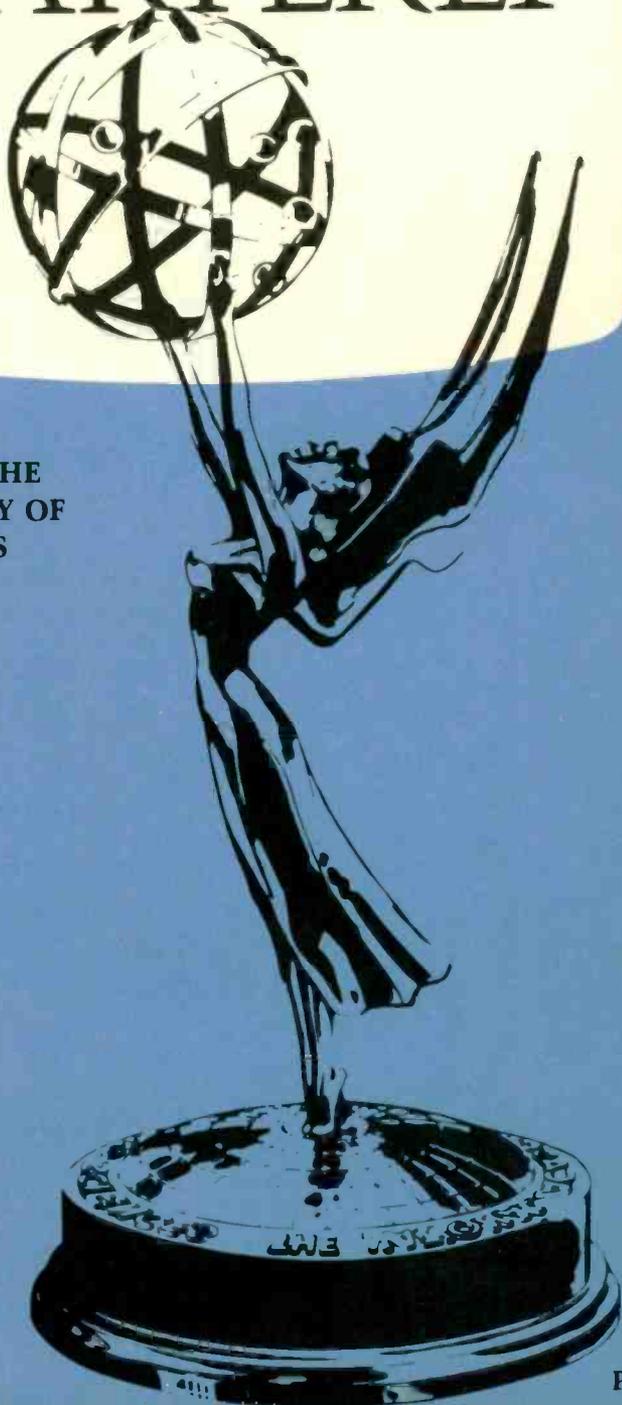


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TELEVISION QUARTERLY

THE JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
TELEVISION ARTS
AND SCIENCES

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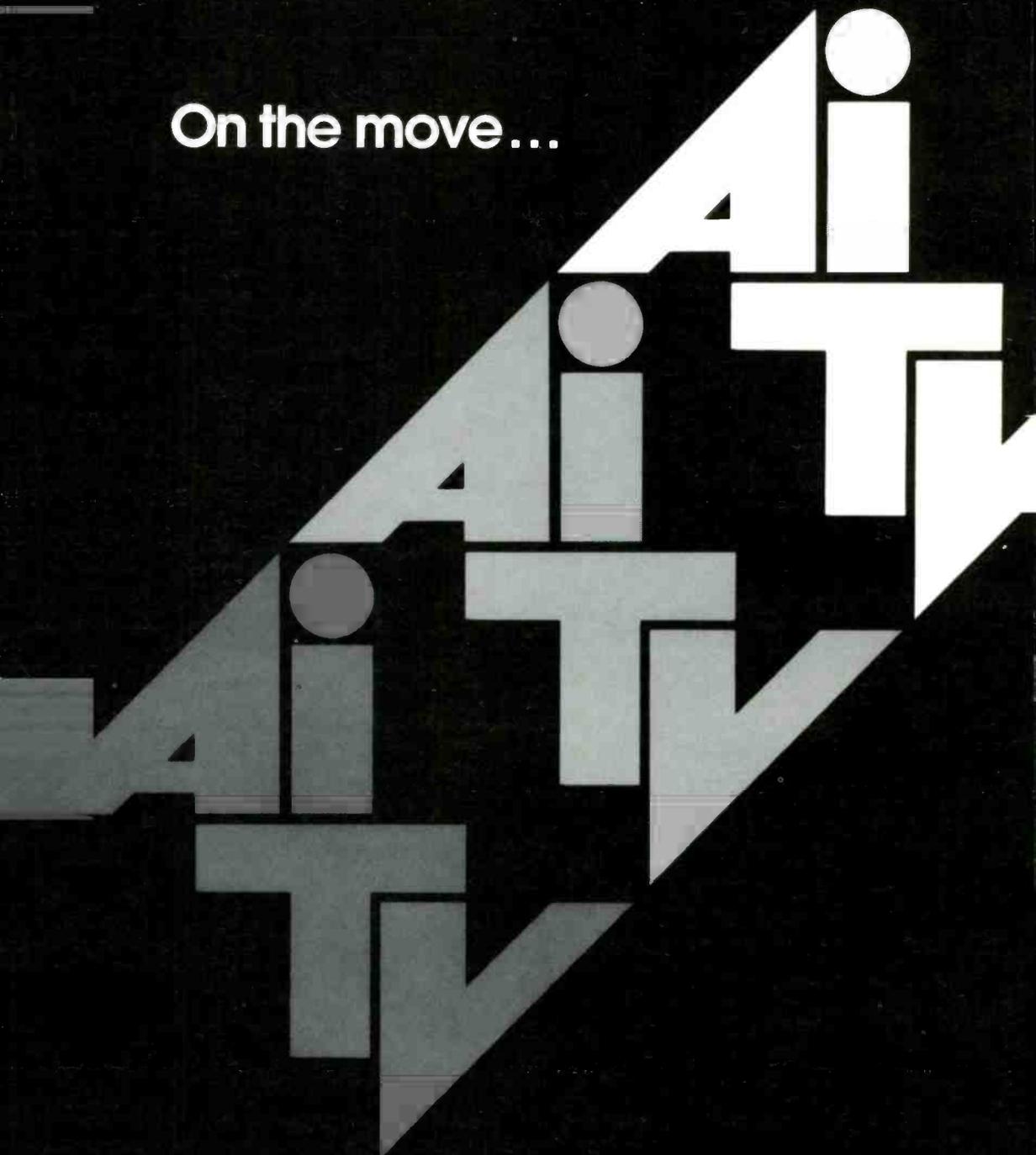
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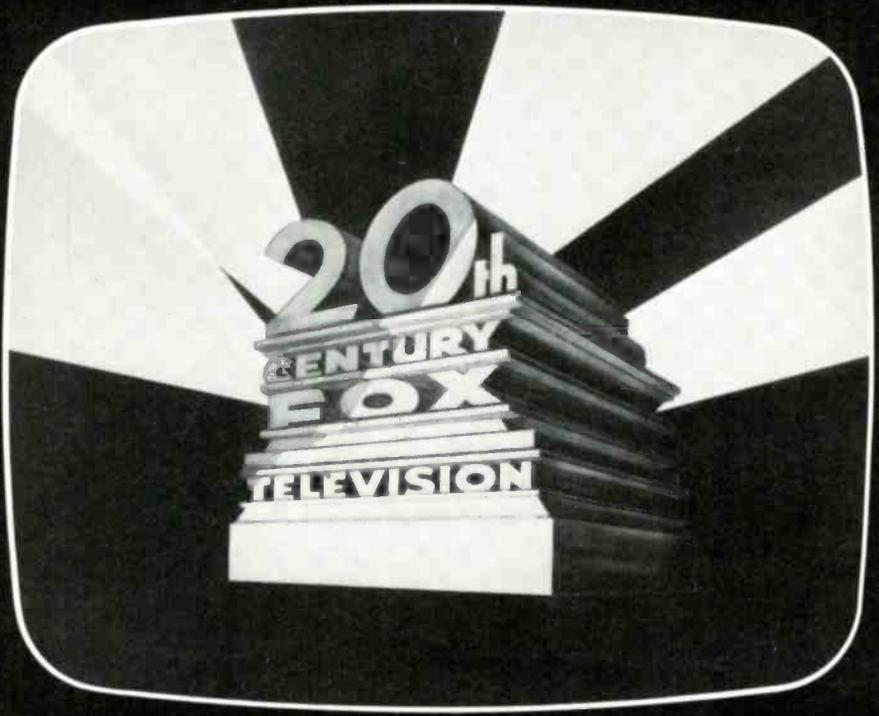
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Going Home Again

By RALPH NELSON

It seemed an arrogant assumption that the epic novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, which capped Thomas Wolfe's career in the 1930's could be condensed into a mere two hours of television time. Or, more specifically, into two hours minus commercials, lead-ins, credits, trailers and such, leaving approximately 100 minutes. Much simpler, I thought when Bob Markell of CBS engaged me as director, to engrave the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin.

The script of *You Can't Go Home Again* arrived by special messenger. The title page revealed the author to be Ian McClellan Hunter, a name unknown to me. Probably a callow youth, I thought, a lad of unripened judgment born too late to appreciate the poetry and drama of Wolfe's last novel.

Thirty pages into the script and I amended this judgment. Hunter had managed to distil Wolfe's cavalcade of the American scene 50 years ago into 120 taut pages. He had used Wolfe's own language as narrative bridges, setting mood and scene. He had invented a marvelous device to span time and locale changes from New York to North Carolina, i.e., having Wolfe's editor mulling over the author's posthumous manuscript, explaining the man and his demons.

Wolfe, of course, wrote thinly disguised autobiography and called it fiction. He was George Webber of the book, and so I shall hereafter refer to him as Wolfe/Webber. Similarly, the brilliant scenic designer of the '20's, Aline Bernstein, became Esther Jack in the script, hence Aline/Esther. Maxwell Perkins, Wolfe's sensitive and generous editor, became Foxhall Edwards, hence Maxwell/Foxhall.

Hunter brought alive the tortured character of Wolfe/Webber, the self-doubts, the defensive conceit, his bigotry and latent self-destruction. He coped adroitly with the love/hate relationship between the novelist and Aline/Esther. Bitter and disillusioned, Wolfe/Webber sinks into debauchery, taking his cheap pleasures with prostitutes. Aline/Esther persuades him to attend a party where he will, she promises, meet his intellectual equals. But Wolfe/Webber sees the party through his own jaundiced eyes, hating the idle rich and particularly Amy Carlton—fabulously rich, compulsively wicked.

When fire breaks out in the apartment complex where the party is held, guests are herded into the courtyard. The gaiety continues amidst firemen and sirens until word comes that the old elevator man has died of smoke inhalation. The Wolfe character is sickened by what he sees and flees into the night.

Wolfe had George Webber visit Germany twice in the novel. Hunter condensed the experience into one journey, to Berlin in the summer of the 1936 Olympiad.

After studying the script, I called Bob Markell at CBS in New York and accepted the assignment as director. Ratings, said Markell, were not the primary concern of this production. *You Can't Go Home Again* was a special project of CBS board chairman William Paley. It would be the first in a series to be called *American Classics*. If not a hit with the mass audience, it would at least be prestigious.

In August we began our search for a location site. Asheville, North Carolina, where Wolfe grew up, was out of the question. It had taken on the standard attributes of the neon age. Wolfe himself would hardly have recognized it.

The production department under Peter Runfalo had scouted various sites in Pennsylvania. We finally settled on a town on the rim of distressed Appalachia.

Jim Thorpe, Pa., named in honor of the great Indian athlete, is a village time forgot. The clock tower on the old city hall has read 9:30 for many years. The railroad station has changed little since the 1880's. There's even a mini-museum devoted to antique railway cars. Waiting for us were a steam locomotive, vintage passenger coaches and a baggage car, all specified in the script.

We had a ready-made 1930's "back lot" in Jim Thorpe's main street. The store fronts were untouched since the 1930's. The old bank had heavy modern doors but the manager allowed us to put in period glass doors through which the population of Ashville—or Libya Hill, as Wolfe called it—would crash through during a run on the bank.

Among the few anachronisms, the most glaring were the parking meters lining the main street. How many, we were asked, would we like to have removed? Another eyesore, a modern gas station at the main intersection, we bought out for a few days, covering its facade with old doors and scaffolding. Thus it became the site of a new Libya Hill hotel, under construction at the time of Wolfe's novel.

The main highway of the valley ran through the town, and a modern traffic light hung there. The light and stanchion could be "camera-flaged," and during those times when we were actually filming, the town would arrange a company of National Guard troops to hold up the constant truck traffic. An antique car club nearby supplied us with period vehicles.

There was nothing the city fathers of Jim Thorpe would not do to entice a motion picture company to the area. They knew the economic benefits brought by a film company, for scenes from the motion picture *The Molly McGuires* had been filmed there. In fact, Mauch Chunk, the original name for the town before it was rechristened Jim Thorpe by referendum, was the historic locale for the Molly McGuire coal uprising.

Having toured the town thoroughly and seen little activity, I asked, "What is the principal industry of Jim Thorpe?" The reply was, "Commuting." All of Jim Thorpe's labor force migrated daily to find employment.

The townspeople were all eager to serve as extras. We encountered one union problem: under Screen Actors Guild rules twenty-five would have to be transported daily from Philadelphia, an hour and a half away. If we used that total, we could employ as many of the amateur locals as needed.

So Jim Thorpe, Pa., became Asheville, North Carolina/Libya Hill.

We would film the railroad station by day and by night, using the rolling stock. We would film the interior and exterior of the courthouse. There was a tall columned statue of a Union Soldier adjacent to the Courthouse commemorating the fallen dead of the Civil War. By using it in a wide shot the Yankee fighter might just as well have been Confederate rebel. We could stage a run on the bank on the main street, climaxed by an enraged populace battering in the glass doors. The Oracle of Libya Hill would bed down in an antique hearse by the railroad yards, and the main street would be transformed with set dressing to the 1930's. It was all accurate down to details never to be seen on the small screen, such as a Liberty Magazine for sale at five cents: reading time fourteen minutes twenty seconds. (Remember?)

The rolling hills cemetery was ours to use. Because an auditorium had to be fully populated for one of Wolfe/Webber's lectures, it would have been sinfully expensive to film in Manhattan, populated by a full complement of the Screen Actors Guild employed as extras. We planned to film it instead in the large church chapel using local people, with the full knowledge of the Screen Actors Guild, for we would use many of their members when we moved to New York City.

All of these decisions were made that first Monday. Tuesday we were back in Manhattan, to divide that week with casting in the mornings, location hunting in the afternoons. I had set an impossible criteria for visualizing Wolfe/Webber. Thomas Wolfe had been a great bear of a man, six foot six. That image also required an actor in his late twenties with a broad range and power.

What I wanted was Orson Welles in the lean and vital days of his youth. If he existed, I never found him. We read every young leading and character juvenile available, ran film on others, searched theatrical records for actors who might recently have played Falstaff. The casting departments and agents on both coasts came up empty, not for lack of effort. It was a plum role, and everyone had a favorite candidate. No pressure was put upon me to cast a name actor in the leading role. As time drifted by, it became obvious I would have to compromise the physical image of Thomas Wolfe for the best available actor.

Aline/Esther was another challenge. Wolfe/Webber described her as

"my dark-haired Jewish beauty." This part had a range of its own: suave, sophisticated, passionate, vulnerable, a 40-ish woman deeply in love. The novel abounds in rich characters.

Before setting out location hunting, I finally got to meet Ian McLellan Hunter over luncheon with Bob Markell. No callow youth here. He was a seamed and weathered man of sixty. He treated me with a certain caution. I was, after all, the stranger to be entrusted with bringing to birth the script on which he had toiled for months. I learned then that CBS had originally engaged him to write a four hour teleplay. That completed, they commissioned a three hour version. He went through the agony of eliminating favorite scenes and blending others.

When he turned in the truncated version, the corporate powers decided that what they really wanted was a two hour drama. Only a fellow-writer could appreciate the excruciating punishment, the blood-letting, of taking his foster brain-child in hand and eviscerating it. I did not express my fears that it was still too long for our time span.

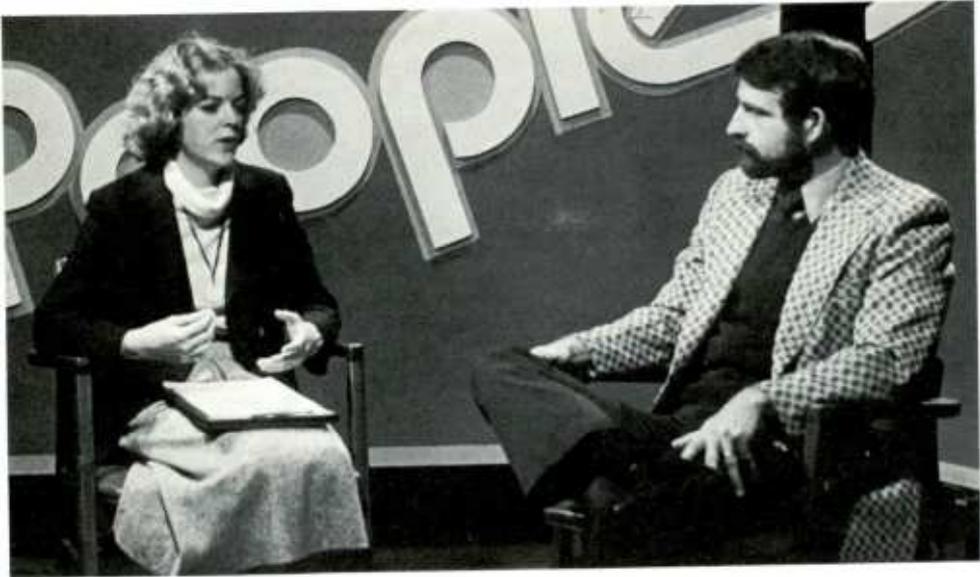
Ian Hunter took my warm felicitations on his script with seeming indifference, as though it was only natural that it should have been superior. He was surprised that I welcomed him to rehearsals. Many directors bar writers from the set, as though they occupied adversary positions. The reason eludes me. I feel it my obligation as director to serve as an extension of the writer's arm. It is the writer who has drafted the blueprint from which an amalgam of talents must pool their skills to achieve the writer's goal.

Markell had told me that Hunter was one of those tarred by the McCarthy brush in the witch-hunting days of the 40's and 50's. That his career had been damaged was without question, which explained why I was not familiar with his name. He had written—in collaboration with Ring Lardner, Jr.—such estimable films as *Roman Holiday* and *Woman of Distinction*, before both their typewriters were stilled by the House Un-American Activities Committee in the fearful fifties.

During our first week we roamed Manhattan, looking for locations. We needed an apartment complex of the 30's that had a courtyard. We would have to stage a party in it, a fire—with the attendant pandemonium: firemen, fire hoses, smoke, flame. The Abthorp Apartments in the Broadway 70's proved ideal. We were able to take over several apartments, one for the actual filming, others for dressing rooms and storage. Most of the tenants in the huge complex took our activities in stride; some resented our intrusion. But we were able to film even the fire sequence without undue interference.

Wolfe/Webber's loft was the other principal location, where we would have to film both by day and by night. An abandoned fire house on the lower west side was perfect. There was plenty of floor space to provide us a mini-sound stage, creating our own loft for Wolfe/Webber, with a small kitchen, bedroom, a work area for him, and after she moved into

(continued on page 12)



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join him in illicit bliss, a work area for Aline/Esther where she could maintain her drawing board, scenic sketches and art work.

There was space left to provide a small speakeasy that Wolfe/Webber frequented. Across the street were factories and lofts, such as Wolfe had described. The first floor became our carpentry shop, the third reserved for dressing rooms for the actors.

The biggest handicap was sound. We were able to hold up traffic with police co-operation on our street, but in a warehouse area snarling truck traffic with blaring horns travelled the main artery nearby. We timed our brief takes to red lights halting traffic. While concentrating on performances, after each take my first glance was to the sound man. Was the sound acceptable? Had important dialogue been smothered by the shifting of semi-trailer gears? He did an excellent job of muffling background noises so that we were left with a minimum of "looping" in post-production.

Casting proceeded. For the syphilitic Judge of Libya Hill I cast the distinguished President of the Players Club, Roland Winters. The other roles necessary to Asheville/Libya Hill fell into place. Maxwell/Foxhall was proving difficult, particularly since Scott Berg had just published his brilliant biography of Maxwell Perkins, which not only gave an image of Perkins, but revived the physical image of Thomas Wolfe which was so troublesome.

All of the production staff was deep in search. There were many of the actual Thomas Wolfe—Aline Bernstein anecdotes we wanted to exploit. There were temptations to pursue the eccentricities of Maxwell Perkins. It was Bob Markell as producer who reminded us that we had only the rights to *You Can't Go Home Again*. We must follow that religiously, no matter how tempting the research material might be. Chastened, we accepted that.

We still needed Berlin locations: a hotel lobby, a beer cellar, a large room for a press conference, two hotel rooms. In addition we needed a posh restaurant where Wolfe/Webber and Maxwell/Foxhall could lunch, as well as Maxwell/Foxhall's editorial offices, plus an exterior of a publishing house, a hospital waiting room, and the hospital room in which Wolfe/Webber died.

Shooting locations in Manhattan is hard work. Movement of the caravan of the trucks and vehicles of a film company in mid-town traffic can be an expensive nightmare, as crawling through traffic eats into production time. It is desirable when possible to compress locations within geographical distances. We found an ideal in the Price George Hotel on 28th Street off Lexington.

Somewhat gone to seed as the quality folk moved farther uptown, this venerable hotel became a haven for foreign tour groups. For our purpose, the Prince George Hotel had a hofbrau, a ballroom for Wolfe/Webber's press conference, as well as a lobby and, of course, bedrooms. When we filmed the lobby sequence, German tourists were astonished to find

Olympiad banners and Swastika flags festooning the lobby. To conserve moves, we filmed the hospital waiting room and the hospital room there as well. Their old world dining room gave elegant grace to the luncheon meetings of Wolfe/Webber and Maxwell/Foxhall.

An Optometrist's display window in the Flatiron Building nearby provided our publishing house exterior. One day's work was scheduled for the four scenes that took place in Maxwell/Foxhall's editorial office. The book-lined library of the Republican Club on 53rd Street off Fifth Avenue was selected.

Bob Markell and I agreed to meet again in Hollywood in mid-September to continue the search for our leading characters. The critical role of Aline/Esther was solved with incredible ease. The estimable actress Lee Grant arrived for a rare interview.

We needed a superb camera man and our prayer was answered when Jack Priestley came into the office—tall, gaunt, experienced and a fast, efficient worker. We had a demanding schedule of twenty filming days.

Bob Markell had complained to me that most directors he had worked with used a stationary camera. I, too, prefer a mobile camera. With so many pages to film each day it is simpler to root actors in one spot and film with a stationary camera. Such was not my intent on this project. It demanded fluidity of actors and camera. Here Jack Priestley earned all of his salary with his first suggestion. When he saw a rehearsal in the firehouse and watched how I was moving, (representing the camera) he ordered the floor covered with plywood. This eliminated the time-consuming laying of track for each shot.

We found our Maxwell Perkins/Foxhall Edwards in Ireland. Hurd Hatfield had just retired to a farm in that green and lovely land. He read the script—and immediately joined us. Not only was his resemblance to Perkins striking, he also had the aura of a thoughtful, bookish man.

Production time was nearing and I needed a week rehearsal with the principals. We were still without a leading man. We narrowed the choice to three promising actors. To the final readings I invited the top executives of CBS, hoping that they would concur with Markell's and my judgment.

The unanimous choice was Chris Sarandan. No name of any prominence to the public, still he had given a remarkable performance and a daring one, as the homosexual love in the film *Dog Day Afternoon*. Not that that performance related to Thomas Wolfe, but he read our script with a keen understanding of the turbulence and pain that possessed Wolfe/Webber. We informed Lee Grant of our decision and she was delighted.

There is a depressing aspect to a television schedule and budget. Based on some seventy-five years of experience, major motion picture companies accept three pages of script filmed per day as a norm. There are so many factors to co-ordinate: transportation of artists and equipment, rehearsal time, lighting, re-takes, eight hour days without going into costly

overtime, special effects, delays—all predicated on Murphy's Law: "If anything can go wrong, it will."

Television schedule and budgets are based illogically on a "We can do it faster and cheaper" attitude. Six to ten pages of script are scheduled per day. For *You Can't Go Home Again*, twenty days had been allotted. Sure, it could be done. You get what you pay for. We had two choices: either to eliminate coverage of close-ups and stage everything in master set-ups, or to go into hours of overtime, then golden time, and golden-golden time.

Contrary to opinion, the various unions and guilds are not out to gouge a production company unless there is total mis-management. Rather, I marvel at the way these skilled people work as rapidly as possible, in effect putting themselves out of work by completing the project on time—or early.

Every shooting day spilled over into long hours of overtime as we struggled to finish our work in Jim Thorpe in the allotted five days, (minus a half day travel each way to New York City). In other words, a total of four days and nights to do a massive amount of work.

On the day we filmed both the cemetery sequence and the run on the bank, with a major transportation move in between, Jack Priestley was forced to use every available light to make the encroaching night seem like day to match the other shots in the sequence. We had to complete the work in Jim Thorpe within four days so that we could meet our contractual commitments in Manhattan the following week. I left Jim Thorpe achingly aware that several vital shots were never filmed.

The schedule hounded us throughout the twenty days of filming. No one in management ever reflected that it would be a savings if we worked normal hours and spread the schedule another week. Instead, enormous amounts of money were spent in overtime, plus taxing the energies of actors and crew members.

For any director the real trauma comes when finally he reaches the cutting room. He never has all the coverage desired; there wasn't time. A close-up is necessary here for punctuation or emphasis. There wasn't time to get it. An important transition shot was essential; the weather changed, and it was never filmed.

With the first assemblage of film the director sees the totality, the warts, the deficiencies, the lacks. While he eats his heart out alone in the darkened screening room, he wanders what alchemy might be created in the cutting room to camouflage the deficiencies.

Filming in 16 millimeter proved no time saver and no bargain, as I saw it. Bob Markell disagrees. There was a savings in raw stock, true, and in film processing. But in moving from location to location the same logistics applied as to 35 millimeter film. The whole unit was as fast as its slowest component. We learned that 16 millimeter took the same care in lighting, and the same number of lights. The demand for faster film

speeds has produced more results in the field where there is more demand, in the 35 millimeter range. The final quality of 16 mm can be equivalent, particularly with the expertise of a Jack Priestley. Our film is not only sharp for home television, but it can be projected in a motion picture theatre onto a large screen without loss of quality. But where was our cost savings?

Many old haunts were gone, faded into the lore of the changing city. But there was a sparkling new Shubert Alley, and all the old theatres, many refurbished and renamed.

CBS's "Black Rock" was new to me. I had helped build this, I thought, from the humble television beginnings at Liederkrantz Hall on East 58th Street, the second floor studios above Grand Central Station, dingy dirty rehearsal halls in whatever lofts and basements provided space, from Central Plaza on the lower East side (over Ratner's Dairy Restaurant where I had once broken bagels with Lord Laurence Olivier), to the Amsterdam Hotel on upper Broadway. Now all of these facilities are compressed into the cavernous Production Center on West 57th Street, converted from a dairy barn into a multi-million dollar complex with security checks and remote cameras covering every entrance.

Toward the end of the filming, Bob Markell was becoming edgy about our budget overages. Behind us was Libya Hill, the loft, the party, the fire. All that remained to be shot were two scenes in Aline/Esther's bedroom, plus two tight over-shoulder pick-up shots of Wolfe/Webber and Aline/Esther presumably in the loft, but which could be filmed in the apartment. I also planned a simple insert shot I thought would be essential in editing.

"Do you think you can do it all by nine tonight?" Bob asked, anxiously. "We go into triple time after nine."

"It all depends on one person," I answered my producer. "Lee Grant."

Miss Grant is an estimable actress, vital, handsome and versatile. She is also creative, intelligent, and ambitious, with hopes of become a director. She is eminently qualified.

My concern was based on knowledge of her habits. Each morning of our filming she would keep her rented limousine waiting, at least a half hour. From the time she entered the car she would devote herself to adjusting and arranging her hair. In her dressing room on the set she would continually re-do her make-up, while having her hair re-styled.

Once everything was prepared to her satisfaction, Miss Grant was totally professional, her performance and business anchored, and we could proceed apace. But the delays in getting her onto the set had been very costly.

Thanksgiving was upon us. The editor needed a week to assemble all the footage into a recognizable sequence. There was no immediate need for me, so Bob Markell and Ted Baer were happy to have me return to Northern California.

A week later I was in the darkened screening room in mid-Manhattan, alone, to witness what I as director had wrought. It was traumatic. There was a neophyte projectionist. The film broke a dozen times. It took five hours to see the entire assemblage. Subjectively, it was a disaster. The night was spent in self-flagellation for scenes that could have been better, for coverage I did not have.

Throughout the week the editor and I reviewed the film scene by scene, reel by reel. I made endless notes on how to structure the available footage into dramatic coherence. I analyzed each scene as a mosaic in the whole picture and established a rhythm of cutting within each scene. It would take the editor at least another two weeks simply to carry out these initial instructions. My wife, ailing for some time, was now in the hospital in northern California. I was worried about the film; I was worried about her.

Bob Markell produced a Solomon-like decision. "You have a video-cassette recorder at home. You go to California. When the editor has finished with your notes, we'll send you cassettes of the film. You make further notes, call us, and we'll get your director's cut accomplished."

That offered me the best of East and West Coast worlds. I could be at my wife's bedside, and edit the film, feet up, in my own living room, telephoning further instruction to the editor 2500 miles away in Manhattan. Technology had taken another step forward.

The film was no longer mine. Final editing passed on to the producer, with notes from the network. My labor pains were over; the private accomplishment of delivering the baby was no longer private, the film was network property.

Came a telegram from Alan Wagner, our CBS corporate friend. "Dear Ralph: I have seen your director's cut of *You Can't Go Home Again*. It is brilliant. Congratulations and thanks."

Extravagant praise. I saw the film as a thalidomide child, limbs truncated or missing. I had wanted it perfect.

And so, a six month project finally ended. A few scars remained, but so did the satisfaction of knowing that Thomas Wolfe's last novel had achieved a pulsing reality. In certain passages, our dreams had been beautifully realized.

You Can't Go Home Again finally played on CBS last April 25. Reviews were generally warm and favorable. Those crisp autumn mornings in Pennsylvania, those hectic days at our "Berlin hotel" on 28th Street seemed far away. Now, I reflected, our revels had ended, our actors melted into the air . . . and we've gone home again.

Ralph Nelson has had a long and distinguished career in television going back to Playhouse 90. His credits include Requiem for a Heavyweight (both the television and film versions), The Defenders and such outstanding motion pictures as Lilies of the Field, Soldier Blue and Charly.

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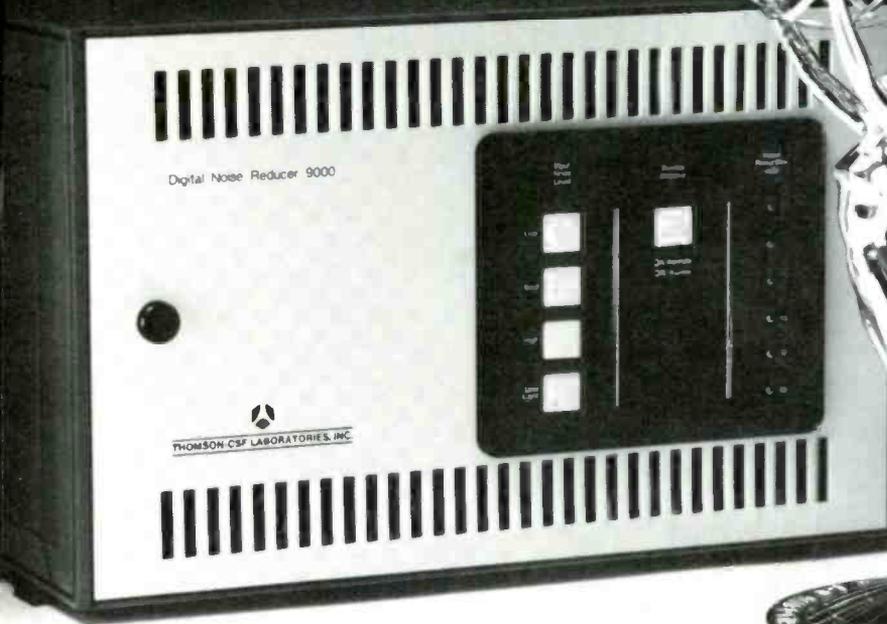
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“Don’t You Know What’s Going On at Your Station?”

By EVE MATACIA

It’s a typical 10:45 a.m. I’ve already listened to one complaint about last night’s movie. I’ve given two caller’s Phil Donohue’s Chicago address and told one irate viewer I do not know the home town of a certain contestant he just saw on *The Price Is Right*. Her reply was typical: “Don’t you know what’s going on at your own station?”

For reasons that elude me, television viewers are under the impression that if you work in a TV station you must be watching a monitor screen all day and all night. In addition, it is assumed that TV employees possess a special knowledge of everything that ever happened, not only in television but in the world at large. How else could we have been chosen for our exciting, glamorous jobs?

With that sort of misguided logic in mind people call TV stations looking for answers. Such as: “What’s the weather in Minneapolis in August?” “Who was Elvis Presley’s musical director and how do you reach him?” And, “How did the late movie end last night? I must have fallen asleep.”

Some answers fly right off the top of my head. I’m the Instant Answer Lady when it comes to such queries as: Does Burt Reynolds wear a toupee? Or, “Is Bill Hartman (an Atlanta sportscaster) any kin to Mary Hartman?” Or, “What ever happened to the actor who played *Maverick*?” I’ve explained that clocks go forward with Daylight Saving Time and that President Carter can now be reached at 1400 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Now and then I’m obliged to put a caller on “Hold” while I consult reference works. Who, outside the town of Huntsville, Ala., would know the precise power—in mega-hertz—of Huntsville’s Channel 19? I know now.

Some questions’ are stumpers, and they are driving me mad. Not because I cannot bring the answer trippingly to tongue but because I cannot understand why people are calling *me*. Where is it written that I should know how old Elvis’s mother was when she died, or why some Bowl Games are held on January 1 instead of January 2?

In the course of one morning I have been asked what year this is in the Jewish calendar, who Bill Cosby’s agent is and who directs the *Grammy Awards*. Some queries seem random and senseless. Some are hostile. Some suggest that a viewer is out of touch, in the widest sense of the

term. ("What is the phone number of *Bewitched*?" This came five years after the show was off the air.)

Song titles and movie titles have a way of slipping the public mind. "What was that old movie where Ronald Colman lost his memory and didn't know Greer Garson was his wife?" Or—there are a thousand variations on this one—"What was the name of the song Natalie Wood sang in that picture with Robert Wagner, I forget the title?"

Soap opera addicts are a troubled lot. They have to share their anxiety with *somebody*. They demand of me, "How can you let Steve on *Search for Tomorrow* die?" As if I'd put a knife to his throat.

Sometimes the dialog between caller and station is well-nigh incredible. Here's a true to life sampling:

Are you going to pick up the *Dinah!* show?

No.

Well, Channel 11 has made me really mad because they have dropped the show.

Why don't you call Channel 11 and complain?

I did but it didn't do any good. That's why I'm calling you.

Or this:

Are you going to re-run Elvis's funeral? I was in Memphis and missed the TV coverage.

No, we don't re-run old funerals.

You don't? You can't be Elvis Presley fans then.

Or this:

Is James McArthur Helen Hayes' son or grandson?

Her son.

No, he's her grandson.

Well, if you won't take my word, why did you call?

Finally, this memorable exchange:

I thought last night's *Happy Days* was a repulsive show. I did not want my three kids to see it. Why did you run it?

How much of the show did you see, sir?

All of it.

Well, if it was so bad, why didn't you turn it off?

Because I wanted to see it, OK?

Then why are you calling to complain?

Even after many years in television I continue to be amazed by the consuming role TV plays in people's lives. For me it has been an education in human behavior. I've also learned a lot from all those trips to the reference shelf. And maybe I've settled some arguments that could have ended in something less than sweet harmony.

Eva Matacia received her B.A. degree from Roanoke College in Virginia. For the past four years she has been assistant promotion manager of WAGA-TV in Atlanta. She is a former president of the Atlanta Chapter, American Women in Radio and Television.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"The frenzied competitive environment that currently afflicts the TV industry is out of control, and it has produced a generation of network chieftains who think like mass-marketers, not showmen. . . . What is forgotten in this increasingly costly "creative" process is that TV audiences aren't buying tins of tuna fish. They are buying entertainment, and when it all begins to look alike, it isn't very entertaining.

"Against this background, enter *60 Minutes*, offering three or four smartly paced little dramas each week. . . . When the good guys, (clutching clipboards and microphones) face off with the bad guys (sitting pasty-faced and stiff in the glare of the TV lights) we're given the very essence of good theater."

—Ellen Graham in *The Wall Street Journal*

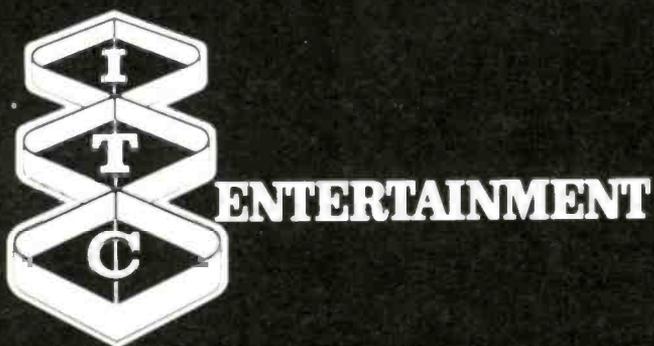
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"Broadcasting is a curious profession. It is the most powerful instrument in the world for merchandising soap, and it is potentially the most powerful instrument in the world for public service, and it has always been caught between the duality of its roles: public service because it is licensed by the government . . . and merchandising, because its material norms are relentlessly driven upward by the marketplace and the stock market. So there is an inevitable conflict of great proportions built in here. . . ."

—"*The Powers That Be*" by David Halberstam
(Alfred A. Knopf)



ABC Television Network



**The Company
That Entertains
The World**



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

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

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

30,000 people wrote asking for details.

Police departments started including it in their training programs.

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

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

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

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

**We'd rather
do more than
not enough**



**NBC Owned
Television
Stations**

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

Entertaining You

By WILLIAM S. PALEY
Chairman, CBS, Inc.

Programming is the heart and bloodstream of network broadcasting. It is also my special love. Over my long years in this industry, I have listened to and looked at just about every kind of program that has been put on the air by all three networks. And I have learned from what I have seen, building up a storehouse of knowledge about what has succeeded and what has failed in the past—and why. So, I have had as much *experience* in programming as any other man in the business. But, more than that, a good programmer must also keep in close contact with new ideas and trends in all forms of entertainment and with the current mores, customs, and changing values of the society we live in. Everything counts.

Experience and knowledge alone, however, are not enough: a good programmer must possess or develop special, indescribable instincts—*gut reactions*. They will tell you sometimes in a loud clear voice or sometimes in a whisper what the unseen mass audience will accept, what it will particularly enjoy, what it will become engrossed in and faithful to, and, equally, what programs most viewers will find boring or too complex or too out of the ordinary to accept.

Sometimes gut reactions are right and can be trusted, sometimes not; they are not infallible.

In choosing which entertainment programs deserve to go on the air, the programmer selects those which he believes will appeal to the mass audience. For it is the public which chooses ultimately which programs will be tuned in and which tuned out. When I look at pilots of new programs, I ask myself, "Do I like it?" But that is not enough. I also ask, "Will the television viewer at home like it?" Oftentimes, the two judgments are the same; sometimes not. The hopeless cases are easy to dismiss. All the others demand judgment, instinct and the courage to take a risk. Then there are the programs which appear to promise success on the air but are in poor taste and, in my opinion, unworthy of appearing on CBS Television. I vote against them.

Television entertainment makes a valuable contribution to American life simply by bringing enjoyment and relaxation into the home. Every good programmer also is aware that he has the opportunity and responsibility to try to elevate the tastes and knowledge of the viewing audience by providing more serious, uplifting cultural programs. But these programs must be interesting enough in themselves to capture the audi-

ence's attention. Today's television does offer such fare on the commercial and the public television channels—more than any other mass medium I know—but not as much as it could if the size of the audiences were not so important. The culture, artistic, and educational programs are there, but they almost always attract only small audiences. I sometimes suspect that even the so-called high-brow critics, who complain of ordinary TV fare, seldom tune in the more cultural programs which are offered.

The best of all worlds is a combination of high quality and popularity, a program that is enjoyed by the mass audience and has a quality feel to it, one that the audience recognizes and enjoys as something rather special. That is when the programmer hits the jackpot. At all three networks programmers are competing avidly for such programs.

Where are these programs? They have to be written, cast, directed, and produced; costumes have to be made and sets designed, all of which demands many different skills working together. The truth is that there is a dearth of such skills. As chairman of CBS, I cannot say, "I want this particular kind of program. Get me the best writer, the best director, the best production team." I can say it; but I can't get it. We have to look around, see what is available, and take chances.

How does a television series come into being? The beginning is always the same: someone comes to us with an idea. It could be one of the big motion-picture companies that now has special units making television programs—Universal, Warner Brothers, Columbia, or Twentieth Century-Fox. Or it could be an independent producer such as Grant Tinker, Norman Lear, or Quinn Martin. Sometimes it is an experienced director or writer, or someone else who has never produced a show. Sometimes it is a member of our own staff. Any one of these people might come into our program development group in Hollywood or New York to discuss the idea, or he can submit a written proposal.

We ask the producer or creator to refine his concept by telling us more about the characters, where they will live, what they will do, and what their relationships will be with each other; and we want to know who is going to write, produce, direct, and star in the show. Our aim is to have a show that is better than anyone else's. The execution rather than the idea itself is often what makes a show successful. That is why I want to know who the producer intends to use in making the show—especially which writers. They are the most important ingredient. You can never be sure if you'll like a show until you actually see it; but we check the records of the people whose names the producer brings us in order to estimate how good the effort might be. We hope that once in a while he will come up with somebody who's brand-new and say, "Listen, I've got great faith in this young fellow. He hasn't written anything that's been successful yet, but I'd like to use him. Here's a sample of his work." We are, of course, always looking for new people.

Because writers are the first important element in the making of a good show, our programmers will sit down and discuss ideas with them. They might ask them for brief outlines of several shows. "What are you going to do for the next ten shows?" we might ask a writer. "Just give us short paragraphs so we can get a feel for the basic concept of your proposed series." Later, we might say, "Okay, do four scripts." What we really want to find out is how well the writer can handle his material over the long run. Consistently good writers are as scarce as precious stones and their prices are not dissimilar.

Over the past ten years, the process of selection proposals, scripts and pilots for our new programs has grown into a large operation, primarily because so many small independent producers are trying to hit it big with a new series. Ten years ago, our program development group consisted of just one man and two assistants, and they handled eight hundred or so proposals or treatments for new series. Today, more than eighteen hundred official submission of ideas, treatments, and proposals are received from professional sources, and they are logged in the registered at our program development group. This does not count another thousand or so ideas that come up informally in conversations with producers, writers, actors, and our staff every year.

We ordered only thirty-seven full scripts for the 1969-70 season and made thirteen pilots, while for this past season of 1978-79 we ordered more than two hundred scripts and from them we had about forty pilots made. Our creative development and programming people work with the producers and writers of these scripts from conception to final draft. If a script does not measure up to expectations, we may reject the whole project at that stage, or we may ask for further revisions or we may order an entirely new script. If we do like a script, we may order four to six more scripts in order to get a better idea of the series before going on. Once in a while, we commission a presentation film—a ten- or fifteen-minute film showing the cast, the locations, the sets, and the flavor of the program. When fully satisfied, the head of our Entertainment Division in Hollywood, in consultation with his programming department, will make the final decision in ordering a pilot for the proposed series. This process goes on throughout the year.

The completed pilots are sent to New York in video cassettes where I and others at CBS can see them. We once used to meet to review our new pilots on a large screen set up in a conference room. But since the advent of cassettes, I prefer to see new pilots on my own television set at the office or at home. In that way, I am seeing the program as the average viewer would in his home and I can judge the quality of the production, the cast and the story line as they would appear on the home television screen. Making notes about the writing, directing, casting, acting, and other points of production, I try to determine to whom the show would appeal. I write down my own estimate of how good a chance the

proposed series has of making it into our schedule. A small group in New York do the same thing in preparation for our final programming meeting to determine the new schedule of shows.

The final winnowing of projects and ordering of pilots goes on during the late fall and winter. Then in the early spring, usually around mid-March, the top people concerned come together either at our Television City studios in Hollywood or at CBS headquarters in New York for final programming meetings to set our schedule for the following September. By this time, everyone involved has seen all the pilots under consideration. The president of our Entertainment Division and the programming chief in Hollywood have worked out a rough outline of which new shows will work best and in what specific time periods for the new schedule.

Each of the pilots has gone through our research and analysis department, which pre-tests them in front of a carefully selected group representing a cross section of the national viewing audience. The pilots are also reviewed by a small group from our programming department in New York, men with certain special areas of expertise, as well as the president of the corporation and myself as chairman.

In our full programming meeting, which decided our final line-up for the 1978-79 season, fourteen of us met in a conference room of the programming department on the thirty-fourth floor of our New York headquarters. Like all such meetings, this one was long, agonizing, painful, ego-bruising, and extremely stimulating. It went on for five days! Lunch was brought in. Telephone calls were held. Outside interruptions were rare. Each pilot was taken up in turn, presented by its advocate, and criticized by some, condemned by some, and praised by others. Some pilots were easily discarded by majority opinion, but the more we narrowed the field down, the more intense became the debate. The meeting was open and frank; disagreements were expressed quite strongly; running debates raged. Men who had spent the past year guiding their projects to this critical point found some of their favorite projects rejected as unsuitable. But it was understood that the pilots, the projects, and a man's opinions were wide open to criticism, not the man himself.

Outside the room, there were hundreds of producers, directors, actors, and others, whose careers, livelihood, and well-being depended upon our decisions. Above all, the well-being of CBS Television and CBS as a whole rested upon decisions made in that room. People may scoff at the importance of program ratings; but our network advertising revenues, our financial resources, our plans for future projects, all depend upon how well we do the next season. We must pick and choose our programs and then schedule them for the prime time of the following television season or during the year as replacements for shows that fail. The pilots which do not make the fall schedule are set aside as possible replacements for those programs which do not work out on the air. We go through this same process again after the start of the fall season when we choose new shows for mid-season sometime in January or February. In fact, lately,

we have become even more flexible and are ready to make changes at any time, substituting a new show for a failing one no matter what time of the year it may be necessary.

In all of our programming meetings, I like to see healthy differences of opinion. I like to see all possible alternatives and I encourage full, open discussions because such give-and-take often will produce new or clearer ideas of what we should do. There is never any playing of politics or running for higher positions in these meetings that I can discern. What I do observe is an honest respect for the opinions of others. Each one there had earned his right to be at this crucial meeting and no matter how strongly one disagreed with a colleague, no matter how hard one fought for one's own favorite show, it was understood that out of it all would come a consensus which all of us would ultimately support. Aside from the tension and some rubbing of raw nerves, I enjoyed the interplay of strong minds in that room, as I remembered the fierce battles that had gone on in programming meetings before.

The most momentous programming meetings of CBS Television were those which scheduled our 1970-71 season. Bob Wood, who had become president of the network only about a year before, took the position that we would have to change the entire design of our prime-time schedule. It was an audacious stand for a man so new in the job, but then Bob Wood was a man of courage and conviction. He proposed that CBS cancel some of its most popular programs and go into something entirely different.

The problem, as he saw it, was that we had become the prisoner of our own tremendous success as the number-one network throughout the sixties. The longer our top-rated series lasted, the older our audiences became. At the same time, as the sixties drew to a close, advertisers began to use more sophisticated demographic data to make their time-buying decisions. They became interested not only in the size but in the age and economic status of the audience.

Specifically, most advertisers wanted to reach an audience between the ages of eighteen and forty-nine. The statistics were saying to us, in effect: the percentage of older people in your audience is too large . . . you are not building a base in the new and younger audience . . . you need to attract a larger proportion of younger people. I saw the beginning of that problem as early as 1965, when I wrote a memo about the make-up of our audiences to Frank Stanton.

But Bob Wood was the man who took the idea and implemented it with a proposal of what CBS Television should do next. The change he recommended for attracting a younger audience was simple and basic: abandon fantasy for realism and abandon rural settings for urban ones.

Not everyone, to say the least, approved of this proposal. It meant canceling some of our most popular and successful programs and risking new and untried ones in their place. At our programming meeting, a man from the research department actually started to cry. "You don't know what you're doing," he exclaimed. "You're throwing away millions and mil-

lions of viewers. If you do this, a year from today you'll all be sitting around here scratching your heads and wondering why in hell you were such goddamned fools."

But for the long-range view the handwriting was on the wall. Some of our favorite old shows were running their course and getting a little tired. And on the outside, it was a time of youth's uprisings in the ghettos and on college campuses. The action was in the streets of our major cities, not in bygone rural settings. I agreed with Bob Wood's diagnosis and admired him for looking so far ahead. In my mind, a good programmer always tries to stay ahead of his audience's tastes, rather than follow them blindly.

We started the transition in our schedule for the 1970-71 season. The new concepts of realism and relevance were represented, for example, by the story of a single woman working for a Minneapolis-St. Paul television station—the now classic *Mary Tyler Moore Show*; by *Arnie*, a loading-dock worker promoted to a front-office executive; and by *The Interns*, the story of a small group of young doctors in a large hospital. In this transition, we kept such old favorites as *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Green Acres*.

In June 1970, a few months before this new schedule went on the air, Mike Dann resigned as head of our programming department for reasons of health. On his doctor's advice that he seek something less strenuous and nerve-wracking, he joined the Children's Television Workshop, a non-profit corporation which produces *Sesame Street*.

In choosing a replacement for Dann, we picked one of the youngest men on our program staff, the vice-president for Program Planning and Development: Fred Silverman. From time to time I had noticed Silverman's sharp perception about programming and scheduling. Soon after Silverman took over Dann's job we grouped the older rural-type programs together on Tuesday night and put the newer, youth-oriented programs together on Wednesday and Saturday nights. Silverman left us in 1975 for the top programming job at ABC, where he had been offered extremely generous financial terms plus the challenge of turning the lowest-rated network into the highest one. I was surprised when he left, for I had not know he was even considering it. I was told by mutual associates at CBS that the challenge involved played a big part in his decision to leave CBS. In 1978, Silverman was offered and accepted the presidency of NBC, an important and prestigious advance in his career as he took over the network which had become the lowest-rated.

The biggest break with the past came in the middle of the 1970-71 season, when we put on *All in the Family*. This was the story of an exceedingly boisterous and bigoted middle-class man; his fluttery, plain-speaking, and honest wife; and his liberal daughter and son-in-law. Bob Wood presented the pilot to us for our consideration and we all recognized it as an outstanding program well produced in every respect. But,

(continued on page 32)



equally, all of us realized the tremendous risk involved in putting such a different kind of program on the air. After long discussions and much agonizing and considerable trepidation, we agreed to go ahead with it.

For the first time, we allowed an entertainment program to deal in a real way with ordinary subjects, using the kind of conversations that one might hear in any household—ethnic attitudes and all. We came out and said, in effect, we'll do it the way it is and not be afraid of the complaints we expected. Some would say that white people do not have black people coming into their houses, and if you, Mr. CBS, think they do, you're mistaken, and we're not going to listen to your network any more. That would have been, I think, the kind of reaction we would have received ten years earlier. But we felt the time had come to catch up with some of the developments that had taken place in the United States.

We also felt that there were many situations where whites and blacks mix and where they like each other on the surface and don't like each other underneath. As a result, we developed *The Jeffersons* as a spin-off about the black neighbors of Archie Bunker. In *All in the Family*, the racist Archie Bunker cannot abide George Jefferson because he is black, and Mr. Jefferson cannot stand Mr. Bunker because he is such a racist. Yet, the two wives become good friends. In the spin-off, we made Mr. Jefferson a prosperous owner of a dry-cleaning business who flaunts his success by moving into a luxury apartment house in a white neighborhood. So, in *The Jeffersons*, we depict this proud black man who is angry with whites, showing off his wealth and status and at the same time wants to be accepted by his white neighbors. He was a new kind of character for television, which reflected, we thought, a change in the social customs of the country. And we decided to use it as a basis for entertainment.

For the next season, 1971–72, we canceled other old standbys and replaced them with a Western (*Cade's County*), two detective series (*Cannon* and *O'Hara, United States Treasury*) and three situation comedies (*The Chicago Teddy Bears*, *Funny Face*, and *The New Dick Van Dyke Show*); only the Western did not have an urban setting. All in all, the 1971 fall schedule represented the most drastic overhaul in CBS history. That season, we eliminated fourteen programs, introduced eight new series, and rescheduled eleven series in new time periods. Only four time periods out of twenty-nine remained unchanged from our previous fall season.

Our changes worked. The composition of our audience did change—just as we had hoped.

CBS Television continued to rank first in the ratings year after year. Then suddenly, in the fall of 1975, the early ratings indicated that our status as number one was in real trouble. Even before we got the bad news in late September, I had planned a trip to network headquarters in Hollywood.

On a Sunday in mid-October 1975, I flew out to Hollywood, along with Jack Schneider and our top program people from New York. Bob Wood was already there. The next morning in Television City we met with members of the Hollywood staff, about fifteen of us in all. Two big jobs were at hand: first, rearranging the existing programs so that they might become more successful in new time slots; and second, choosing new shows to replace the ones that were failing. Our goal was to have a complete new schedule in place by mid-season, which meant sometime in January.

At the time, we lacked sufficient inventory. We had no series ready for immediate broadcast. So after canceling three failing shows, we filled their time slots with specials and reruns for the several weeks until the replacements were ready. Marginal programs that we might have canceled in other years we left alone because we could not replace them with anything better. We decided at the meetings to put in three replacement series from the small inventory available: *The Blue Knight*, *Sara*, and *One Day at a Time*, a Norman Lear production. By mid-season all three were on the air as part of the rearranged schedule.

The ratings *did* turn around, and when the 1975–76 season ended, CBS was again on top, for the twenty-first consecutive year. But that was the end of our unbroken chain of seasons in that position.

Early in the next season we found that there was still a lack in our inventory and no time to make up for past lapses. We had several backup projects, but they were mediocre or just plain useless. This time we could not make satisfactory repairs and we finished the 1976–77 season in second place, after ABC.

Being second in the ratings, we brought ten new shows into our prime-time schedule for the 1977–78 season. These were the most changes we had ever made for a new fall season. And many of those shows failed. We made three changes in November, four in December, four more in January, and by the time the season was over, we had canceled and replaced eighteen programs on our prime-time schedule. We also shuffled other programs to new time slots during the year. Despite our efforts we did not regain first place.

Thus the stage was set for programming for the 1978–79 season, when I found that many of our people were quite ready to sacrifice quality and realism, where necessary, to try to gain maximum popular appeal. We had about twenty-five pilots still under consideration for six, seven, or possibly eight open time slots, depending upon how many previous shows we decided to cancel. In going over those pilots, I had some favorites which I thought deserved to get on our schedule; others I considered marginal, and some I thought unworthy of CBS.

Over the years I have learned to judge new programs by certain benchmarks which have characterized previously successful programs. These qualities do not guarantee the acceptance and popularity of a program,

but without them a program has a very slender chance of success. I believe the most important and virtually unailing indication of a good program—over and above basic good writing, direction, casting, costumes, and sets—is likable, intriguing characters who capture the imagination, interest, or concern of the audience. The best of them take on the aspects of real people to such an extent that the audience wants to know from week to week what happens to them.

The other benchmark I continually seek out is *believability*. In drama, casting is very important for this trait. The story line must be close to real life. Comedy can go beyond real life but not too far. There is a fine line here. In any case, a program should reflect life through realism, exaggeration, or satire. But the best programs will, however slightly or subtly, be making a clear statement that gives you truly a slice of life.

My personal favorite among all the proposed new shows for the 1978–79 season was *The Paper Chase*, a top-quality adaptation from the motion picture, starring John Houseman in his Academy Award-winning role as the stern Ivy League law school professor who has such an impact upon his first-year law students. This was clearly an outstanding program in every way, serious and yet witty, pertinent to our times, heartwarming, mature, *believable*, with a number of realistic interesting characters. Some thought the trials and tribulations of law school students and their professor would not appeal to the mass audience. As a result, they argued, we would lose out in the battle for ratings and jeopardize our chances of regaining the number-one position among the competing networks.

We had a running battle over *The Paper Chase* versus several other pilots which promised greater popular appeal. The debate was much more concerned with programming philosophy than over the merits of the individual programs. There are some people within CBS and on the outside who believe that I dominate our programming meetings. After one meeting awhile ago, someone sighed with exhaustion and remarked, “We sit around here arguing for days and in the end we do what Paley says.” He may have thought so, but it was not true. Our programming chiefs and network presidents have not been weak men. Certainly, Robert A. Daly, president of our Entertainment Division, is known for his outspokenness as much as for his acumen in picking and choosing programs, talent and staff. We argued back and forth on *The Paper Chase*, even though we both agreed the program was of outstanding quality but that it had virtually no chance of making it into the Top Ten. Where we disagreed was whether the program had any chance at all of lasting out the season and what its influence would be on our overall audience ratings.

I argued that the quality of the program warranted giving *The Paper Chase* the chance it deserved. It was television at its finest. CBS had a responsibility to put it on the air even if it did fail. And, finally, I argued that the program just might possibly draw an audience which would surprise us all. I do not want to give the impression that I was the only one who felt this way about *The Paper Chase*. Others agreed with me.

I do have a reputation for possessing rather special instincts about programming and the public's tastes and I am often asked, "How do you do it?" I don't know how I do it. There may be an expressible, intellectual side to programming, but for me there is also a deeper, instinctive side that can never be fully explained. Because I usually work in groups seeking consensus, rather than alone, my opinions on television programs often have been influenced by interactions with others; although, I suppose, in my position, mine often may have carried more individual weight.

By the end of our five-day programming meeting for the 1978–79 season, the fourteen men in the room, like a jury on a difficult and controversial case, had reached a unanimous decision on introducing eight new shows into the fall schedule. *The Paper Chase* was among those chosen. The critics acclaimed it as the best of all the new programs on the air and, with equal unanimity, they predicted it would fail and not last out the season. But the public will make the ultimate decision.

The other half of the art of programming—after we have picked and chosen the dramas, comedies and variety series we want—is what to do with them. That is "scheduling" or the placing of each new program along with the old ones in a time slot which would be most advantageous. Scheduling is an art or skill in itself, once again derived from experience, instinct and philosophy. It is also the precise point of competition with the other networks.

Our scheduling strategy is worked out by our programming committee on a standing magnetic board, five feet long by four feet high, marked for all the prime-time half hours in the broadcasting week. As we plan our strategy, we move around different-colored plaques representing our programs in competition with the NBC and ABC expected programs. Such is the importance of that magnetic scheduling board that during pre-season planning not only do we keep the doors of the room securely locked, but the board itself, when not in use, is covered with locked steel doors. One might, as some have, think of it as the top-secret room of network television. The reputation, the ratings, and the financial well-being of the network depend upon the judgments made in that room.

There are two basic strategies to scheduling: scattering your strongest shows through the week, putting each of them against the strongest shows of your opposition, which is defensive scheduling (for you are trying to reduce your losses). Offensive scheduling, on the other hand, is placing your best shows together in sequence on certain nights when the competition is not at its strongest. The idea here is to gain a cumulative effect, so that each show brings in a large audience which can carry over to the other programs on that night. In this kind of offensive planning, you might be conceding certain nights to gain the advantage over one, two, or perhaps three other nights. The overall result, if all this works as it is designed, is to give you the highest ratings for the week as a whole.

The scheduling of a program can spell the difference between success

and failure. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* was introduced on CBS October 3, 1961, and ran for three months from 8:00 to 8:30 Tuesday nights, following a rerun of *Gunsmoke*. It was not even in the top seventy for that period. But we had faith in Dick Van Dyke and his co-star, Mary Tyler Moore, and we rescheduled it for a later time slot, 9:30 to 10:00 on Wednesday nights, following *Checkmate*, with a so-so rating. Then we replaced *Checkmate* with *The Beverly Hillbillies* that September and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* rose to number nine. The next season it became number three because *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which led into it, had become the number-one program on television. Scheduling and sequence count a great deal.

The daytime and late-night hours also must be programmed and scheduled in similar fashion and beyond our prime-time series, we also have to plan with great care the short mini-series and the motion pictures we put on the air. We also have a separate department which concentrates on broadcasting live sports events. There is fierce competition in all these areas among the networks, for here again ratings and shares of the audience and financial returns depend upon how well we suit the tastes of the audience. So, as part of our 1978–79 season, CBS scheduled such movie classics as *Gone With the Wind*, with Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh, *The Corn Is Green*, with Katharine Hepburn, and such box office hits as *Rocky*, *Marathon Man*, *Carrie*, *Network*, and *Black Sunday*.

All our programming and scheduling of comedy, drama, and variety series, and our mini-series, specials, movies and sports are designed to give the viewing public what we think it wants to see, what we think it might like to see, what we think is important for it to see. Of course, we strive constantly for quality in everything we do. Although CBS has slipped in the ratings recently, I believe we still maintain our lead in quality. But we do keep one eye on the ratings. It is well enough for outside critics to say, "Don't cater to the mass audience or the majority taste; give them what they ought to have." But a network cannot do that. We must give them very much what they want. Still, at CBS we have always tried to lead the audience to some extent. Over the years I do believe we have broadcast successful programs that broadened audience views about the world we live in. To name but a few: *The Defenders*, *Playhouse 90*, *60 Minutes*, *The Waltons*, *All in the Family*, and a long list of documentaries, starting with the broadcasts of Ed Murrow.

Personally, I wish that the ratings were truly a secondary consideration in programming. Television would be much better off and the public better served if the numbers race were not so important. But ratings are terribly important. Advertising revenues depend upon how many viewers the sponsor is reaching with his commercials. So, the financial well-being of each network does depend upon the ratings.

The problem has concerned me for some time. About ten years ago I proposed to the presidents of NBC and ABC that we work out some way

in which each network could broadcast a certain number of special cultural, educational, high-quality, serious programs. My proposal did not evoke any interest at that time, but perhaps the time is ripe for the idea now.

What I propose is that representatives of the three major networks meet to work out the feasibility and the details in setting aside a given period of time—say, two hours a week in prime time—for special, high-quality programs that would appeal to educated, sophisticated tastes more than to the mass audience. Each network would take different nights of the week, thus offering the public six hours of high-quality programming each week.

No one network, as a practical matter, can do it alone. If CBS were to broadcast a high-quality cultural or documentary program on a subject which attracted the interest of only a minority of viewers, CBS would lose its normal share of the audience not only in the hour or two of its quality broadcast but very possibly for the whole evening. If, for example, we scheduled such a program at 8 P.M., we probably would lose the whole night to the other networks. If we scheduled it for 10:00 P.M., our local affiliated stations might find they were losing their audience for the 11:00 P.M. local news programs. Low audience ratings for an hour or two in order to present special interest programs might be bearable, but forfeiting the whole night through the domino effect would make the cost to the network untenable.

But if all the networks contributed to the objective of increasing the number of high-quality programs put on the air, the losses would be divided among us. I believe such programs would increase in popularity as time went on and the television audience came to appreciate this kind of fare. There would be a point when at least some of them might become income-producing. In any event, the public would get a chance to see programs of greater cultural, educational and informational value and the television industry would be making a fuller and better use of this magic form of communications.

This idea can succeed only if all three networks agree and can persuade their affiliates that it is incumbent upon us all to do something about the paralyzing effect of network competition on high-quality programming. There are innumerable questions to be answered. What is quality programming? Is it only high-minded drama? Good music? Documentaries? Is it an examination of American history? All these are seriously lacking in regular prime-time schedule. Should prime time be limited to that niche we call "the arts"?

These are questions—and there may be others—that men of good will, men who have devoted their careers to broadcasting, can work out. If we must compete, I would like to see the three networks vying to put on the best program of the year in this special category—best in quality, not in audience ratings. It seems to me that the commercial networks should

seek out those subjects which are not popular with the mass audience and treat them on the air so that they would be more easily appreciated. It is the exposure of these kinds of subjects which broaden their appeal.

One major stumbling block to this idea might be the U.S. Department of Justice. I understand that the Justice Department could object to any such joint meeting of the three networks as an attempt at collusion in restraint of free competition. This problem could be overcome, I believe, by reviewing the principle with the Justice Department in advance—so long as neither the government nor any of its agencies would have anything to do with the content of TV broadcasting as a result.

My inner feeling is that now the time has arrived when a large part of the American public is asking for a new, major change in television programming. High-quality programs in prime time may be the beginning of such a change.

The preceding article is an excerpt from the book, "As It Happened," published by Doubleday and Co., Copyright © 1979 by William S. Paley.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

Children are natural skeptics, insatiably curious, with a taste for hard facts and a nose for dishonesty. Presumably for this reason, television advertisements for toys consist mainly of straightforward demonstrations of the toys in use, usually in settings of harmonious play with family or peers, which hardly seems corrupting. It is adult advertising, not children's which seeks to manipulate by stimulating envy, insecurity, and sexual longing.

One cannot imagine a commercial promising a boy that if he acquires a particular toy, girls will be powerfully attracted to him, or boys will realize he's made it to the top. If the FTC is strictly interested in protecting people against inherent psychological vulnerabilities, it should ban advertising to adults and let children's advertising be.

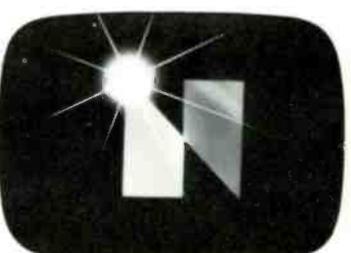
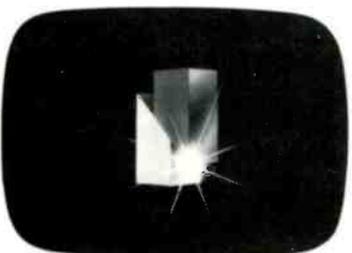
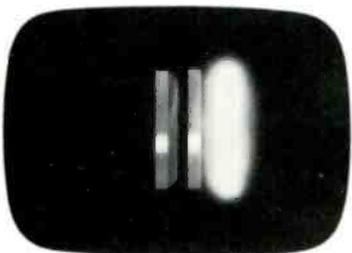
—*"Hands Off Children's Television"*
by Christopher DeMuth,
in *The American Spectator*.

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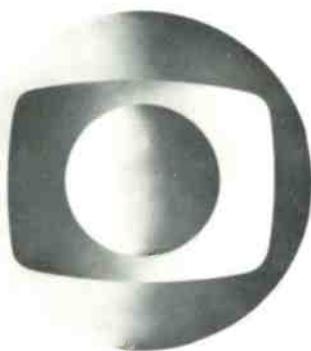
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Needed: More Non-Fiction Programs

By PAMELA HILL

The non-fiction film today should be as important to television as the non-fiction book to publishing. And yet, 30 years after the advent of television, news department documentaries and magazine programming occupy only a fraction of its total air time.

What has gone wrong?

Some say non-fiction is too expensive. But its costs less than entertainment programming.

Some say its too controversial. But only a handful of documentaries over 30 years have generated real controversy.

The real reason there is so little non-fiction programming is that it cannot produce the high advertising rates that can be charged for entertainment. And the reason for that is that people aren't watching. Television writers haven't always encouraged them to watch. The result is that the network's loss of money is frequently not offset even by increased prestige.

I am not saying ratings should affect news department programming. I do not believe that. But I am raising an uncomfortable question for news departments. Why aren't more people watching most of what we do? *60 Minutes* skillfully has proved they will.

Sometimes they're not watching because complex subjects seem to be too demanding. We must cover these subjects anyway, and, it's now clear, cover them more clearly. People are not watching because we in television news haven't done our jobs well enough.

We've been too slow to take advantage of the film making skills needed for television. And too willing, because our heritage of print journalism to rely on the word at the expense of the picture. We need to find a balance of excellence between the two.

Because of our heritage as a licensed business, we have been far too inhibited in what we'll try. We have worked within artificial constraints too often self-imposed.

With some exceptions, we haven't been courageous. Controversy is too uncomfortable.

We at the networks have allowed the documentary to slip into a single rigid, unchanging format. That narrative format has an important place. But we haven't sufficiently explored other possibilities opened by film and technology.

We must not insulate ourselves from talented young filmmakers, inside and outside the industry, who could combine their talents with those of our best journalists, to produce the best in television journalism.

The next decade, I believe, will see the non-fiction film take its rightful place in television. The industry is changing. Technology will make documentaries more timely. Cassettes and cable will contribute to diversity. Eventually we will follow the newspapers into quality series on science, culture, sports, and economics.

But we have to reach that point while working in today's fiercely competitive market. One way is to make existing documentary and magazine coverage more courageous, more innovative, more energetic. One way is to make people pay attention to us. Then it will be up to our organizations to support us—to give us what non fiction programming must have to achieve its sadly neglected potential: fixed and regular air time, and more of it.

The preceding essay is drawn from Miss Hill's remarks at the Columbia-DuPont Awards in New York last February.

Pamela Hill is Vice-president and Executive Producer of documentaries, ABC Television. Since joining ABC in 1973 Miss Hill has produced a number of award-winning news programs, including the acclaimed report, "Fire," which won two Emmys, as well as the Peabody, DuPont and National Press Club Awards. Before joining ABC, Miss Hill was associated with NBC News for eight years, working on the White Paper series. She directed "Pollution Is a Matter of Choice," which also won two Emmys and a DuPont Award. She is a graduate of Bennington College and is married to New York Times columnist, Tom Wicker.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"For the first time, 'action' on the floor of the House of Representatives is being televised by the House itself and transmitted to the outside world. . . . Six television cameras have been permanently positioned in the House chamber. . . . The surprising impression from the House's first week before the cameras is how interesting some of the routine business can be. The problem is, it is almost incomprehensible to someone who isn't seriously devoted to Congressional procedures and the agenda."

—James M. Perry in *The Wall Street Journal*



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Panjandrum Emeritus— A Talk with Sir Huw Wheldon

By FREDERICK A. JACOBI

Sir Huw Wheldon, the craggy-visaged Welshman who ran the BBC's vast television empire for six years, has kind words for some American Commercial television, for his mother-in-law and for large production centers, more or less in that order.

He has little good to say for Americans who disparage their own country, for scholarly committees which meddle in program content or for the notion that public broadcasting can succeed in America as a locally based enterprise.

Above all, Sir Huw harbors an abiding love of architecture. This enthusiasm colors his judgment about all forms of art, not only those manifested by stone and steel. For example, as head of programming for BBC Television, a post he held for four years before becoming its managing director in 1969, he would tell his producers that every program—whether it was news, documentary or drama—should tell a story.

“And a STORY”—the word does seem to boom out in Celtic capitals when he talks—“has a beginning, a middle and an end.” Sir Huw attributes the quality of the best of the BBC programs (“the ones we send over to you here in America—never fear, we have our share of dreadful ones but we keep them to ourselves”) to the faithful adherence on the part of most BBC producers to this precept. Good programs have sound structures.

Huw Wheldon's sense of structure extends to his concrete interest in architecture, which was stimulated when the BBC first started planning for Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee. With typical BBC foresight, this planning began three or four years before the actual celebration, which would take place in 1977.

“Dick Cawston, who was head of documentaries, was having conversations with the Palace about what might be possible,” Sir Huw said. “Gradually the idea developed for a series about the Royal collections. There are literally scores of them, you know—everything from stamps and rare books to paintings, sculpture, armor, costumes, jewelry, incubula and ancient manuscripts.

“Then Michael Gill, who had produced *Civilisation* and *America*, asked me to discuss the project with the Duke of Edinburgh. Gill drew in the eminent historian, J. H. Plumb, who is also an authority on art. I found that the Duke was as keen about the buildings as he was about the collections. So the three of us—the Duke, Plumb and I—spent three weeks walking about Windsor Castle, Balmoral, Buckingham Palace and

other royal residences. I believed we should take the buildings *and* the collections, through which we could say something about the story of Britain and the development of Western ideas, the ideas of civilization. So I had to retire a year earlier than I had intended—which I was *delighted* to do—in order to devote full time to the project. I had been a panjandrum at the BBC for 10 years and that was enough.”

The result of his fortuitous retirement was *Royal Heritage*, a series of nine hour-long programs celebrating the British royal treasures, the largest and most valuable private art collection in the world. Huw Wheldon is to *Royal Heritage* what Kenneth Clark was to *Civilisation*: an urbane, witty and frequently fascinating host and narrator. He also wrote the narration, in collaboration with Plumb.

Wheldon conducts a journey through castles and palaces, through collections of da Vincis, Rembrandts, Holbeins, Sevres china, Waterford glass, furniture, jewels, armor and some pretty terrible Victorian monumental sculpture. An audience of over 10 million watched the series when it was broadcast in Britain, where it received the highest ratings ever recorded for a television art series. It has been shown twice on the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States. The programs are dazzling and often enthralling—even to viewers who have only a passing interest in Britain, in history or in art. *What is the BBC's secret?*

“Money” is a simplistic—and today a somewhat misleading—answer. Even the might “Beeb” is feeling inflation’s pinch. The operative intangible is tradition, a special *modus operandi*, and the near-silent hum of a well-oiled, beautifully crafted piece of machinery.

As Judy Flander wrote about *Royal Heritage* in the *Washington Post*: “The access to royalty and the treasures of empire is only part of it. There is also access to a ‘barn’ full of talent among the 25,000 people working for the BBC.” And such a pool of talent was not filled overnight. In fact it has been simmering for over a quarter of a century.

“What I miss in the United States, especially in public television,” Wheldon says, “is the large production center. At the BBC you get writers, producers, directors, editors, scenic designers and other creative people meeting in the corridors and striking sparks off each other. And the business of working together over a long period of time has a great deal to do with the quality of the work one turns out.” He noted that on the Library of Congress documentary, in addition to Ann Turner, the cameraman and several other key technical crew members had worked with him over a period of 20 years.

He noted that while public broadcasting has production centers in New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Washington and elsewhere, “they’re not big enough.” And: “Yes, you do need more than one.” By the same token he believes that public broadcasting in this country can-

(continued on page 50)



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not succeed if it is based—as some of its proponents wish it to be—on local television and local power. “It’s like saying you want a university education and will place one professor in every village,” says Sir Huw. “What you should have is 50 professors in one center.”

Sheer size, of course, does not fairly characterize the BBC. There is something far more elusive: style, taste, a point of view.

“In my judgment,” Huw Wheldon says, “you must make programs for people who are interested in a particular field—whether it’s football, string quartets or poetry. If you’re going to publish poetry you’ve got to take it seriously, and not run it next to a picture of a naked lady, no matter how attractive she may be. In other words, we didn’t try to lure anybody. We weren’t trying to turn an opera hater into an opera lover. To hell with him.

“But you’ve got to take into consideration that a passion for some one thing may be based on a very wide range of knowledge indeed. When I was doing *Monitor*, I knew that I had two very faithful watchers: one was E. M. Forster and the other was my mother-in-law. Now my mother-in-law, a highly intelligent woman, received about as little formal education as it was possible to get by with in Britain and still survive. So that if I were going to do a program about Robert Graves and the Muse of poetry, for example, I would do my utmost to inform my mother-in-law without offending Forster. You have to have a feeling of courtesy both toward the ignorant and the informed.”

So it is obviously possible to respect the audience and succeed in television. It works on both sides of the Atlantic: nearly 30 years ago NBC President Sylvester said (Pat) Weaver preferred to follow his own taste rather than try to second-guess that of the public. “The Today Show,” which he invented, is still on the air.

Huw Wheldon sees no point in American television, public or commercial, trying to ape British programs. He concedes, however, that “America should use writers and its own literary tradition more than it does now in the service of television.” He does not believe that it is possible to create good television by committee. Committees of academics have exerted a deadening influence on certain of public-television’s more ambitious undertakings.

“Television can only be made by tyrants,” he says, beaming. “Two, at the most three, people—a director, a writer and a producer—who constitute authority. The word ‘authority’ and the word ‘author’ are not conjoined by accident.”

As to American commercial television, it does what it does expertly, in the opinion of the Welshman who helped to import some of it into Britain. He loves *MASH*, *Kojak* and *Hawaii Five-O*.

“They come from a great MOVIE tradition,” he asserts. “What’s more, they’re very good! Americans who look down their noses at them are wrong! We inhabit an age of disparagement. There are Americans who

tend to tear their own country apart. They're wrong! This country stands for great civility, and Americans should recognize that theirs is a highly civilized country."

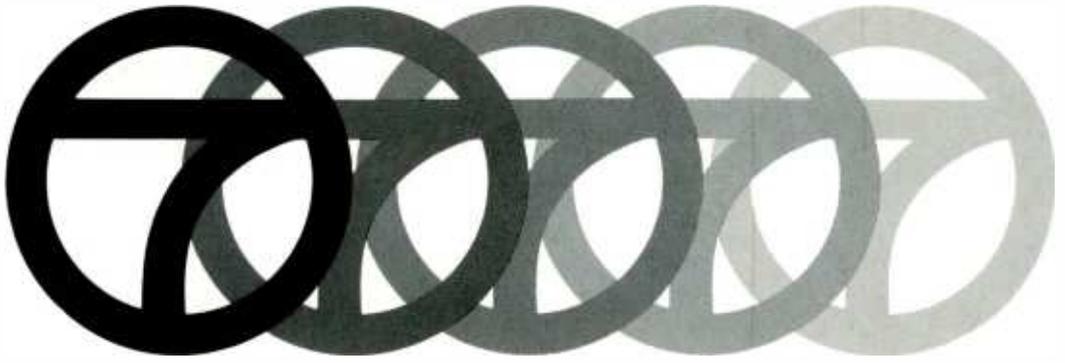
There can have been no finer tribute to this civilization than the recent 90-minute documentary on our own Library of Congress. To this *Portrait of an American Institution* (he knows it is an off-putting title) Sir Huw brought his infectious enthusiasm and his engagingly idiosyncratic approach. How had this project come about?

Huw Wheldon had met Daniel J. Boorstin, the historian, at an Aspen seminar, before he'd been made Librarian of Congress. After leaving the BBC in 1975, Wheldon had become chairman of the Court of Governors of the London School of Economics, his alma mater. "It has a huge library, the greatest social-science library in existence," he said. "It had to be moved to new premises. The move took 10 years and cost \$10-million, of which \$1.2-million came from the United States. That's when I became interested in libraries. After Boorstin became Librarian of Congress I visited him in Washington and he took me on a tour of the Library. I discovered that few Americans really knew what the Library of Congress was about. So I thought it would be agreeable to make a program about it."

Just like that. No 300-page proposal, no committee meetings, no breathless search for underwriters, none of the travails that normally attend the birth of an American public television project. Wheldon simply "thought it would be agreeable," brought together his friends from the BBC and WNET/13, and did it.

Of course that's how many of the BBC's finest hours are realized—by genial tyrants who believe that such-and-such would be "agreeable" to do. And they do it. May the sun never set on the likes of Sir Huw Wheldon. Or his mother-in-law.

Frederick A. Jacobi is an Anglophile who has toiled in, around or near American television for almost 30 years, the past 15 in public broadcasting. He now runs the Publications Office for WNET/THIRTEEN, New York.

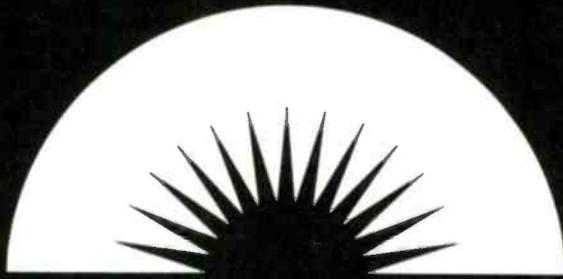


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Changing Goals in a Changing World

(From Carnegie Commission Report on The Future of Public Television)

Americans now watch television for nearly 6½ hours per day in the average household. Americans today each listen to an average of 3½ hours of radio. Many of us spend more time with the electronic media than we spend with other human beings, much less reading or learning. These are facts that we may deplore but can hardly ignore. The ubiquity of the electronic media forces us to ask fundamental questions about how and why they operate.

Societies structure their ways of communicating to reflect their dominant values. Our constitutional freedom of the press bears witness to this nation's early commitment to robust political debate and grass-roots limitations on state power.

Yet, for all our resistance to censorship, there is a sense in which Americans are denied what other societies consider vital: a flourishing public communications service uncensored by commercial imperatives.

The United States is the only Western nation relying so exclusively upon advertising effectiveness as the gatekeeper of its broadcasting activities. The consequences of using the public spectrum primarily for commercial purposes are numerous, and increasingly disturbing. The idea of broadcasting as a force in the public interest, a display case for the best of America's creative arts, a forum of public debate—advancing the democratic conversation and enhancing the public imagination—has receded before the inexorable force of audience maximization. In their early days, television and radio experienced brief "golden eras" when relatively small and critical audiences encouraged the profession to foster inventiveness and to pioneer new forms of journalism and mass entertainment.

As television moved into virtually every home, our nation has become increasingly dependent upon it. But, because broadcasting is largely based on commercial sponsorship, it must address itself primarily to attracting the largest audiences, and therefore, also the largest advertising revenues. What these developments suggest about our national life and our dominant values is a matter of concern to many thinking Americans. It led to the establishment of the first Carnegie Commission on public television in 1966.

Although some radio and television channels had already been "reserved" for noncommercial use by the government in 1945 and 1952, re-

spectively, the idea of a national system, funded in part with government funds and aimed at the deficiencies of commercial media, was spearheaded by the work of the first Carnegie Commission in the mid-sixties. With the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act as the codification of the Commission's provocative study, the government was saying, in effect, that if commercial broadcasting must serve purposes other than the public interest, let us create a broadcast system that can serve the untapped potential of the electronic media for public understanding and enlightenment.

As Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University, has said, "The modern miracles of communications have been used to transmit vulgarity, triviality, and violence. They might better be used to enable great master teachers to transmit hope and access to a better life."

And so, American public broadcasting as we know it was conceived in 1967 with the involvement of the federal government in supporting an independent, noncommercial, diversified system of radio and television stations serving local communities. These elements were to be forged into a national institution serving all those who hungered for an alternative to the increasingly vulgarized commercial fare.

Today, 12 years later, public broadcasting is at the center of an even more momentous debate about communications policy, one that is fundamental to the life of this nation and the world in the late 20th century. Imperceptibly, but in less than 60 years, the means by which we perceive ourselves and the world around us have been totally transformed by the electronic media. The technological revolution, that catchall cliché promising to bring utopia to every home, has changed us all in an unspectacular, but nonetheless revolutionary fashion. We ask ourselves whether the transformation is utopian or Orwellian.

Will the next wave of the communications systems that are becoming increasingly central to our lives leave a place for the creative inspiration and unique learning that we have come to associate with the best of public broadcasting during the last decade? Does the emergence of a new technological context for public broadcasting radically alter the institution's mission? How can public broadcasting survive the stresses it will surely encounter during the next decade from extremely well-financed commercial alternatives?

Not only are professionals in the commercial and noncommercial media industries concerned about the future of telecommunications in America, but a variety of citizen groups have developed considerable expertise which they have sought to use on behalf of constituencies hitherto excluded from national debates on communications policy.

Such citizen and lay concern is the result of more than a decade of disillusionment with powerful institutions in America, and "the media" in particular. Following the lead of the civil rights movement, citizen groups have focused on the power of the media to determine the national

agenda and to establish the outlines of our public debate. While citizen activism originally centered on commercial television in protests against violence, sex, and overcommercialization, the media movement soon expanded to encompass public broadcasting as well.

Many public groups, once staunch supporters of public broadcasting against the blandness and vulgarity of commercial broadcasting, began to express disappointment about the record of public broadcasting on programming for minorities and women, public participation in station governance, equal employment opportunity, clandestine commercialism via corporate underwriting, and the use of so many British imports.

Perhaps criticism was inevitable, given public broadcasting's very limited resources. Expectations of a system that calls itself "public" are necessarily broad, and perhaps overambitious at a time when many conflicting voices claim to speak for the public interest.

Hence, as public broadcasting enters its early adolescence, it suffers from chronic underfunding, growing internal conflict, and a loss of a clear sense of purpose and direction. Concerns over new technology and continuing redefinition of its public responsibilities have only unbalanced what was none too stable a personality in the first place. Roughly handled as an infant industry by repeated and enervating survival struggles, public broadcasting is only now able to consider its long term future.

If we are to rediscover purpose and direction, we must somehow reach a consensus on a question with an almost infinite number of answers: *What is public broadcasting?* What distinguishes it from its commercial counterpart and justifies extensive public support? Without audience ratings and profitability as the criteria of success, how do we determine what public broadcasting should attempt to do? During a year and a half of extensive public hearings and spirited internal discussions, the Carnegie Commission has sought to answer these questions for itself. What then do we believe to be the functional characteristics and goals of American public broadcasting?

First, *public broadcasting must be noncommercial*. Unlike commercial radio and television, most print media, and many new communications services, public broadcasting creates programs primarily to serve the needs of audiences, not to sell products or to meet demands of the marketplace. This ideal demands that public television and radio attract viewers and listeners whose tastes and interests are significant, but neglected or overlooked by media requiring mass audiences. The noncommercial nature of public broadcasting has important implications for its programs, its relations with creative talent, and its mission to unserved audiences.

Equally important, *public broadcasting must be independent*. Both at the local and national levels, public broadcasting must create and maintain distance between its funders and the content of its programs—particularly when matters of journalistic and artistic judgment are at stake.

Whether financial support is derived from the federal government, local or state governments, foundations, businesses, or viewers themselves, the institutions responsible for making programs must be prepared to fight for their journalistic and artistic integrity. Public broadcasters and program makers should be considered instrumentalities of the press, specially protected by the First Amendment as an integral part of the democratic process.

Public broadcasting must become public telecommunications. All communicators are today in a profession whose fundamental assumptions are challenged by new technological developments and by the social and political consequences that accompany any broad redefinition of mission.

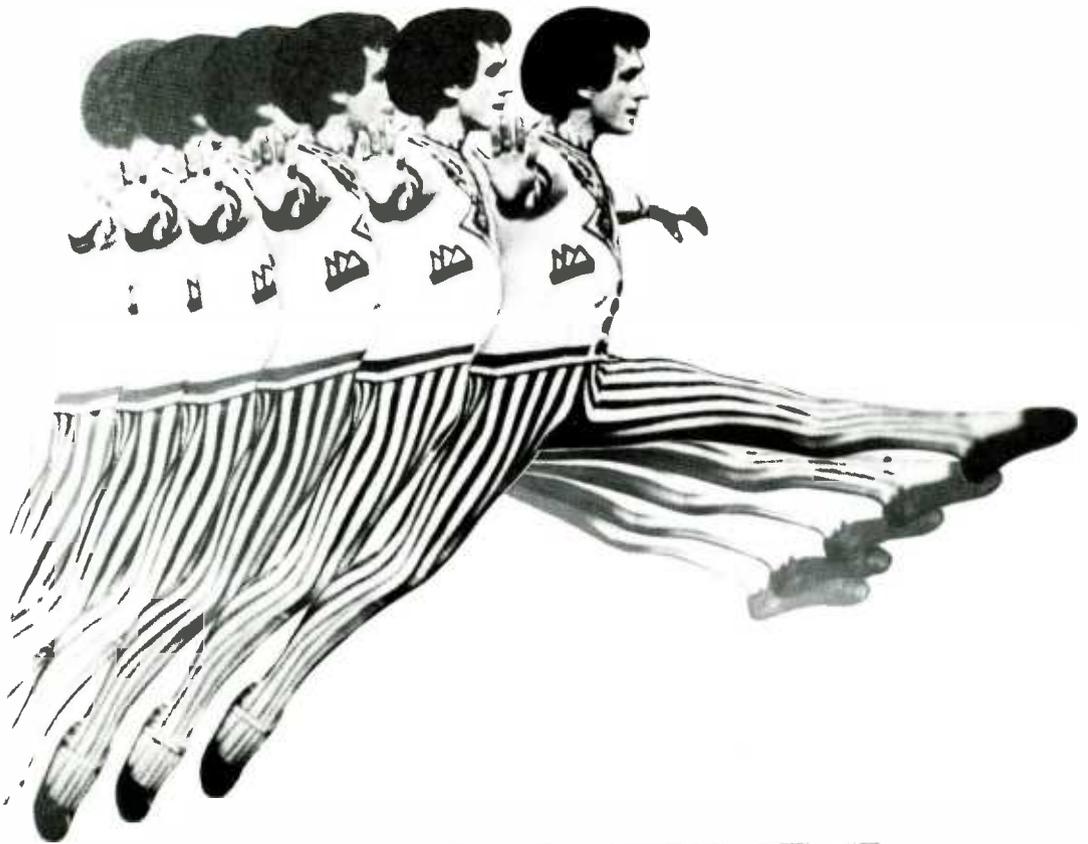
We expect the years ahead to be a period of unrestrained competitive upheaval. Public broadcasting may well be the only vehicle within the communications infrastructure that will be capable of dispassionate evaluation of programming and new telecommunications services without a constant and chilling eye on the bottom line or the fortunes of a particular corporation. Classical and jazz music services, extensive national radio news commentary, original American drama, documentaries, programming in science and the arts, and public education have already proven unappealing for commercial network distribution. Even more disturbing is the trend for stations and networks to regard newsmakers and newscasters as personalities available to enhance ratings like any other program element. Today's public broadcasting and tomorrow's public telecommunications should try to strike a different note.

Public broadcasting must consistently set a standard of excellence for America. Whenever noncommercial broadcasting addresses itself to its work, it must aim to excel. Free of the unrelenting demand to meet a standard of taste attractive to mass audiences, public broadcasting should permit American talent to fulfill the potential of the electronic media to educate and inform, as well as to entertain and delight.

It is clear that the communication of creative excellence is a difficult challenge, one not easily mastered by any institution. A call for excellence is not a retreat to elitism. Cultural and journalistic excellence should provide opportunities for the diverse groupings of the American people to define a pattern of programming unattainable in commercial broadcasting. These alternatives to fare suitable for mass audiences are not programs centered on the preoccupations of a privileged elite. Public broadcasting should bring to Americans the highest accomplishments of our society and civilization in all of its rich diversity.

To do so, of course, means that public broadcasting must create the institutions that will nurture creative excellence. If commercial broadcasting, by pursuing conformity defined by advertising, has stifled the full vigor of America's creative artists and journalists, we must say as

(continued on page 60)



MOMENTUM IS HARD TO STOP

On July 22, 1978, something rather amazing happened...the first live satellite broadcast of a ballet, ever. It was the Royal Ballet's Salute to the U.S.A., from Covent Garden, London. It wasn't televised by a network. It was televised by Metromedia, the nation's largest independent broadcaster.

We did it because we're committed to providing quality programming for our audience. And we've got the momentum to do it.

Metromedia Television got to be the nation's largest independent broadcaster because we never lost sight of one simple fact: people watch programs, not stations. So we showed programs that we know people love. Like "The Merv Griffin Show." And "Carol Burnett and Friends." And news programs. And kids' programs. And we grew. How we grew. It was on Metromedia Television that David Frost interviewed Richard Nixon; the first interview since he left office. The audience was immense. And immensely pleased.

Metromedia televised the Royal Ballet on two occasions: their Salute to the U.S.A., and their performance of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Metromedia also televised *Die Fledermaus*, the first opera ever transmitted via satellite, from Europe. Metromedia Television scored a cultural coup. And still we grew.

Today Metromedia Television is bigger. And better. That's true momentum. The kind of momentum that's hard to stop.

Metromedia Television Means Momentum.

New York, Ch. 5, WNEW-TV
Los Angeles, Ch. 11, KTTV
Washington, D.C., Ch. 5, WTTG
Houston, Ch. 26, KRIV-TV
Minneapolis/St. Paul, Ch. 11, WTCN-TV
Cincinnati, Ch. 19, WXIX-TV
Kansas City, Ch. 9, KMBC-TV

well that public broadcasting has exhausted them in a Kafkaesque search for disappearing funds.

Television and radio production are art forms that flourish in an environment that rewards excellence and stimulates achievement. The act of creation is not so much a mystical event as it is the coincidence of inspiration and opportunity. Public broadcasting ought to become a major source of opportunity for inspired craftsmanship, shaping an electronic artifice into an extension and enhancement of human perception.

The medium has yet to develop the resources necessary for a sustained commitment to genuine artistry, regardless of genre. The creator, animated by love of the medium, and by the delight of discovering new pathways within the form, must be central to any successful creative enterprise. Public broadcasting must be able to find and sustain the inventive and inspired people who are capable of making the American scene into a hallmark of excellence acknowledged by the rest of the world. We are certainly capable of it. Only the resources seem to be lacking.

By providing a uniquely constructed special window on society, television and radio shape it and define it. Public broadcasting can easily bring together, face to face, people who might otherwise never meet in daily life. Such communication provides breathtaking potentialities for our sense of community. It can harmonize us in our local concerns. It can bind a nation together by constructing a common catalog of the best in our own society and world culture.

These visions of the role of public broadcasting in widening and deepening America's understanding of itself are in no way intended to be confined to any given form of radio or television programming. As we have already emphasized, the electronic media will continue to transform themselves during the next decade in directions that are only dimly visible today. Certainly, the goals of creative excellence, cultural pluralism, and individual expression can be applied equally to drama, children's programming, minority self-expression, and electronic education of every kind.

We believe that public broadcasting must be a full service system offering a sufficiently wide range of viewing and listening experiences to attract virtually every segment of the population on a regular basis. Some programs will be extremely popular, and that is good. Other programs will have highly specialized appeal. This, too, will manage to attract significant numbers of viewers and listeners who would otherwise search in vain for interesting program materials.

But there is one objective that public broadcasting must locate at its center of its activity if it is ever to be considered a mature voice in society. Public broadcasting must have a strong editorial purpose. *Without this strong editorial purpose expressed in diverse, even controversial ways, and without an ability to construct a context for understanding the events that occur around us and the meaning of history, public broadcasting will never be taken seriously.*

Journalism has been the greatest area of peril for public broadcasters. In the early 1970s, public broadcasting's outspoken public affairs presence prompted a powerful demand for conformity from the Nixon administration. Once burned, the system, substantially financed by tax dollars, was less tempted to seek controversy or to perform a journalistic role that occasionally earns the displeasure of local pressure groups and government itself.

Yet, while it has a difficult course to chart, public broadcasting *must* develop a strong professional and independent public affairs presence if it is to be respected as an important public voice.

There are some within public broadcasting who will actively resist this recommendation, preferring the blandness that raises no one's hackles. This is not the life of the serious artist or journalist. We certainly do not advocate that public broadcasters should be granted unlimited license to sensationalize or distort in order to titillate audiences, but rather that they be allowed to become a free institution that disciplines itself by constant comparison with truth.

Public broadcast journalism must be carried on by professionals prepared to accept and live by the requirements of responsibility that go hand in hand with freedom. We believe, for example, that a mature journalistic role for public broadcasting will require that the institution speak out on matters of public policy, attempt to uncover wrongdoing, and occasionally criticize those in high places. Such criticism must be truthful and fair, but we believe that appropriate standards should be allowed to develop within the system, rather than by statute.

We believe that public broadcasting has the responsibility to use these most powerful communications media as tools to enhance citizenship and public service. The noncommercial nature of public broadcasting permits dissemination of informational and educational activities that can elevate the level of public debate and understanding of our ever more complex local, state, and national activities.

Public broadcasting currently provides many such services over the air—legislative coverage and analysis, hearings coverage, call-in programs, professional and special-interest training via state or regional networks, special forms of instruction and information access. We believe that expansion into the nonbroadcast technologies will greatly increase the system's capability, especially on the local level, to discover new forms of public service and provide them to a wide range of professional and interest groups.

Public telecommunications must continue to break new ground in the education of all Americans—children in their classrooms and at home, adults in life-long learning and professional training, and the general public. We recall here such highly enjoyable and educational programs as *Civilisation*, *The Adams Chronicles*, *Nova*, *National Geographic*, and *The Cousteau Odyssey*. Moreover, we believe public broadcasting must be prepared to devote substantial future effort and resources to the cre-

ation of first-rate programs that present to the broad audience the cultures and concerns of other specialized groups. The system must go beyond the reactive support of particular programs to "satisfy" special-interest groups and begin to apply talent, time, and money to innovative programming that celebrates and illuminates the diversity of American culture. Our understanding, for instance, is that public broadcasting was unable to develop a program about blacks with the appeal and quality of *Roots* because it lacked funds for a project of such magnitude. We must try to change that.

Finally, we observe that a strong and mature public broadcasting institution will become increasingly indispensable during the next decade as our fragmented and troubled nation attempts to rebuild its self-confidence, to heal its wounds, and to discover the strength that emerges in the wake of a shared ordeal.

More immediately, public telecommunications will probably be the vehicle for America to realize its social dividend from the well-entrenched and already powerful media. As a necessary contribution to the nation's need for self-knowledge and healing, public broadcasters—and soon, public telecommunicators—have the obligation and opportunity to bring together a fragmented and wounded society. We have momentarily lost touch with one another as we react to a decade of terrorism, guerrilla war, racial discontent, and economic danger.

This achievement will come not from the imposition of a new conformity, derived either from government or public opinion polls, but from the careful cultivation of a public discourse in its most expansive and profound sense. Somehow we must build a constituency and a means by which America can again develop consensual agreement about the democratic heritage we all hold in common: history, family, art, science, love of nature and tolerance for differences.

We have faltered, and are in danger of losing the will to try again. The growth of the commercial electronic media has perhaps not coincidentally accompanied this loss of mutual grace, and this leads us to conjecture that the sociological impact of radio and television is cumulative. We therefore express both concern and optimism for the impact of the electronic media on our children and their children's children. This power can be used in ways that society has barely begun to try, in the revelation of an ethos of mutual respect. The true greatness of America lies in strength that emerges from a diversity of religious, racial, and cultural heritages. We must come to know ourselves as we really are, not as advertising would have us be.

The Commission is obviously not advocating the establishment of any kind of ministry of culture or propaganda machine that seeks "consensus" by the imposition of ideological orthodoxy. Our vision of an independent and innovative public telecommunications institution is the antithesis of the monolithic outlook of all forms of totalitarianism.

We see, instead, the reverent and the rude, the disciplined and the ram-bunctious—a celebration of American freedom in all its unpredictable varieties. This revelation of diversity will not please some, notably the book burners and the dogmatists among us. It will startle and anger others, as well it should. But we have found in our own lives that anger yields to understanding. America needs, perhaps even more than healing, a sense of understanding, something that is impossible if we each continue to wall ourselves within the corner of society that we find safe, appealing, and comfortable.

Unless we grasp the means to broaden our conversation to include the diverse interests of the entire society, in ways that both illuminate our differences and distill our mutual hopes, more will be lost than the public broadcasting system.

Americans have rarely been closer to one another than in the isolation of their living rooms as they witnessed in tears the funeral of a martyred president, or took pride in the first tentative steps of our astronauts on the moon. These fundamental events of an electronic age were rare intrusions on a commercially oriented system built to serve other purposes. It must not always be so. Americans have the capacity to rebuild their local communities, their regions, and indeed their country, with tools no more formidable than transistors and television tubes. They need only to want to do so intensely enough to create a public telecommunications system that will bring it about.

We remember the Egyptians for the pyramids, and the Greeks for their graceful stone temples. How shall Americans be remembered? As exporters of sensationalism and salaciousness? Or as builders of magical electronic tabernacles that can in an instant erase the limitations of time and geography, and make us into one people?

The choice is in our hands and the time is now.

The preceding article is drawn from "A Public Trust: Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting."

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QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"Already we Viewers, when not viewing, have begun to whisper to one another that the more we elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate."

—*Thoughts in the Wilderness* by J.B. Priestley
(Heinemann, London)



Proposals and Prescriptions For Public Broadcasting

By MARTIN MAYER

Andrew Carnegie, I know about. But who is “Distinguished Carnegie”? The question is of some importance, because the new set of prescriptions on what should be done with public television is the product of a group calling itself the “Distinguished Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting,” right on the front page of its “Landmark Report.” I guess it means that this commission should be distinguished from the other Carnegie commission, which gave us public television to begin with, back in the sixties. That’s easy. For all its posturing and occasional inconsequences, the first one was better.

The problem with the current commission is that it has nothing to say, doesn’t know much about television, and doesn’t really care about television at all—just about its alleged immense potential for doing good in the world. You may not have realized how great that potential is. The Distinguished Commission has found that “Americans have the capacity to rebuild their communities, their regions, and indeed their country, with tools no more formidable than transistors and television tubes. They need only want to do so intensely enough to create a public telecommunications system that will bring it about.” So if \$1.16 billion a year for operations looks like a lot of money—and that’s how much the commission wants you to spend for public television—just think what you’re going to get for it.

The public broadcasting system envisioned in this report (though its authors do not understand what they have recommended) is a national network controlled by the president of the United States and “watched regularly” by “one hundred percent of the people.” There is no intrinsic reason in the logic and presentation why Congress should not pass a law requiring people to watch the public network (or why HEW should not issue administrative orders to that effect if Congress refuses to move); certainly, there’s little here to make you believe anyone would watch it in the absence of compulsion.

I don’t think the word “entertainment” appears once in the main text (the only thing “entertaining” is “ways to learn”), and I know the word “sports” is never mentioned. What we are going to get are “the kinds of

programming that will inspire the local community, educate the region, and inform the nation." Sorry, gang, that show closed in tryouts.

The governing body of the system is to be a Public Telecommunications Trust operated by nine people appointed by the president, *without* the consent of the Senate, from a panel of saintly citizens who will not be asked to make public disclosures of their finances the way other public officials must. This trust will receive \$590 million a year of federal money, keeping \$20 million for itself. (Sans Souci will have to build a new wing.) It will pass on \$380 million to the stations (temporarily) on a matching basis of \$1 in grants for every \$1.50 raised locally. (The report assumes that the public television stations will be able to *quadruple* giving by individuals and families in a context of massive federal granting; why, I cannot imagine.) And it will contribute \$190 million to a Program Services Endowment with a board appointed by the trust itself. This endowment would decide how to spend \$125 million on national programming, with another \$22 million for local and regional programming (the rest for radio and research).

A single chief executive officer of this endowment will "exercise final power of decision on all grants and contracts." We don't have to worry about him, though, because he will, "practically speaking, rely upon a staff, as well as the advice and strength of the endowment's governing board, comprised of individuals whose own expertise in various fields of creative and intellectual activity can add immeasurably to the endowment's decision-making process." (Nope, I don't trust him, or his friends. If you're going to do this, give us at least two, probably more, competing endowments; there's plenty of money to go round.)

Another \$235 million for national and regional programming will be made available by the stations; this contribution, I believe, is to be coerced (the words are "would require"), presumably pro rata, returning sixty percent of the stations' grants back to nationwide administration.

Between them, the national programming authority and the national consortium of stations will feed money for national shows to fill no less than 71 hours a week (out of the 126 hours the stations are presumed to be on the air). That's a higher proportion of network feed than you find on the commercial stations. This is a total break with the conclusions of the first Carnegie commission. The Distinguished Commission writes in a footnote that "the first Carnegie commission's statement that 'the local stations must be the bedrock upon which public television is erected' has often been inaccurately quoted as an assertion that the system should rest upon a 'bedrock of localism.' That commission stated no such thing. . . ."

Well, what that commission stated was that "public television, as we see it, is to be as decentralized as the nature of television permits." The Distinguished Commission merely concedes with obvious distaste that "insistence on local control is not necessarily objectionable." The dif-

ference between the two attitudes is clear, and the attempt to conceal it is, to say the least, unfortunate.

Whether corporate funders will be allowed to supply programs to the new system is left in doubt. The commission believes such funding has "skewed the total schedule in the direction of cultural programs which are popular among the 'up-scale' audiences that corporations prefer." So much for the commitment to "excellence." Unfortunately, the commission completely ignores the differences between the Mobil approach of buying programs overseas and the Exxon approach which has given us "Theatre in America" and "Dance in America," outstanding examples of the communication of local and regional artistic enterprise to the nation as a whole. It doesn't like the heavy diet of English programs (neither do I, much) and wants its endowment to Buy American. But it neglects the absolutely central question of possible symbiosis between existing cultural enterprise and the television medium.

On public affairs shows, the commission feels the First Amendment as a brooding omnipresence in the sky, but does not, in fact, apply it. Such programs, the report insists, will be critical even of elected officials but, of course, also "truthful and fair." They will be "controversial," of course, but "public broadcasting should, like all elements in American society, be committed to national requirements for social policy." Moreover, "public broadcasters have the *obligation* . . . to bring together a fragmented and wounded society" (emphasis added). So much for the First Amendment.

The trust will protect the endowment, which funds such programs, against "inappropriate intrusion." Unfortunately, there are lots of grounds here for appropriateness. Underlying the recommendations is a juvenile assumption that in the end only "book burners and dogmatists" will be displeased by television documentaries—right-minded people like the authors of this document won't find anything on the tube to offend them. How's about I do a show on the inflationary impact of affirmative action programs, boys? Does that violate the national requirements for social policy? Does it meet the obligation to bring together a fragmented and wounded community? Will the trust protect me from intrusion? The hell it will.

The report begins with a statement untrue in its implications: "Americans now watch television for nearly six-and-a-half hours per day in the average household." Very few individuals watch anywhere that much television; what is true is that the set is on, being watched by one or another member of the household (but rarely by everyone) for six-and-a-half hours a day. That the authors of the report do not understand this is, I think, demonstrated by the continuation in the same paragraph: "Many of us spend more time with the electronic media than we spend with other human beings, much less reading or learning." (Note that watching television does not involve "learning.")

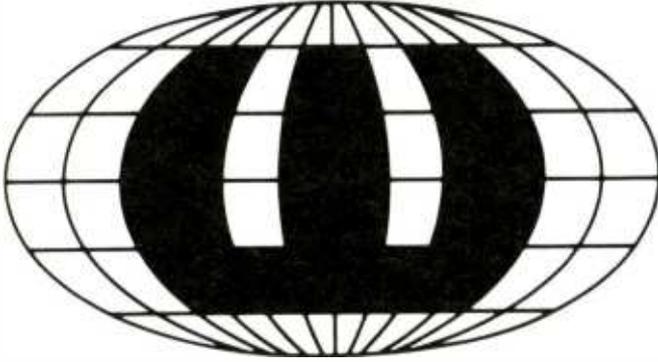
On no level is the analysis in the least sophisticated. "Marxists," the report intones, covering its rear, "see their press as an agency serving the aims of government." Now, "Marxists" see all instruments of communication as part of a superstructure dictated by the needs of the ruling class. In the transition period before the state withers away, when the ruling class is the proletariat, the proletariat will necessarily control the press, probably (not necessarily) through the agency of the state. We could have used a Marxist on this commission—at the least, he would not have been critical of cultural programs aimed at an "upscale" audience, because he would have believed that all people are capable of enjoying culturally significant programming.

What informs this document, unfortunately, is an ignorant and unreasoning hatred—no lesser word will do—for commercial television. "Commercial broadcasting's entire output is defined by an imperative need to reach mass audiences in order to sell products." Entire output? "Camera Three"? Pamela Hill's documentaries on ABC? That four-hour NBC show on Africa a few years back? "CBS Reports"? ABC's original dramas for children in the late afternoon? There's nowhere near as much ambitious work on commercial television as there ought to be, but the best is far from contemptible, and lots of people are out there trying.

Carried through, which won't happen, the proposals of this Distinguished Commission would get rid of the existing political board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and they would generate some more money for programming. Both of these are pretty desirable, though the Public Telecommunications Trustees would probably be even more political than the crowd we've got now. (And the bureaucracy would, of course, simply move over to the new and fancier office space.)

On examination, however, the Distinguished Commission turns out not to be giving us that much more money per show. We're to get only \$200,000 an hour for the music-dance-opera slot. (Five single hours a week. When you're always counterpunching commercial television, you stick yourself with these fixed, clock-hour timetables.) But the report says that "Dance in America" as now budgeted costs \$350,000 an hour. The new nightly one-hour news show, which is supposed to have film inserts and minidocumentaries as well as talking heads, is budgeted at \$55,000, less than one-third of the budget for "Sixty Minutes."

The \$220,000 each for "a new series of weekly one-hour and two-hour dramas written expressly for public television" certainly won't get you much. And as there are no more than five or six adequate new plays a year on Broadway and off-Broadway combined—and this is a charitable figure—it's extremely difficult to understand how the Distinguished Commission thinks it's going to find fifty-two stageable new plays for television, even at a budget a good deal higher than what is offered.



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"What is the purpose of public television?" I inquired in a book, *About Television*, published in 1972. "Nearly all discussion of the subject begs the question by assuming that commercial television is (a) very bad and (b) unsatisfying to most Americans. Even under these assumptions there remains the problem of deciding which of the infinite variety of subsets in the great set of not-commercial-television should be recommended by the analyst. Still, 'anything' being 'better' than what we have now, the problem isn't immediate. . . .

"Most of the time, for most of the people, public television is going to be less important than commercial television. The newspaper and magazine critics who keep proclaiming that public television is the most important thing on the air are doing its cause a serious disservice. But they will keep doing it; and the people of public television, who have so few other rewards, will keep lapping it up."

That book came out around the time when John W. Macy, Jr., the first president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, became ill and resigned. I had a letter from him from a hospital bed, one of those rare delights of authorship, in which he waxed enthusiastic, said how sorry he was he hadn't had this book to read before he went to work in television (he had been head of the Civil Service Commission), and announced that he would try to see to it that everybody involved with public television read it. He failed; my book is not listed among the two-dozen items of bibliography at the back of the report.

Ordinarily I do not believe that people have to read a book of mine to comment intelligently on a subject I have covered. Anything I have seen is, by definition, there for others to see, too. As Donald Michaels once observed on the difference between science and art, anyone could have found Planck's constant, but only Beethoven could have written Beethoven's sonatas. But it's hard, and irritating, seven years later, to read a book which is *exclusively* stuff one has denounced as visibly clichéd and false seven years before. (And this includes the impact-of-new-technology chapter, which is the same resurrection pie we were being fed in the sixties; how I wish all the people who find heaven on earth in "interactive" two-way television would listen to a radio call-in show someday.)

The problem with discussions of public television seven years ago was that its advocates conceived of it not as an alternate to, or a complement to, commercial television, but as a substitute. We haven't advanced an inch. Thus, all the words about the "public telecommunicator" who is going to change the world—and all the chatter about "diversity" from the mouths of people whose every instinct is totalitarian, whose egalitarianism never inhibits their contempt for the "mass audience," whose desire is to compel people to watch the programs they think the people ought to see. This report is the sixties all over again: Hofstadter's Age of Rubbish.

On the average hour of the average evening, a little more than two percent of the people watching television are watching public television. That's twice what the public television stations had seven years ago; it is, in fact, a good-size audience, more than the circulation of *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Saturday Review*, *Nation*, *New Republic*, *National Review*, and *American Film* put together. It's not badly served, either: There must be ten hours a week of some significance, an *enormous* output over the year.

After the president's State of the Union message, I turned to public television rather than a network for the commentary—and was rewarded with David Broder, who was to my taste more interesting than what the networks were offering. Just before writing these last paragraphs I watched a rerun of the splendid Israel Horovitz adaptation of Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*—produced not by some national authority or Hollywood studio, but by the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. The system is working reasonably well. What the Distinguished Commission proposes would, in my judgment, work worse.

"The institution we now call public broadcasting," says the Distinguished Commission at the top of its last chapter, "has reached an unprecedented intersection of the dynamics of American democracy with advanced communications technology as we are drawn inexorably toward the uncharted configurations of the twenty-first century." No, in thunder. Learning that Talleyrand had said man was given language to conceal his thoughts, Kierkegaard commented that man was really given language to conceal the fact that he had no thoughts. To demand "excellence" of others—or to question the "integrity" of those doing stoop labor out there in the vineyards of television—ill becomes a Distinguished Commission that would sign a report like this one.

The preceding article is reprinted from the April, 1979 issue of American Film Magazine, Copyright © 1979, American Film Institute, John F. Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C.

Martin Mayer is the author of "About Television" published by Harper & Row in 1972. Enormously prolific, he has written books about banking, the law and the public schools. His first thriller, "Trigger Points" will be published next fall.

MCA TV

The Shaky Marriage Of Theatre and Television

By DAVID COLLINS

Let us begin with three tiresome questions, clichés that cannot be ignored.

Question 1: Why should PBS use taxpayers' money to give work to English actors?

Question 2: Why do the networks produce so much rubbish?

Question 3: Why isn't more theatre televised?

To all these queries there are straight, sensible answers, as you will see.

Everyone in America knows what one-shot drama is. That they do know is remarkable, as so little is shot in this country. Let us take a simple premise. If you write a feasible script that can be shot in a few sets, and do not use stars, television drama is simple and effective and *cheap*. Can such a project be mounted in New York? Maybe there isn't a suitable studio? Nonsense, there are scores of studios in New York, most of them in effective use at the present time.

Maybe there isn't enough? Let us not even consider that proposition. Maybe the production back-up is weak? Again, an idiotic question to anyone involved in production. Maybe the people with the money are elsewhere? I find that hard to believe.

What, then, is the problem? New York is, the entertainment capital of the world particularly when we talk of theatre and television. In London, my other home, the talent flows freely between television and the West End stage. This interchange is considered perfectly natural and each side has a healthy respect for the other. This also happens in New York, as ten of TV's thirteen soaps are shot here, and New York theatre is thriving, unlimited in its daring and scope.

Therein lies a clue. You see, London's theatre could also be described as unlimited in daring and scope. The scope is equally impressive in London's television.

Dramatic television in New York does not often reach beyond the day-time serials, and while these are superb professional productions, there is room for a vast alternative television production output. Thus we find ourselves discussing purpose and scale in television terms.

BBC Television's Drama Department has, for years, been subdivided into Series, Serials and Plays. Series, we might call the Soap Department; the same characters each week, but in a succession of short stories. Serials handles specific lengthy projects that have a beginning, middle and end, such as adaptations of novels. The Plays Department is the *grande dame* of BBC drama. Its brief is to mount individual teleplays to suit a variety of time slots including *Thirty Minute Theatre*, also *Play of the Week* and *Play of the Month*, both 90 minutes, as well as longer productions of Shakespeare and other dramatists.

Needless to say, many shows refuse to be pigeon-holed: *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* is clearly a serial in six episodes, yet it was produced by Plays Department.

The taxpayer in England supports a staggering production budget. To keep all those departments busy the drama output must be enormous. Does this mean we should compare London and Hollywood? In some ways, yes, but the wide variety of shows produced in London precludes any detailed comparison. Both cities produce their own variants in specific areas such as police series and sit-coms, but English programming is infinitely more diverse on both BBC and ITV.

Is it simply a question of taste? I suspect this is an over-rated explanation. After all, if London's West End and New York's Broadway can duplicate productions of practically any live show (the critics on either side of the Atlantic have been known to duplicate their comments as well) surely we do not need those worn-out excuses beginning "De gustibus. . . ." Equally, the motion picture business distributes the same movies in either city. There are small differences in the more intellectual offerings, but absolutely nothing to indicate that America has no audience at all for quality television.

I begin to hear voices muttering that this is all very well, but English television spends much more time on production. Cynics will tell us this is because it's cheaper to work in England—salaries are lower, materials less costly, etc. Not true! All those beautiful Masterpiece Theatre productions seen recently in this country had the same studio time as a half hour soap. I grant you more time is spend on rehearsal, but *Masterpiece* shows demand it as the writing is more adventurous.

At last we get back to home base—the writing, or, from a producer's point of view, the "concept." Television, as we know, is a hungry medium. Nobody has time to talk about setting up one show, or two shows, however special. Television programmers are only concerned with the calendar, sliced with a butcher's knife: There are 52 weeks in a year, 26 weeks are half a year, 13 weeks a quarter. This means, "Show me 13 shows or go home and shoot more!"

In Hollywood terminology 13, 90 minute teleplays is a colossal capital outlay and an assumed ratings disaster. Hence, no planned one-shot

drama season appears on the network schedule, or hasn't since the great old days of "live" television in the fifties.

Why did one-shot dramas cease? Did the invention of video-tape automatically preclude any further dramatic production? Maybe Bing Crosby is actually the villain after all—he gave us videotape, but destroyed live television drama forever!

One of the most fashionable shows of recent years is *Upstairs, Downstairs*. It has been seen by a larger audience than any drama series in the medium's history. It is now four years since that show brought London Weekend Television international fame and fortune. There are still wonderful dramatic productions coming out of the English studios but they will probably never eclipse the commercial success of *Upstairs, Downstairs*. The story of the Ballamys and their servants was originally produced amid great scepticism and doubt. It was originally shown at 10 p.m. on Sunday night (English television closes at 11 p.m. every night!) It quickly became so popular that it was moved to a prime time slot, and the rest is history.

Now, here is a show mounted by the commercial network, and when it proved a success it was superbly handled to ensure it won the acclaim it deserved. Of course, we should remember that in England it was taken for what it was—a superb "costume soap"! It was never regarded as serious, top drawer drama. Nor was it considered adventurous, in the *avant garde* sense.

What would the English consider adventurous? Possibly, an original, well written one-shot drama. Remember, we are not dealing with the occasional Drama Special, but a regular weekly slot (at least one for each network) producing modest budget originals written for that slot alone—not occasional mammoth specials.

Regional drama, with colorful native settings, should be a natural for America TV, but one sees little of it. Hollywood series are always set in some standardized limbo where everybody speaks in the same idiom and the laugh track booms at 20 second intervals.

Tell a writer to create a short story, set in a specific locale with real people, and to be more concerned with keeping the piece organic than straining to reach the largest possible audience, and he has a chance to arrive at a dramatic *truth*. He can make a personal statement in 90 minutes without worrying over the cliff-hanger at the close or the need to focus on another character in the story next week.

What does such a show offer to the audience? Why, the most precious gift of all—surprise.

This brings us back to stars and the old "star system." There is no denying the appeal of famous faces nor the charm of familiar personality tics. But how much saner to focus on acting ability, on voice and style and discipline, rather than on the glitter of an old marquee name. Seeing

a favorite star miscast or striving to be good in a role outside his or her range can be painful.

Now, let us pull some of these threads together. Nothing in this dissertation can be called revolutionary, one-shot drama has happened before in this country in the fifties. At present there is evidence that some serious-minded producers are trying to re-establish it. Why did it ever fall into decline?

The obvious—and inescapable—answer is that American television must bow to the demands of the marketplace. In most countries television enjoys generous government subsidies. German TV, for instance, may be the most generously financed in the world. PBS is funded by the government but its scope does not compare with that of the commercial networks.

Those of us born of the ancient tradition that has nourished the stage, the cinema and TV—the tradition of writing and acting to lift the mass audience out of its dreary reality—would happily rise to the challenge of a weekly dramatic show. It was a format that worked beautifully for *Playhouse 90* and all its imitators. As in Shakespeare's time, "the play's the thing," and on our small screens today we have need of more—and better—plays.

David Collins is an English director who has worked for the BBC, London Weekend Television and Australian Television. He is currently residing in New York.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"They [the networks] want the advantages both of exploitation and of sober responsibility. . . . They give conflicting messages to the creative community about the kinds of shows they are looking for and the treatment of those shows they require. Sometimes they sound publicly like the *New York Times* and privately like *The National Enquirer*. I appreciate the need for variety in a network's schedule, but this is such an important area that, like news, standards for drama must be particularly high even though, paradoxically, they cannot always be absolutely clear."

—David Rintels in *The New York Times*
("In Defense of the TV Docu-Drama")

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And Now . . . WARC-'79

By JAMES D. PARKER
Staff Consultant, Telecommunications
CBS Inc.

To begin with the plain facts: "WARC-79" is an expression appearing in the trade press with increasing frequency. What does it mean? What is its significance? The letters and numerals stand for the World Administrative Radio Conference to be convened in Geneva in the fall of 1979. As to its significance, it will establish the pattern for the future development of all radio services for the next twenty years. To understand better the significance, however, some background on international radio treaty matters will be helpful. The technological terms may sound forbidding but the problems are basically simple and of historic significance.

Our starting point is the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The ITU is a specialized agency of the United Nations on matters of telecommunication. The composition, purpose, and structure of the ITU are all set forth in the International Telecommunication Convention, subscribed to by approximately 150 countries.

Annexed to the Convention are the General Regulations, and the provisions of the Convention are completed by the following sets of Administrative Regulations: Telegraph Regulations; Telephone Regulations; Radio Regulations; and Additional Radio Regulations. Of these Administrative Regulations our concern is with the Radio Regulations. These international Radio Regulations encompass service definitions, operational requirements, and administrative procedures; however, the most significant element is the international Table of Frequency Allocations (Article 5). This Table sets forth the bands of the radio frequencies to be used by the various radio services, and, in effect, is the international "master plan." Individual Administrations must abide by this master plan in assigning frequencies for domestic use by particular services within their respective countries.

For the allocation of frequencies the world has been subdivided into three geographic Regions. Region 1 embraces essentially Europe, Africa, and the U.S.S.R.; Region 2 embraces the Americas; and Region 3 embraces Asia and Oceania. Radio services in the United States, therefore, are primarily concerned with the allocation of frequencies for Region 2, although it must be recognized that there is, of course, for a number of valid reasons, a certain degree of interrelationship with frequency allocations in the other two Regions.

Primarily because of the magnitude and complexity of the task, the international Table of Frequency Allocations is revised only infrequently. Following World War II, a Table of Frequency Allocations was adopted at a Conference in Atlantic City in 1947 for the frequency spectrum from 10 kHz to 10,500 MHz (10.5 GHz).

In 1959 at a general WARC the international Table was reviewed and revised, and extended upward to 40,000 MHz (40.0 GHz). Since that time there have been several specialized conferences dealing with particular radio services, but there has been no general review. Recognizing that there have been vast technological changes in communications services, as early as 1973 the ITU proposed that a general WARC be held in 1979 to review and revise, as necessary, the Radio Regulations, including, of course, the international Table of Frequency Allocations.

Although the U.S. proposals relate to all radio communications services, only those proposals which concern telecasting or related services will be reviewed here. These proposals may be summarized as follows:

TV Broadcasting

VHF Frequencies presently used for VHF Channels 2 through 13 are allocated on a shared basis for broadcasting, fixed, and mobile services, but are used in the United States exclusively for television broadcasting. The U.S. is not proposing to change the international allocation.

UHF Presently the UHF band 470–890 MHz is allocated exclusively for the broadcasting service (Channels 14–83). In the United States, however, assignments for land mobile services have been made in selected areas in the 470–512 MHz portion (Channels 14–20), and the 806.8890 MHz portion (Channels 70–83) has been allocated to the land mobile services. The United States is proposing that the band 470–890 MHz be allocated on a shared basis for broadcasting, fixed, and mobile services, except the 608–614 MHz portion (Channel 37) which would be allocated exclusively for the Radio Astronomy service. The net effect would be to provide greater flexibility in the domestic use of this band for services other than television broadcasting.

12 GHz Presently there is an allocation at 11.7–12.5 GHz for terrestrial broadcasting (shared with other services) which, although not currently used for this service, is available for future development of “high definition” television broadcasting. The U.S. proposals would change this allocation to 12.2–12.7 GHz, a reduction in total available spectrum, but it would be shared only with the broadcasting satellite service.

International (HF) Broadcasting In general terms the U.S. is proposing to expand the several frequency bands presently allocated for international “shortwave” broadcasting.

Satellite Broadcasting Although television broadcasting from satellites (direct-to-home) has not been implemented anywhere in the world, its technical feasibility at 12 GHz has been demonstrated experimentally. Presently there are allocations for the broadcasting satellite service,

shared with other services, in all three Regions in the vicinity of 12 GHz. In Regions 1 and 3 none of the shared services is a satellite service; however, in Region 2 one of the shared services is the fixed satellite service used for point-to-point transmission. This sharing of satellite services in Region 2 has presented serious problems. In 1977, Regions 1 and 3 developed complete frequency assignment and orbital position plans for the broadcasting satellite service; however, the development of such a plan for Region 2 has been postponed until 1983.

Fixed Satellite Service The fixed satellite service is of significance to the broadcasting industry because it provides the capability to transmit program material between points by other than terrestrial circuits. Presently such transmission is accomplished in the 4 and 6 GHz bands, but to provide for future expansion the U.S. proposals would provide additional allocations for this service in higher frequency bands (in addition to the one described in the preceding paragraph).

In summary, it should be evident that the outcome of WARC-79 will impact one way or another upon virtually all radio and TV communications services. Technological advances coupled with the changing requirements of radio communications services necessitate revision in the Table of Frequency Allocations, in order that this scarce "resource" be utilized most efficiently.

Furthermore, technical developments are constantly raising the upper limit of the usable radio frequency spectrum. In fact, the U.S. is proposing that the upper limit of the Table of Frequency Allocations be extended to 300 GHz. Other issues are bound to come up at WARC-79, most notably the use of the finite orbit at 22,300 miles above the equator for geostationary satellites. But, whatever the outcome, it will set the pattern for the future for at least the next twenty years.

James D. Parker, CBS Staff Consultant, Tele-Communications, is an MIT graduate. He has been with the CBS Network since 1937 and for the past 15 years has been specializing in Satellite Communication.

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