentrated the electronic impulses so that any antenna, properly aimed, will pick up fairly strong signals.

But to everything there is a season. From late spring to early fall, weather patterns obligingly bounce TV signals over long distances. The low pressure systems which prevail act as repeaters (similar to those used in undersea cables) which boost the signals from transmitter to receiver.

On a perfect night in the perfect season, I have tuned in KMOX-TV in St. Louis, and a heady experience it was. Admittedly, this was a special occasion. We do not have such luck every night.

The west to east air mass flow has a decidedly salutary effect on long distance viewing. As the typical "low" moves up the East Coast, it straddles an imaginary line between the coastline and the mountains. When the low reaches Chesapeake Bay, the winds start whipping the TV signals generated in Norfolk-Portsmouth, on the Delaware Peninsula and in southern New Jersey. The momentum carries up the Coast, past Long Island, in sufficient strength for excellent reception.

High pressure areas travel in the same fashion, save that the winds move clockwise rather than counter-clockwise. I recall watching CB-FCT, Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, for three hours before the call letters came into view. As the high approaches Long Island, the front winds cause Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts to put forth a stronger signal.

The size of the weather front has a dramatic effect on reception. For example, a large 'low' over-rides a small 'high'. A beautiful sight is obtained

during the summer by tuning to Channel 6 and rotating the antenna north. By going to the high end of the fine tuning control, you enter the FM band. Thunderstorms occur almost nightly somewhere in lower Connecticut. By turning up the color intensity, you may listen to FM music and view the most startling kaleidoscope of static electricity discharges.

Readers of a technical bent will naturally be curious about the equipment that brings in these far-away pictures. Others may pass lightly over the next paragraphs.

To mention only the essentials, I have a 20 foot telescoping mast mounted within a ten foot tripod roof tower, all of which is guyed to the roof with eight separate wires. The wire is treated to prevent corrosion, then sealed in plastic. On the mast I have mounted a 'CDE' Indicating Antenna Rotator, guaranteed to support 150 pounds in a 100 mile gale. Above the rotator, on a five foot pole, I have mounted a Winegard 350 mile range 56-element antenna. The antenna is mounted as close to the rotator as practical.

In setting up my antenna system, I not only did a great deal of shopping, plus research into various components, I also made a serious study of Long Island geography. I spent hours poring over Geodetic Service maps of my area.

Thanks to the maps, I learned the location of every transmitter tower and water tower in my area. Adjusting my antenna accordingly, I have been able to exorcise a good many ghosts.

Indoors, the five wire lead runs to the rotator control. The CDE control is sturdy enough to withstand the playful abuse of six children, aged one to ten.

The system, if one considers the entertainment, the challenge and the plain fun of it all, is remarkably cheap. The total cost of my equipment, including the telescoping mast, tripod tower, guy wire, antenna, the pre-amplifier and booster, adds up to two hundred and ten dollars.

The development of long distance televiewing as a hobby was quite unplanned. Initially, when the old set collapsed after seven years use, a trip to Sears to browse resulted in the purchase of a 23-inch Silvertone color set and a cheap (\$19.00) antenna.

"Stupid!" said my friends. "A color TV should have a rotor so you can get the Giant football games." (In my innocence a rotor was the key to viewing Channel 3.)

A second visit to Sears almost resulted in failure. The salesman, positive that Channel 3 was unattainable from the south shore, tried his best to dissuade my purchase. His reluctance, however, annoyed me. I purchased my rotor and firmly decided, "I will watch Channel 3!!"

The problem was now, what to do next? Where does one go to locate information on TV signals? The Baldwin, Freeport and Oceanside public libraries could not provide a solution.

The Encyclopedia Brittanica, after a three-week wait for a reply, proved no better. At last, the New York Daily News Information Service offered a clue. "Try the FCC." they said. "They control TV broadcasting."

A call to the FCC all but doomed my quest. They had the information but couldn't give it out. Using reverse logic, I asked, "Suppose I install a 100 foot high tower? What would the FCC do?" I received a quick response of "We'd make you take it down." I guess the continued tenacity overwhelmed the FCC, for finally I was asked where I lived and how high the peak of my roof was from the ground; also, whether I was above or below sea level, and by how much?

I was told that a 26 element antenna mounted 53 feet above sea level would give me line of sight to Channel 3 from my area. Since my home is 20 feet above sea level and the peak is 28 feet high, all I needed was five feet.

When the television set was delivered I watched the installation. The serviceman seemed to be having problems. He was getting pictures and sound on all VHF channels and many UHF channels. He couldn't figure out why the signal overlap. Luckily the call letters of WRCV Philadelphia were flashed. The results were a huge success, 32 VHF stations and 44 UHF channels.

After many months of nightly experiment, I was able to compile a chart of all the TV channels available to me in my Long Island viewing room. Among the far-distant cities and towns that came in, some faint, some loud and clear, were: Washington, Boston, Philadelphia, Hartford, Providence, New Britain, Conn., Wildwood, Pa., and New Bedford, Mass.

With our powerful antenna, life is full of sudden surprises. One Sunday morning, while roaming the dial in quest of cartoons for the children, I picked up a strong picture and sound. For about two hours we watched a film then in its first run on Broadway. Periodically the signal grew faint and the antenna had to be adjusted to the southwest. Eventually, the call letters appeared. We were watching CVA—59, a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier steaming toward Norfolk. It was apparently broadcasting signals from its mast. That Sunday we watched a full day of first run movies without leaving home.

\* \* \*

*THOMAS V. SOBCZAK, Ph.D. is Director of Information Processing for Waldes Kohinoor, Inc. of Long Island City. He was educated at St. John's University and Hofstra University in New York and received his Doctorate in management at Sussex College in England. He has been active in the dissemination of all phases of management information. He has published five books and 55 magazine articles, and frequently lectures before educational and civic groups.*

\* \* \*

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# REMARKS FOR A MATURE AUDIENCE

By Robert D. Wood  
President, CBS Television Network

Let me begin with a note of caution. As one of our announcers might put it, the speech you are about to hear is designed for mature audiences.

I feel that it is time for some frank observations about some of the criticism being leveled against program standards, taste and acceptability.

There was a time — and not so long ago — when television generally (and CBS in particular) designed its programs almost exclusively for conventional, tradition-bound audiences. Because we were so hidebound, we left ourselves open to attacks from critics who charged we had turned television into a “vast wasteland”.

Those were the days when newspaper critics wrote fondly of the Golden Age of the '50s, when innovation and experiment were the watchwords. In moments when they were not looking back in nostalgia, critics also damned us for being dull, for trafficking in escapism, for ignoring the basic issues in our society, for catering to the lowest common denominator. We couldn't win.

Whatever our failings in the past, I think it fair to say that in recent seasons we have tried to broaden our appeal, to win back the occasional viewer and attract the next generation of viewers. To roll with the wave of the future, we virtually wiped out our nighttime lineup. Indeed, over the past four seasons we dropped all but five regularly scheduled series: *Gunsmoke*, *Lucy*, *Carol Burnett*, *Mannix* and *Hawaii Five-O*.

To fill the suddenly empty hours, we challenged the best talents in the creative community to strike out in new directions, to respond to contemporary taste, to breathe new life into our schedule.

This commitment to participate in the present was responsible for *All In The Family*, *M\*A\*S\*H*, *Sonny & Cher* and *Maude*. It also encouraged the introduction of more believable real-life themes and situations in traditional series such as *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Medical Center* and *Dick Van Dyke*. As a consequence, a more contemporary approach now runs through our entire lineup.

Perhaps the most startling example is *The Waltons*. On the face of it, this series may seem far from contemporary. Indeed, most of us are apt to regard the program as a return to those basic truths that made our country great — the

tenderness and love of a closely knit family struggling through the Great Depression. Yet, even this series has dealt with themes which, in the past, would have been regarded as inappropriate. For example, last month we presented "The Odyssey," the story of how John-Boy arrived at an abandoned cabin just in time to help a frightened runaway girl give birth to her baby. If you and your family shared this hour, I think you will agree that it was one of the most moving stories ever shown on television.

On the other hand, there are those who would maintain that by presenting such a program we are not simply keeping pace with the changing tastes of our audience, but rather that we are trying to lead the way. They contend that we have moved so far in front, so fast, that we are losing the support of the viewing public.

This simply is not supported by the evidence. Last year the average family spent over six hours a day watching television — an all-time high.

Television's increasing hold on its public would suggest we are catching up to the varied interests of our audience rather than the other way around.

While it is true that our programming decisions have been breaking new ground, it is also true that they have given us some anxious moments. We have had to take risks. But they have been calculated risks. They have not been capricious or thoughtless. And let me stress that when we do put on such work, we do not abdicate our responsibilities in the area of broadcast standards. On the contrary, we feel we are facing up to our obligations. Instead of playing it safe, we are meeting the challenge that comes of recognizing that society's standards and tastes are undergoing enormous change, and that television must reflect the growing maturity of the audience we serve.

This growing maturity is indicated by public reaction to some of the most controversial programs we have aired over the past year. A case in point is "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" Written by Pulitzer Prize-winner Edward Albee and starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, the film covers a drunken night of spiritual cannibalism, in which two couples reveal the innermost secrets of their relationships. Despite its adult theme and bruising language, we received only 1,200 critical letters although the program was seen by some 33 million viewers.

To cite another example, we broadcast a re-enactment on film of Truman Capote's "In Cold Blood," a chronicle of violent murder and retribution. The two-hour broadcast was seen by 42 million viewers; but we received fewer than 200 critical letters.

Now and then, of course, a program elicits a sudden torrent of mail.

Perhaps the most interesting and revealing example involves the two episodes of *Maude* about middle-age pregnancy. When this two-parter was first presented last season we received 7,000 critical letters; and when it was repeated in August we received 17,000 more. At first glance, 24,000 critical letters may seem to be a public outcry. But, in television terms the number must be

considered insignificant. An estimated 65 million people watched at least one of the four broadcasts; yet only 24 thousand took pen in hand to write. It is a percentage too minute to measure. And keep in mind that these 24,000 letters represented the fruits of one of the most highly organized, highly emotional, nationwide campaigns ever mounted against a particular program.

My final example is "Sticks and Bones." We originally postponed the broadcast of this drama about a blinded war veteran because we felt its presentation might be unnecessarily abrasive to a nation that was welcoming the return of the first POW's from Vietnam. Finally, in August, we followed through on the commitment I had made to broadcast the program at a later date. From areas served by affiliates that carried the program we received only 1,075 letters — and over half congratulated the Network for presenting the program.

It is vitally important that we not over-react to a relatively small number of critical letters. At least we should take care to balance them against the millions who watch and presumably enjoy the entertainment.

Now I do not mean to imply that we disregard letters. We do not. Each one is tabulated, each one forwarded to an appropriate executive, and each one is answered. Most important, the mail does exert an influence on future programming decisions — along with measurements of audience acceptance, press comment and the reactions of the stations with which we are affiliated. All these forces — acting in concert — provide a built-in process that automatically assures that over the long run what we put on the television screen is responsive to the interests, needs and appetites of our public.

And part of being fully responsive to our public is to make sure that we do not allow a small, vocal and, at times, highly organized minority to determine what may be seen on your television set. If we fell into this trap we might be easily led to ban present-day equivalents of such literary classics as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter" — once called "a brokerage of lust"; or Charlotte Bronte's "Jane Eyre" — once termed "too immoral to be ranked as decent literature." We might forbid in the future the modern counterparts of other once-banned works such as George Bernard Shaw's "Mrs. Warren's Profession"; Theodore Dreiser's "An American Tragedy"; Emile Zola's "Nana"; even Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass."

Some of those who have taken exception to a controversial show have applauded the work as a whole, but questioned the necessity of including scenes which they maintain contributed nothing yet expose television to needless criticism.

They contend that the program would have been ideal if only a censor had ruled, or the Program Department had requested, or I had dictated, that certain phrases be deleted, that certain scenes be shortened, that certain references be toned down, that certain shots be cut.

In response let me note first that in every instance where we have presented

anything controversial, the production was pre-screened, evaluated and carefully edited. Only then was it accepted for broadcast.

When, however, we do edit a production for broadcast, we cannot completely sanitize all controversial matter by debating every phrase and examining every frame. Creative artists argue that each program should be judged as a whole, on its total effect. They maintain, and in most instances we agree, that while a specific scene might be eliminated, such a loss would destroy the mood, break the flow and perhaps eliminate something which, in their opinion, gives insight into character or contributes to plot development.

These creative spirits argue that to do otherwise is to look at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and condemn Michelangelo's work because — in the eyes of some hypothetical beholder — a specific panel might be offensive. But, as they point out, still other critics might praise that particular panel, yet find flaws in another section. The final question arises: Would not a willingness to compromise ultimately lead to the destruction of an entire piece of art? That is, a blank ceiling —, or, in our context, an empty television screen?

As the novelist, Virginia Woolf, once said, if a writer must be thinking about what a censor's reaction will be, the writer will defeat himself worrying whether he "will be asked to weaken, or soften, to omit."

"Such hesitation and suspense," Mrs. Woolf added, "are fatal to freedom of mind, and freedom of mind is essential to great art."

I should like to make one final observation: a common thread runs through much of the criticism of television entertainment. It is a plea that we show only the good things in our society. That request troubles me because of all the good things about America, the greatest perhaps is our *freedom to choose*. Under our system of broadcasting, each of us is free to choose what we will or will not see or hear. And, equally important, that freedom includes the freedom of others to watch and enjoy programs that we personally do not care for, cannot stand or perhaps find in atrocious taste.

All too often when we do ask an irate viewer precisely what was objectionable in a program, the answer is: "I did not watch it. I would not watch it after reading about it in TV Guide and my newspaper." One cannot escape the suspicion that those who object and complain are not concerned for themselves. Their preoccupation is not with something they do not wish to see or hear. Or did not watch. The concern they express is for something they think someone else should or should not see or hear. As Aldous Huxley remarked, such people want "to be the fathers of a humanity too childish to look after itself, to assume its own responsibilities." In the final analysis these self-appointed guardians would have the taste of the nation conform exactly to their own. No individual, no group should exercise such power in a democratic society.

The issue was summed up with eloquence and brevity in a letter one of our affiliates received from a Catholic priest. He wrote:

"Today I received a form letter asking me to write in complaint about the

possible broadcasting of two segments of the MAUDE series and the play 'Sticks and Bones.'

"Although I believe that abortion is murder and a great evil, I also believe that censorship in any form is evil.

"I do not see where you are in a position to directly prevent either abortion or suicide, but you are in a position to prevent the encroachment of censorship on the public media — and I hope you will do so."

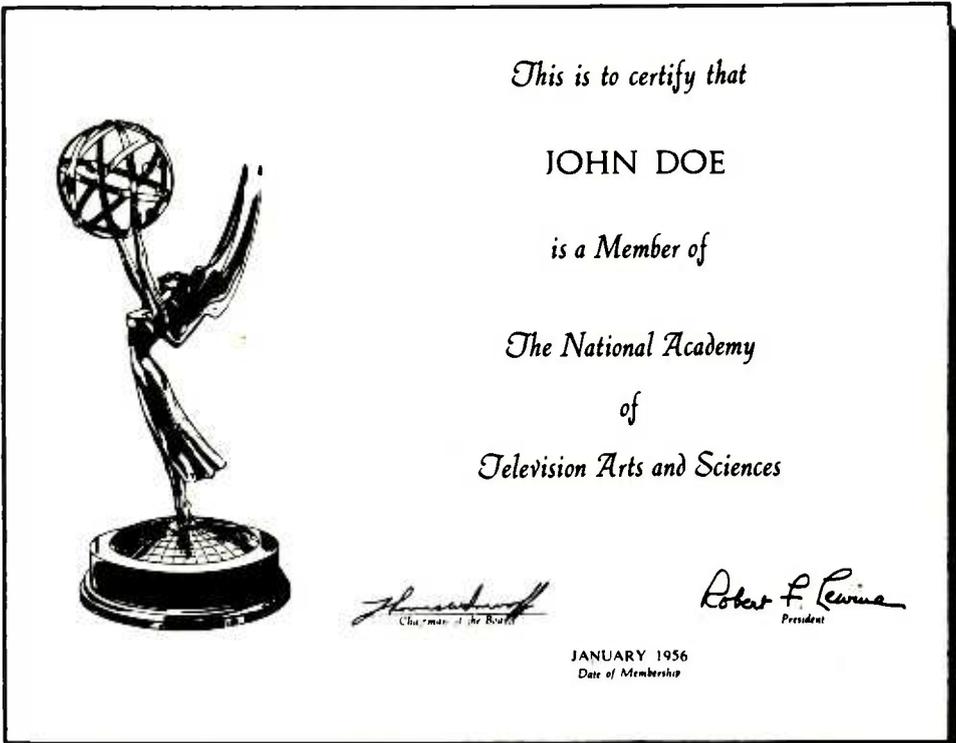
We intend to do precisely that.

\* \* \*

*The foregoing article is adapted from an address delivered by ROBERT D. WOOD, President, CBS Television Network, on October 16, 1973, before the Better Business Bureau of Nashville, Tenn.*

\* \* \*

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# *LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF TELEVISION QUARTERLY:*

It occurred to me that your readers might be interested in learning how television scripts have helped vast numbers of children to overcome their reading blocks and improve their verbal skills.

We here at the Philadelphia School Board have been terribly frustrated, as have other large school systems throughout our country, with the ever-increasing number of our students who are falling behind the National Norm in Reading skills. We believed something was wrong — not with our students — but most probably with the material being presented to them. The students were not being “turned-on” to the wonderful world of Reading.

For the past year and a half we have experimented with bringing together students and the medium that has the most influence on their lives — television. The results have been remarkable. We have combined the video part of the most popular commercial television programs with their actual working scripts.

We crossed our fingers and hoped that this touch of show business would stir a response. Results have been most heartening.

Our first step was to record programs directly “off the air”, using available video tape recorders. Then we would replay the tapes, copying in longhand the various acts which made up the programs. We then typed the longhand “scripts” and mimeographed approximately thirty-five copies of each, enough to handle several classes, sharing of course.

The “scripts” were then reinforced by strong basic Reading skills developed by our professional staff, extracted directly from the context. The children would then view the taped program, following the accompanying script. The children would then be asked to complete the individual lessons (ex. phonics, syllabifications, inference skills and so on). Using this approach, we began to see dramatic results. Inner city children, considered backward and slow, were suddenly reading and writing with keen interest.

We quickly realized the impact that this program would present to our School System, and all others throughout the country.

We immediately began contacting all the Executive Producers of the programs we were using — praying that at least some would respond affirmatively — allowing us to continue our experimental program.

Their responses were magnanimous, to say the least. They not only would

allow us to continue, but they offered to supply us with copies of scripts, pictures of the stars of their shows, just anything that would help us to motivate our children to read.

Strengthened by this unprecedented support, the Philadelphia Television Reading Program moved onward.

The children in the experimental part of the program were heterogeneously grouped — from non-readers to outstanding readers. They responded magnificently. Their reading has improved dramatically. Their absences have been reduced considerably. Absenteeism is virtually non-existent. Discipline problems have been eliminated — ALL due to their involvement in the Television Reading Program.

This program has cut across all levels of reading ability — from the non-reader to the outstanding reader. Its motivational impact is unparalleled.

This year we are expanding the program throughout our School System. Our Reading and Language Arts specialists are currently involved in developing basic exercises and creative exercises taken directly from the context of the scripts.

Our Research and Evaluation Department is actively involved in the preparation of pre-tests for all children involved next term. They are also busy developing an evaluation of the program as it progresses.

We have received, and are continuing to receive, local and national coverage for the program (Philadelphia Inquirer, WCAU-TV, WPVI-TV, locally; Newsweek, The New York Times, Woman's Day, Broadcasting, TV Guide, on a national level). Because of this, we are being deluged with inquiries expressing great interest from school systems throughout this country, from San Francisco to Boston.

This is the reason we are now communicating with you, and with the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences. We have expressed, and are continuing to express, our gratitude to all the executive producers, whose programs cover all networks, and whose contributions have, quite simply, made the Philadelphia Television Reading Program possible.

But we should like to make these contributions known. The Philadelphia School System wants everyone to realize just how magnificently the television industry is responding to a national crisis. We want everyone to realize that television producers — without requesting acknowledgement or praise — have made possible the most exciting, rewarding Reading-Language Arts Program in the entire country. We of the Philadelphia School System are most grateful to a public spirited industry.

Sincerely,  
Michael McAndrew

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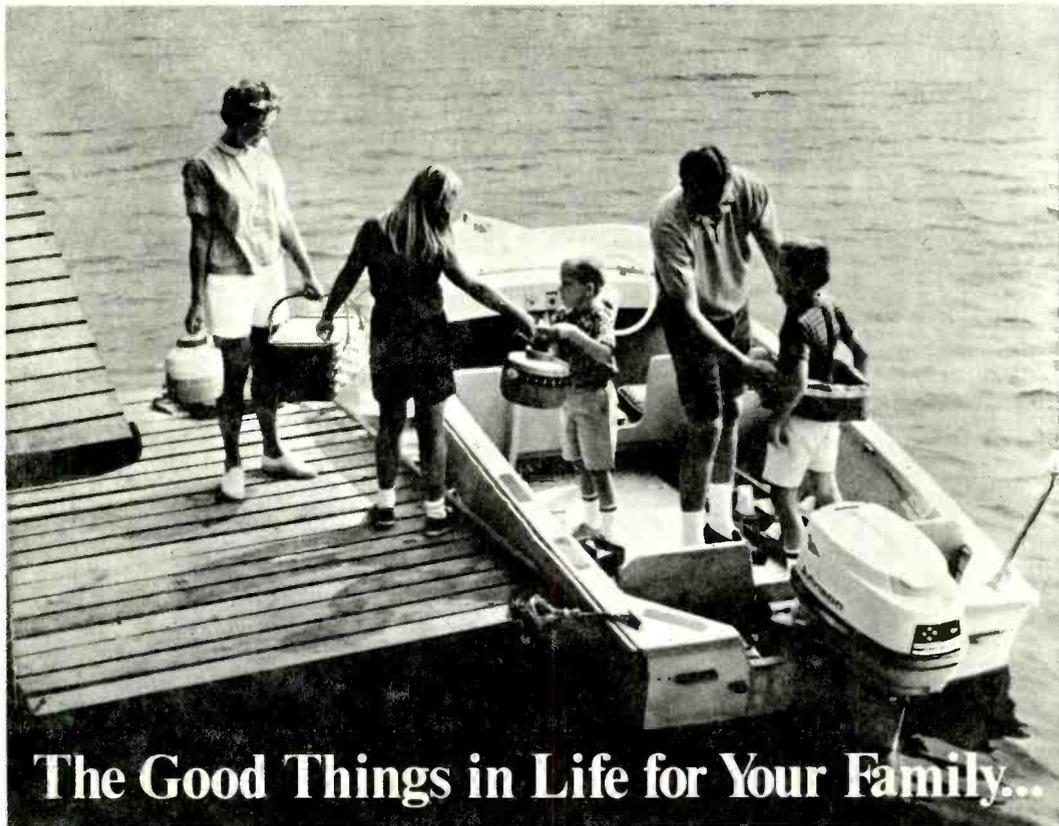
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