

1982

# TELEVISION QUARTERLY



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## **WHERE CAESAR CAN WATCH CAESAR: A MUSEUM FOR TV'S HERITAGE**

THE NEW LOOK OF SERIALS  
TV ITALIAN STYLE  
SYNDICATORS VS. THE NETWORKS

IN A WORLD OF SUBTLETY, NUANCE,  
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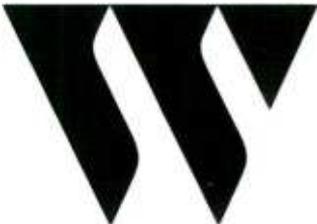
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Cover photo by Marc Becker

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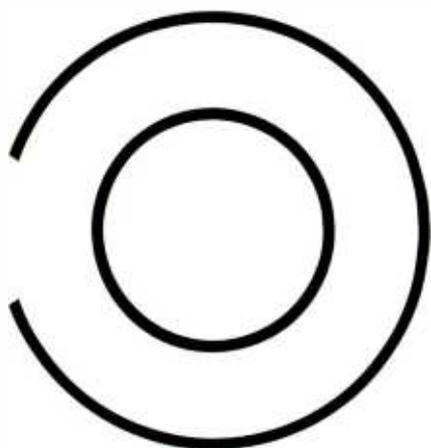
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## INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

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Globo TV is Brazil's largest television network.

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- Salute'79, offered by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences of the U.S.A.
- the '79 Iris Award by the National Association of Television Programming Executives — NATPE — bestowed on the series "Malu, Woman."

- the '79 Ondas Award from the Spanish Broadcasting Society and Radio Barcelona bestowed on the series "Malu, Woman."

- the Golden Teleguide Award, offered by Mexican critics for the serial "Dona Xepa."

- the '80 Ondas Award for the special "Quincas Berro d'Agua."

- the '81 Ondas Award given for the special "Vinicius for Children."

- the Prague D'Or Award at the 17th International Television Festival of Czechoslovakia, presented to the actress Regina Duarte for her performance in the series "Malu, Woman."

- the '81 Fonte D'Oro Award from the Italian Association of Television Critics.

- the Guaicaipuru de Ouro Award, granted by the trade press of Venezuela to the Globo Network as Latin America's best television.

- the Silver Medal at the '81 International Film and TV Festival of New York, granted for the special "Vinicius for Children."

- the '81 Golden Emmy granted for the program "Vinicius for Children" in the Popular Arts category.

- the '82 Iris Award from NATPE offered for the program "Vinicius for Children."

- the '82 Ondas Award from the Spanish Broadcasting Society for the program "Life and Death Severina."

- the Silver Medal at the '82 International Film and TV Festival of New York for the documentary "Amazon — The Last Frontier."

- the Gold Medal at the '82 International Film and TV Festival of New York for the mini-series "Lampião and Maria Bonita."

- the '82 Golden Emmy for the programa "Life and Death Severina" in the Popular Arts category.



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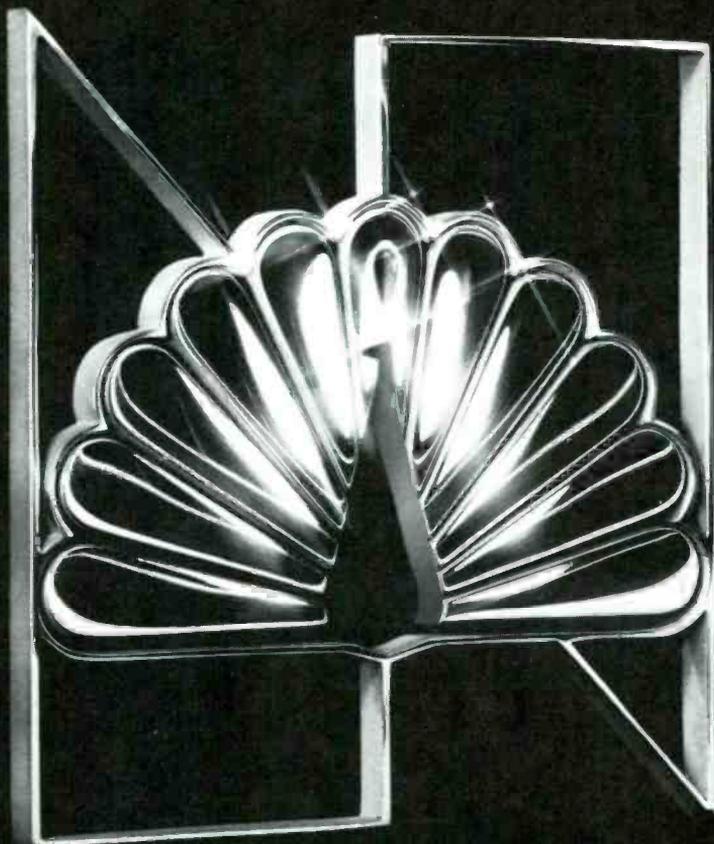
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**BY JOHN CARDEN**

*The worth of a museum is in its use.*  
— John Cotton Dana

**W**hat's a museum for? Whether it's Manhattan's mighty Metropolitan or a cramped repository for stuffed owls by a crossroads in Maine, what purpose should it serve? A famed curator, John Cotton Dana, thought he knew. Dana founded, and then for twenty years directed the Newark Museum, until his death in 1929. He detested "gazing museums." He insisted that museums were not intended just to display "rare and costly objects," but to educate the public. Above all, he always distinguished a *museum* from a *mausoleum*.

An exuberant man, Dana sometimes shook up museum visitors with Indian war whoops. How delighted he would have been by the emergence of a new museum — one that, instead of "exhibits" strung out in linear sequence, affords everyone a chance to learn and review at leisure, and for individual reasons.

This museum is alive and kicking on the first six floors of 1 East 53rd Street in New York City. Since its start in 1976, the Museum of Broadcasting has welcomed over one hundred thousand people, among them Gene Kelly, Kim Hunter, David Letterman and Bob and Ray. For this museum appeals to all radio and television professionals —

actors, directors, producers, writers, dancers, and composers included — as well as students and casual visitors.

Their reasons for using it are varied. Usually, they wish to view one or several of the Museum's more than sixteen thousand catalogued and computerized programs — approximately six thousand from television, and ten thousand from radio. This they can do by using one of the fifteen television and three radio consoles on the second floor, or eight consoles for both radio and television on the third. (Each viewing and/or listening console seats up to two persons.) Television programs are recorded on three-quarter and one-half inch videotape cassettes, and radio programs on audio cassettes and seven-inch reels. "Use" copies of all programs are available for playback on request; "preservation" copies are stored in a separate location.

The selection process takes time. Museum cataloguers watch or listen to every new program and note carefully its content. Quite often, they have to check network program archives to compile complete, accurate credit lists. Information gathered by them produces entries in a computer-generated card catalog, exhaustively cross referenced, and with each program briefly summarized. Each card is divided into four references: program information, credits, summary and cross references. Some programs are described and filed under as many as twenty-five different headings. Then, the cards are interfiled alphabetically in the master catalog of

the Museum library; there's also a chronological file containing a card for each program, listed according to its original broadcast date.

Commercials have not been forgotten. After their presence in various programs has been noted, they are catalogued and filed alphabetically in two sections, one for radio, the other for television. Available too is a special reel of award-winning commercials from the 1950's, and another of political messages. The job of cataloguing demands an average of three hours of work for each program hour.

Among the Museum's most popular television programs are *The Ed Sullivan Show* featuring the live debut of the Beatles in February, 1964; *Peter Pan*, with Mary Martin, broadcast on December 8, 1960; and the 1953-54 *See It Now* documentaries about Senator Joseph McCarthy. (A four-week retrospective of *See It Now* programs was held at the Museum in the Spring of 1982.) Orson Welles' radio production of *War of the Worlds* is requested often, as are the Marx Brothers' radio shows of the 1930's, and the pre-television series, *Amos 'n' Andy*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *The Shadow*.

**T**he oldest program dates from 1918 — a radio speech by Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor. The earliest television program stars Arturo Toscanini and the NBC Symphony, performing Verdi's *Hymn of the Nations* in 1944. ABC, CBS and NBC each furnish 300 hours of material yearly to the Museum, permitted by contract to choose either past or present programs. Included in the Museum's collection are newscasts, documentaries, sports and special news reports, and musical, dance and dramatic programs of all kinds. Both series and other productions are available for viewing and listening.

From abroad, the Museum has acquired television programs from Austria, Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Canada,

West Germany and the Netherlands, plus — in England — the BBC, Thames Television of London, and Granada. Nor has it neglected either the local commercial or public network scenes. Once a year it requests from a local radio or television station a taped record of an entire day's programming. An agreement with the Public Broadcasting Service results in another perennial source of programs.

But — stay! As an ebullient Al Jolson shouts so often on some of these shows, "You ain't heard nothin' yet!" Unmentioned have been the reference library, containing over a thousand books and periodicals, the radio script collection, composed of 2,400 rare production skits, and the NBC Radio Archive, a selection from 175,000 disc recordings representing the NBC Radio Network schedule from 1927 to 1969.

Oddities abound. Picture Paul Newman as an anxious, toga-attired Athenian in a *You Are There* episode entitled *The Death of Socrates*, or Robert Redford as a surly Nazi. These are but two of the early performances on file by actors who later became stars. In an early commercial, Robert Duvall complains of a headache. In others, three famous ladies — Louise Lasser, Diane Keaton and Jane Fonda — register the appropriate emotions for their sponsors. A kittenish Mike Wallace hosts the pilot program for *To Tell the Truth*, while Steve Allen presents two comedy extremes (The Three Stooges and Lenny Bruce) on one show.

If you're looking for dramatic programs without spoken dialog, you'll enjoy several Ernie Kovacs specials and a mute episode of *77 Sunset Strip*. (Seeing them brings back Lillian Gish's contention that, ideally, silent film should have evolved from sound, not the reverse.) On radio, you can listen to John F. Kennedy, fresh from Harvard, promoting his book, *Why England Slept*, in a 1940 broadcast; or the late John Cheever, then editing an Army newsletter, responding to an interviewer's questions during World War II.

If you view any of the television programs recorded originally on kinescope, (made before video tape) the picture quality may be relatively poor. (A kine is a record of a television image made by filming it from a television monitor.) Other oddities occur in the form of viewing requests. One such is made constantly by The Man Who Adores Funerals. He plays and replays radio and television reports of funeral ceremonies.

**M**ost museums like to acquire new items, and so does this one. Chief curator Ron Simon is looking for: any radio shows from the 1920's; the second half of the television play, *Twelve Angry Men*; the video version of *The Petrified Forest*, with Humphrey Bogart, Henry Fonda and Lauren Bacall; generally, any specimens of early television drama, in particular those produced by the *Kraft Television Theatre*; any coverage — newsreel or otherwise — of pre-1948 developments in television programming and technology; and any coverage also of the Army-McCarthy hearings and early space flights.

These are some of the desirables. Equally important in museology is the determination of what *not* to acquire, and

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Paley wanted to safeguard a chronicle of our times in sound and in pictures, color and motion.

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here the picture is cloudy. Because the curators have yet to decide on the social and aesthetic criteria with which to evaluate soap operas and game shows — though some are already on file — these are not presently among the main candidates for preservation. They remain the unclassified flint arrowheads of the new electronic archaeologists. Curators select material on the basis of its reception by press and public, its degree of rarity, and its impression on them. In ad-

dition, the Museum solicits opinions from advisory committees composed of broadcasting personnel.

Surely, all this represents much more than the "gazing museum" Dana so disliked. Still, gazing comprises a great part of most museum going, so along with its viewing consoles, this one has two theaters: the MB, a 63-seater with a 12-foot screen on the first floor, and the Videothèque, a 40-seater with a 6-foot screen on the second. Here new visitors watch an orientation film narrated by Alistair Cooke, demonstrating how they can make the Museum work for them. Both theaters show changing program exhibits.

Were he able to visit "this cornucopia," as Cooke terms it, its modest suggested contribution would impress Dana. For he believed museums exist to serve the people. So, apparently, does that most generous patron, William S. Paley. Besides founding the Museum, the CBS Board Chairman also underwrote its recent expansion from two to six floors. The Museum derives 40 per cent of its income from his contributions, 25 per cent from those of the three commercial networks, and the balance from foundation and corporation grants, plus membership fees and donations.

To start the Museum and cover its expenses for the first five years, Paley gave it two million dollars, channeled through some of his foundations. In November, 1976, around the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of network broadcasting, he made some significant remarks when the Museum opened. "Traditional museums are measured in acres," he said, "but this one is measured in hours and minutes." He added the Museum was "present tense" in that it preserved the achievements of various artists at the height of their careers, their creative energies captured for the enjoyment and enlightenment of future generations on easily stored reels. Paley had conceived the idea of the Museum as early as 1961; by 1966 he had formed a planning group. He wanted to "safeguard a chronicle of our times in sound and in

pictures, color and motion." Its first president was Robert Saudek, one time producer of *Omnibus*. He was succeeded in November, 1981, by Robert M. Batscha, a political scientist and communications expert.

**I**n both its democratic attitude and emphasis on personalized use, this museum resembles San Francisco's popular Exploratorium, designed by Dr. Frank Oppenheimer to enable visitors to conduct their own scientific experiments. In the Museum of Broadcasting, anthropologist Franz Boas' "objects used by vanishing tribes" become visual and audio evocations of the past. The "tribes" in this case consist of the broadcast artists, production personnel, and audiences of yesterday. Boas, of course, had in mind those displays at the American Museum of Natural History, with which he was for so long associated. Nevertheless, it's an apt comparison, for the Museum of Broadcasting assumes three functions of the natural history museum.

The first is providing entertainment. This the visitor easily finds, either in the confines of a console, or else in the MB Theatre, where exhibits of variety and dramatic programs — shown by popular request — change every few weeks. The Videothèque presents news and documentary programs on the same basis. Both occasionally feature retrospectives of foreign programming, plus television concerts. Recently *A Celebration of Irish Television* occurred in the MB Theater, lasting two weeks and involving seminars along with such video highlights as coverage of the All-Ireland Hurling Final. Before that, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts had joined with the Museum in presenting a special day of British television. Twenty-five British entries in the 1980 International Emmy Awards Contest were shown continuously in the MB Theater, Videothèque and console rooms.

Other foreign programs of distinction shown in the two theaters included *Fatal Eggs* — *A Science Fantasy* (Italy),

Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, directed by Ingmar Bergman (Sweden), and *The Emperor Visits the Country* (Austria). A reversal of sorts took place in 1981: the Museum co-sponsored a special exhibition of American television during the 1970's — in Paris. The other sponsor was the Insitut de l'Audiovisuel, the French archive of broadcasting, and the six-day event was held at the Centre Georges Pompidou, the national center for the contemporary arts in Paris.

The second function is supplementing courses given in formal educational institutions. Many theses and dissertations have resulted from research conducted here. Two are *Hollywood and American Television, 1947-1955*, and *Effects of Television Coverage on Public Opinion*, sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The Museum's collection of great modern plays is tapped for instructional purposes by Andrew B. Harris, Professor of Theater at Columbia University. "Seeing a professional perform a play that has been studied in class makes students aware of how an actor or director contributes to rounding out a character," he says.

Following the action on a six-foot diagonal screen along with their classmates makes his students feel like real playgoers. And with videotape, Professor Harris is able to stop and repeat performance highlights. For him, "The central aspect of the Museum experience is the ability to discuss a highly volatile art form with certain fixed points of reference."

Thus, by replaying a videotape, the student can begin to appreciate in detail the best that has been done, and the techniques that helped make it such; so can those active in radio and television. For them, it is a unique opportunity to use the Museum as a resource center, a place to view those aspects of their heritage most relevant to their interests no matter what their specialties. This is why its new president states, "Our audience must be the broadcast professional."

The sponsors of museums of decora-

tive art have always hoped succeeding generations of artists would visit them, and try to infuse their own work with the spirit of excellence embodied by the objects therein. Today, another kind of museum draws established professionals and apprentices alike to East 53rd Street in Manhattan. Perry Miller Adato, for one. This producer finds invaluable its collection of non-fiction films and tapes. Her most recent production, *Carl Sandburg: Echoes and Silences*, aired nationally over PBS on March 2, 1982, as part of the *American Playhouse* series. This two-hour film, which she produced and directed, earned high praise for the way in which it combined documentary and dramatic elements.

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David Letterman likes to watch the old Ernie Kovacs shows. Others ask for those featuring Durante, Berle and Gleason.

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"I used live footage that I shot myself," says Ms. Adato, "plus interviews, dramatized sequences, photographs, and a special segment at the end, in which an actor is seen portraying Sandburg."

She continues: "The concept is that John Cullum, playing himself, is searching for Carl Sandburg. John actually listened to eight hours of audio tapes of Sandburg's voice at the Museum. I also sat him down and made him look at all the videotapes and films there, the ones with Sandburg sequences. Among them are records of Sandburg's appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and a Gene Kelly special, in which Kelly dances to a poem Sandburg reads."

Recently, Ms. Adato had recourse to the Museum in preparing *The Great Performances Tenth Anniversary Special for PBS*. For her, it serves several purposes: "I find it tremendously comforting just to know there is such a place. In the past, dozens upon dozens of programs were thrown away because

nobody could afford to store them. The catalogs are not only great for researching current projects; they also give you an idea of what you might do in the future. An extra boon is that it makes available together with recognized broadcast classics, all kinds of programs reflecting all kinds of viewing tastes."

This last observation recalls a remark by Maurice Freedman: "Some material works are fleeting," he writes, "but they are not the less important for being so." His concern is with the objects in an ethnographic collection, but the words apply in another sense to those in the Museum. The seemingly short-lived may well call attention to aspects of its time grander productions overlook. The comedy of manners, after all, mirrors only the follies of the fortunate.

**N**ot so televised comedy, as both the well-known and would-be comedians who study their predecessors' techniques at Museum consoles realize. Tastes vary. David Letterman likes to watch the old Ernie Kovacs shows. Others ask for those featuring Jimmy Durante, Milton Berle and Jackie Gleason, three mainstays of the early days. Their catalogued routines suggest that Durante's demonic elf, Berle's leering emcee and Gleason's doubletake artist derive less from the vaudeville or musical comedy stages than the rowdy intimacy of the night club. This was their milieu, relayed to a nation's eager viewers over the new television networks.

Unfortunately, appearances by some others active in those years have yet to turn up in the card index. Missing, for example, is the sensational television debut of the Ritz Brothers on NBC's *All Star Revue* in 1952, along with Red Buttons' rendition of the moving *Sam, You Made the Pants Too Long*.

Somewhere, perhaps, hide recorded shows with these and other comics, awaiting discovery. . . I haven't checked to see if it's on file, but I hope to enjoy again Kovacs' twist on Red Skelton's closing line: "Thank you for inviting me

into your house — but couldn't you have cleaned it up a bit?" An absent early radio team is that of Stoopnagle and Bud, responsible for the notorious Stoopnagle Bed, "with a live snapping turtle attached to the bottom...designed for people who like a quick bite before going to sleep" or their ten-foot pole" for people you wouldn't want to touch with..." (Excerpts from their scripts appear in Wertheim's *Radio Comedy*.)

To my knowledge, these remain the only network comics ever to brag about their occasional failure to attract advertisers. Then Stoop and Bud would chant, self-derisively, "They haven't got a sponsor! They haven't got a sponsor!"

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## The Museum appreciates comedy's contribution to the growth of broadcasting.

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This in itself entitles them to a Master's thesis, let alone inclusion in the collection.

That the Museum appreciates comedy's contribution to the growth of broadcasting is evident from its three-month Bob and Ray retrospective of last summer. Highlights of their radio and television careers were presented Tuesday through Saturday from noon to 5 pm. in the MB Theater. At a press conference, Ray passed along to grateful reporters Mary McGoon's treasured recipe for "Mock Turkey," made of mashed potatoes shaped in the form of a turkey with hot dogs for legs and wings. (Added Bob: "It's perfect for Thanksgiving.") Also esteemed were their commercials for Frankenstein Brothers Clothing and Reject Sports Equipment. Some were dismayed, however, by the absence of any episodes from "Lawrence Fechtenberger, Interstellar Officer Candidate," made possible by "chocolate cookies with white stuff in between." The Museum's current Sid Caesar retrospective is further evidence of its appreciation of comedy.

Though comedians and other professionals gain a great deal from selective viewing and listening, early network TV newscasts don't have much to offer today's news personnel, unless they push a "happy news" format. If so, they'll enjoy the frisky approach of anchorman John Cameron Swayze. Using little or no pertinent film, this quarter hour "show" concluded with Swayze, sporting a carnation in his lapel, "hopscoching the world for headlines!" It's sobering to realize he was twenty-five years ahead of his time.

The third function the Museum shares with its natural-history counterpart is teaching its own. In *Open Channels* it has possessed an educational program. Held in the evening at the MB Theater, this series of lecture-discussions, begun in 1981, gave a distinguished group of authors, scholars, critics and broadcasting professionals the chance to review various aspects of the media. Over seventy-two speakers led discussions of subjects ranging from the news and politics to performances and programming, among were Jason Robards, Colleen Dewhurst, Edwin Newman, Uta Hagen, Jeff Geenfield, Bobby Short and Lou Harris. Speakers drew on the Museum collection to illustrate their points. Discussions were taped and made available to the public through the MB Library. The series, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, continues in a new format.

These functions make the Museum valuable to those previously unserved. In years to come, audiences no doubt familiar with teletexts and laser discs will also use it. They too will welcome its freedom from what John Cotton Dana called the "gloom" of museums, dispelled by the sunny "increase of intelligence and sympathy" he believed they should encourage.

Like Dana's mandate, this letter from a lady in Portola Valley, California, helps make clear the Museum's real purpose. She writes,

"I wonder if you would be interested in a unique piece of memorabilia from

the early days of radio broadcasting? It is a medal I won in 1924 from WJZ (New York). A short article was read by the announcer to be taken in Gregg Shorthand, transcribed and mailed to the Station. The medal being given for the accurate transcription that came from the greatest distance.

"One side of the medal reads 'Gregg Shorthand Teachers Association Radio Contest' and has a large horn-type loud-speaker beside which is engraved WJZ 1924. The reverse side is engraved 'Won by Ruth Merrill, 100 words, 75 miles.' (I lived in Connecticut at the time.) As I am now an old lady I would like to know it was preserved rather than thrown away.

Sincerely yours,  
Ruth Merrill"

Miss Merrill's medal is important not only to her, but also to those interested in the history of audience response to broadcast programs. It won't be thrown away. For it found a home in Manhattan, giving Miss Merrill peace of mind, and the Museum something new for its budding hardware collection. ■

John Carden is a member of the editorial board of *Television Quarterly*.

## “ QUOTE... UNQUOTE ”

*"All-night television doomed David Cobb's marriage. A bouncer in an Austin, Texas, nightclub, Mr. Cobb usually gets home at about four in the morning and heads straight for the television. Until last Spring, there was nothing more exciting than test patterns to compete for his wife's attention. But then ESPN, a 24-hour cable sports channel, arrived in Austin and captured his heart. It wasn't long before his wife filed for divorce, claiming he had neglected her in favor of television.*

*'Of course, she was right,' admits the 30-year-old Mr. Cobb who often eats and exercises in front of his three color TV sets while he watched reruns of steeplechases and water polo matches."*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

## FACELIFT

*Television Quarterly has received many favorable comments on its new format which was introduced in our last issue. For this transformation, the Editorial Board would like to thank the person who made it possible for the magazine to shed its old look—one of the nation's great graphic designers, Lou Dorfman, Vice-President, Creative Director, Advertising and Design, CBS Inc. The practical support of the TV industry's creative leaders like Mr. Dorfman is of immeasurable aid in our continuing efforts to improve the publication; it is deeply appreciated.*



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# BRITANNIA RULES THE AIRWAVES

Television Became A Sightless Sight Medium In That  
Other Falklands War — The Battle Between Journalists  
and British Defense Officialdom.

**BY JOHN PUTNAM**

LONDON

**F**or something like eleven weeks last spring, Britain and Argentina were locked in an undeclared war over some contested British real estate in the south Atlantic. Simultaneously, the British news media were fighting their own war with the Ministry of Defense over accreditation, facilities for transmitting back copy and pictures—difficult to non-existent—and a confused and confusing censorship that disinformed as much as it misinformed. Basically, it was a fight over nothing less than the public's right to know. As it turned out, Britain won the shooting war but lost the other one, with neither outcome ever in much doubt.

Some months after the Falklands war, a Defense Ministry official told a forum of broadcasters in Edinburgh that the "ideal war" from his department's point of view would be "the one in which the first reporting of it began once the last soldier had returned home." In fact, that's almost how the war was covered for Britain. Virtually up to the very end, for instance, the TV networks suffered the humiliation of reporting the conflict without the benefit of their own film from the combat zone. Thanks to an obstructive, secrecy-obsessed officialdom, the great British public was denied its very own television war the very first chance it got.

As the editor of the big-selling Sunday

*News of the World* later testified to the House of Commons Defense Committee: "The problems, restrictions and appalling communications made Falklands coverage a nightmare compared with the flow of information from other conflicts. As I told Sir Frank (Cooper, permanent under secretary of Defense): 'Next time why don't you borrow the Israeli army's director of public relations?'"

So appalling were communications that some news organizations claimed they were even out of touch with their own correspondents for the duration.

Even before the Defense bureaucrat's ingenious remark at Edinburgh, the media had been convinced the Defense Ministry never really wanted *any* coverage of the war in the first place and only consented to accredit a limited number of British correspondents—but no foreign ones—under what amounted to duress. Originally, Defense also turned down Scottish and other provincial correspondents with the excuse that their papers would be covered anyway by the Press Association, a domestic news agency which was accredited. For a time, even Reuters, the big British wire service with a worldwide list of print and electronic clients, was also left out.

A Reuters official later wrote to the Commons defense committee that his organization "had to exert considerable pressure, finally on Sir Frank Cooper, to gain a belated place on the *Canberra* (a troop ship) for one correspondent. It appears that at no time did the Ministry

of Defense perceive a role for the international agencies, even less for foreign press or broadcasting. One would have expected the Ministry at least to think of Reuters as the premier world news organization. We found it somewhat invidious to be alone among the reputable international news services. The addition of just one other organization, such as the Associated Press of America, would have made this a genuine news operation rather than appearing as a British propaganda exercise."

Faced with having to sit out the combat side of the war, ABC News and other U.S. News organizations threatened to charter their own ship, only to be discouraged by Defense with the warning they would be "blown out of the sea" if they did so. An ABC crew managed a brief visit to the Falklands at one stage, but that was courtesy of Buenos Aires, not London.

**T**hough it's denied by Defense, which claims it muffled the press only to protect the lives of British service personnel, the media themselves remain convinced that what really obsessed British authorities was the spectre of Vietnam. And as one network news executive vouches, Defense did its job "very well in hiding the Falklands equivalent" of the lunacies and barbarities that television was able to cover so freely in Vietnam. Only after the event did the public begin to learn of the "battlefield tragedies that cost needless lives," of the "bungling as well as the heroism," as even the patriotic pro-administration *Daily Express* ("the voice of Britain") couldn't resist putting it.

Throughout the war, the British—indeed, the whole world—had vastly more freedom of maneuver reporting from fascist Argentina than from democratic Britain. The frustration was "enormous," says BBC News editor Peter Woon. By war's end, his department has less than an hour's worth of its own footage cleared by the censors; ditto for rival Independent Television News, supplier of

networked newscasts to the commercial British stations and, with United Press International, a partner in the UPITN newsfilm agency. And of the footage both BBC and ITN did have, only about 10 minutes or so constituted battle action—the sinking of two warships, one British the other Argentinian.

Otherwise, between war's start in early April and its conclusion in mid-June, what British viewers got from their nightly news shows (besides war-related coverage from the UN, Washington and Buenos Aires) was a steady diet of censored audio dispatches from correspondents with the British armada, studio talking heads, various graphics, and Defense Ministry promotional film clips (performing missiles, aircraft, etc.) which were rerun so often it's a wonder they didn't spring their sprockets. For most of the war, the few glimpses of filmed battle action of any kind available to British audiences came, paradoxically, from Argentine TV.

A common problem for the media, besides what ITN chief executive David Nicholas called the "inconsistent and capricious" censorship, was the inadequacy of telexing and other communication facilities. Some ships carrying correspondents had no telephones. From the Falklands once they got there, the shortage of facilities often delayed dispatches for hours or days after they'd already been delayed by the censors. Neither the military, but more particularly Defense, seemed to have much concern for the imperatives of news delivery let alone newsgathering.

But television labored under the worst handicap of all—a sightless sight medium unable to get newsfilm back to London, because it didn't have the facilities since Defense refused to oblige with satellite ground links. Defense has always claimed it wasn't feasible to install same, but BBC-TV war correspondent Brian Hanrahan, among others, insists no feasibility study was even undertaken. ITN's Nicholas claims Defense simply never had the will to comply.

A ground link was available on the

British-owned Ascension islands, a staging point midway between London and the Falklands, but the Royal Navy (which according to correspondents was the most aloof and snobbish branch of service) never seemed able to spare the planes to fly film there. And by ship (when one was available, which wasn't often) it could take as long as two weeks. Or as one Fleet Street editor complained, "Even in these days of modern technology the transmission speed for our pictures was something like 25 knots!" Flying film directly back to London apparently was out of the question altogether.

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## How does a putative democracy get away with muzzling the media?

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What little film did get back via Ascension had to contend—as did photos and stories filed from the armada—with a diabolical three-platoon clearance system: at the point of origin it first had to pass through military and then civilian censors, and was censored again when it reached London. Even then, pictures and reports could be, and often were, stalled on their way to news desks to suit the manipulative whims of Defense.

Just how "eccentric" was the censorship? In written testimony to the Commons Defense Committee, Tony Snow, who covered the war for one of the Fleet Street tabloids, said that after the first British bomb attack on the airfield at Port Stanley he was told he could mention the mission had been carried out by Harrier jump jets but not by Vulcan bombers as well.

"I was told that my editor had signed the Official Secrets Act on my behalf and that I was never to mention anywhere at any time the fact that Vulcans dropped bombs on the airfield," Snow stated. "I was warned that not only could I not put it in any story now or in the future but that even in a pub in two or three years' time I could not tell anyone

in conversation that Vulcans took part in the raid. Having been read the riot act in this way, I sent out my story . . . only to hear on the BBC world service two hours later: 'Vulcan bombers refueling in mid-air bombed Port Stanley airfield early today.' "

But in the case of something so public and noisy as a war, how does a putative democracy get away with muzzling the media to the extent it did? It's simple. You begin with an old tradition of hierarchic secrecy, one which was to produce, as the *Times of London* once remarked in a moment of uncustomary pique, "the most secretive administrative system this side of the iron curtain."

Then, you designate journalists assigned to cover the conflict as official war correspondents. Under British law, that effectively makes them members of the military, subject to the same orders, regulations and discipline as any conscript. And that also means subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, a relic dating from 1911 which imposes a 30-year embargo on all classified material.

**I**n testimony by other newsmen to the Commons Defense panel, there recur time and again complaints about the slowpoke processing of copy by the censors, of news manipulation and news blackouts lasting 24 hours or more, of the same information being deleted from the copy of one correspondent but permitted in the copy of another.

Also common to this testimony was praise, often lavish, for the contrasting approaches to censorship and information of Israeli and American officials in similar circumstances. Enlightened, that is. Correspondents covering Vietnam faced no censorship at all, and no restrictions on movement either. As one British reporter remembered it, hitching a lift from a U.S. military chopper in Vietnam was much like hailing a taxi back home—a breeze.

Reporting Vietnam, of course, wasn't

subject to anything so paternalistically obnoxious as an Official Secrets Act. The difference between media coverage of Vietnam and the Falklands is also the difference between an open society (ours) and the other kind.

**R**epeatedly, testimony to the Commons panel cited the absence of information available in London from British sources—"We have no information on that" was a common response from the bureaucracy. In an atmosphere of official secrecy, rumors, speculation and misinformation—"spurious news" as one media executive called it—flourished, forcing the British newsgatherers to rely time and again on reports from Buenos Aires and Washington. They could also pick the brains of American correspondents in London who were often way ahead as to combat zone developments, because their homeoffices kept them posted on the latest intelligence data from Pentagon monitors.

Defense, meantime, continually pleaded that its uppermost concern was the "national interest." But assessing the whole Defense news operation as a "shambles," one news executive termed the excuse of "national interest" considerations nothing but a "figleaf...to cover the errors, omissions, muddle and lack of information."

In addition to the nightly newscasts, whose ratings boomed, the war also monopolized the weekly public affairs show such as BBC-TV's *Panorama*, Granada's *World in Action*, Thames' *TV Eye* and London Weekend's *Weekend World*; the first three, prime-time offerings.

One attitude these programs projected in common was an air of detachment, refusing to go along with the beat of martial drums, or with the low-lives of Fleet Street who were, as always, pandering to the chauvinistic audience they know and manipulate so well. Thus, besides trying for that most elusive of journalistic qualities, "objectivity," the public affairs programs also preferred "the

British" over use of the term "our boys," and "Argentiniens" over the "Argies" so favored by the tabloids.

Retired generals and admirals became familiar faces on programs like BBC's *Newsnight* by second-guessing strategy on the basis of scanty and often misleading official information. BBC's *Panorama* even had the boldness to present a couple of Argentiniens among other talking heads on one of its Monday night editions—typical of the independent, even-handed style that was to raise howls from chauvinist peers and politicians.

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BBC deputy director general Alan Protheroe declared "We need no lessons in patriotism from MP's, the Ministry of Defense or anyone else . . ."

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The brouhaha over how the broadcast media were dealing the war bristled with "jingo," "treason" and similar emotive expletives. Apologies were demanded from the BBC. A member of the Thatcher cabinet accused BBC (ever a whipping boy for British philistines) of being "odious and subversive." On the floor of Commons, Thatcher herself weighed in with the cagey comment: "I understand that there are times when it seems that we and the Argentines are being treated almost as equals and almost on a neutral basis. I can only say that if this is so it gives offense and causes great emotion among many people."

Fending off mounting attacks, BBC deputy director general Alan Protheroe declared, "We need no lessons in patriotism from MPs, the Ministry of Defense or anyone else." Dick Francis, former chieftain of BBC News and now head of the BBC radio division, said it wasn't for BBC to "boost the morale of British troops or rally the British public around the flag." Subsequent opinion polls seemed to back him up, by which time

the more wilder attacks had subsided. (But neither, one should add, was it BBC's function at the behest of Defense to back off as it did from interviews with kin of personnel killed in the campaign lest one of them blurt a dissenting opinion about the virtue of dying for a few square miles of disputed peat bog, of which few Britons had ever heard before the conflict began.)

For the rest of the war, the networks continued to play it down the middle as best they could under the conditions that prevailed. They continued to cover Buenos Aires, and to siphon pictures off Argentine television. As BBC's Dick Francis proclaimed, "To suppress Argentine pictures for fear of appearing unpatriotic would be ignoble at the least. The widow of Portsmouth is no different to the widow of Buenos Aires." For that one, of course, he got a lot more stick.

The papers, meantime, debated not only video's performance but their own in what came to be one of those old-fashioned, entertaining Fleet Street battles. The *Sun*, for instance, accused the *Daily Mirror* of treason and the *Mirror* (a traditional Labor party supporter) attacked the *Sun* for jingoism. There developed among the whole field of downscale tab-

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### The great debate of how the Falklands fiasco was or wasn't covered continued right on. . .

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loids a competition as to which was most patriotic. The *Sun*, owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch (whose other properties include the *New York Post*), probably won this contest hands down by simply preempting the field with a daily streamer styling itself "the paper that supports our boys."

But the *Sun*, to be fair, may only have taken its cue from Margaret Thatcher herself, for whom "our boys" is one of the many homely expressions in her politically astute vocabulary.

Nor has she ever been above some

controlling of the news, even when it was obvious to everyone with the possible exception of her own fan club. When British forces recaptured South Georgia island to the east of the Falklands, the duly alerted TV chains switched to Downing St. for a live nighttime pickup of the Premier and Defense Secretary John Nott breaking the good news. After Nott read a brief statement, reporters moved in to press for more details but were abruptly repulsed by Thatcher with the evangelistic cry "Rejoice! Rejoice!"

Many British apparently did, or at least the opinion polls that followed this prime time performance put the administration's popularity rating at new highs. Everyone loves a winner after all.

Anyway, the great debate over how the Falklands fiasco was or wasn't covered continued right on through the conflict and well beyond—on debating platforms, in parliamentary hearing rooms, newspaper columns, and broadcast discussions including a host of radio phone-in shows. Public attention was eclipsed only by Wimbledon tennis, the World Cup soccer tournament, the birth of a royal baby, and an ailing economy.

Besides gathering and publishing voluminous testimony from the Fourth Estate, the Commons Defense Committee also dispatched a couple of investigators across the Atlantic to check out how the Yanks cope in similar circumstances. A formal committee report is expected momentarily, and it's anyone's guess on its conclusions. But even if it proves highly critical of the "shambles" that passed for a Defense information policy (more like a non-information policy), only an optimist would look for the report to make much difference one way or the other in a society with so old and honorable a tradition of secrecy—and with it the public's right *not* to know. ■

John Putnam, an American journalist who lives in London, has been covering the media, film and theater as reporter and critic for more than a decade.

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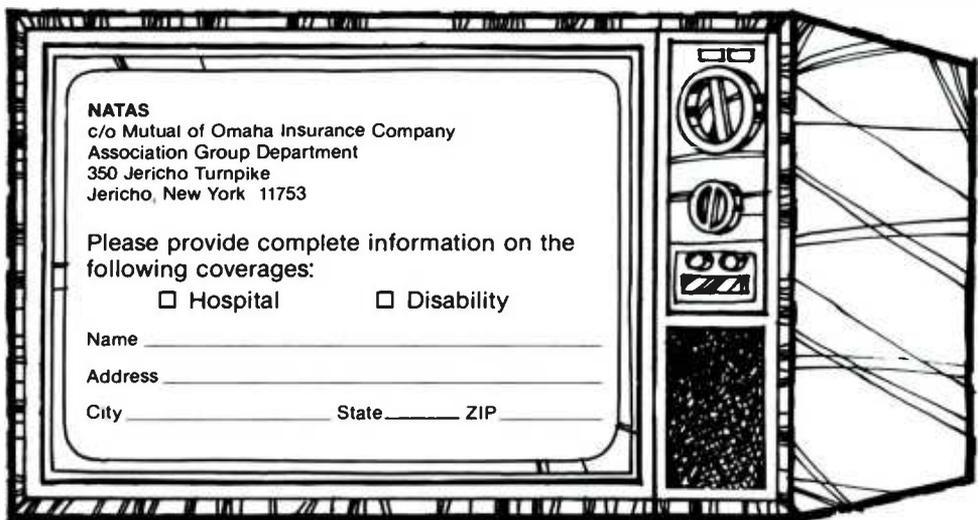
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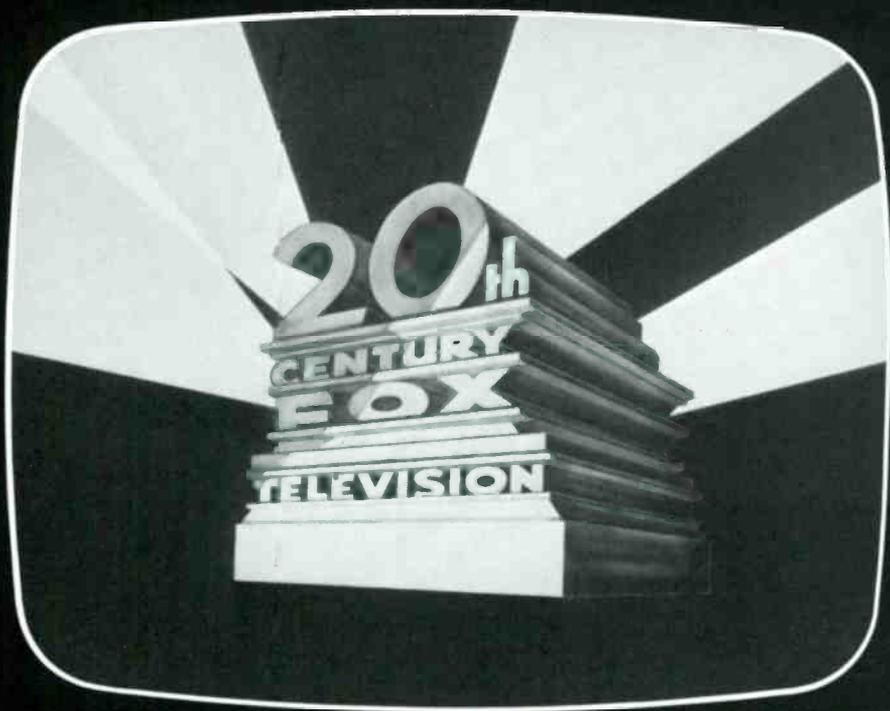
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# THEY CALLED HIM HUCKLEBERRY DRACULA

Remembering Robert Herridge of *Camera Three*, The Forgotten Great of the Golden Age, a Feisty Character With A Creative Mission.

## BY NAT HENTOFF

*"But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before."*

—Huckleberry Finn

**D**uring the past year, PBS television stations have been showing *The Golden Age of Television* — kinescopes of *Marty*, *The Days of Wine and Roses*, and six other remembrances of those years (1948-1960) when television drama was live! Showtime without the safety net of film or tape. And some of it even stayed in your mind the next morning.

In addition to Paddy Chayefsky, the writing-producing-directing credits include Fred Coe, J.P. Miller, Delbert Mann, and John Frankenheimer. Looking over the list before the series started, I called a coordinator of *The Golden Age of Television* and asked her, "Where's something by Robert Herridge?"

There was a pause. "I'm sorry. I don't know the name. Could you clue me in?"

I told her that doing this series without a Herridge show was like producing a celebration of jazz during the same period and leaving out Charlie Parker.

"Oh," she said. "Well, in all the materials I've been reading about 'the Golden Age,' I've never come across Mr. Herridge's name."

Those of you who read obituaries may have seen the name in the August 17, 1981, *New York Times*. Within the limited space he had, C. Gerald Fraser wrote a useful obit, but there is a great deal more to be said, and since it's not likely to be written anywhere else, I am going to tell you about Huckleberry Dracula, as some used to call Robert Herridge.

In creating the single most original body of work in TV history, Herridge found for television its own forms and rhythms. He thought it was dumb "to make a small-scale motion picture and call it television." Or to shoot a play as if it were on a theater stage, the only difference on television being more close-ups. And he hated, I mean hated, the kind of naturalism represented by *Marty* and its clones of the period. Herridge called that "kitchen" writing, there usually being one or more scenes set in a kitchen which, by God, had real pots and pans. With remnants of food in them.

Herridge passionately believed that television could create its own ways of telling a story. Not only in drama, but through music. He cared and knew more about music than any other television writer or producer or director I've known, and I've met a lot of them. In his music shows, like *The Sound of Jazz* and an exhilarating hour with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Herridge refused to do what he called "reporting." That is, just shoot what the musicians would be doing in a concert

hall or club. Instead, with no tricky camera work and without getting in the way of the musicians, he enabled you to get inside the dynamics of the making of the music. Like the way Billie Holiday was looking at Lester Young as he played their blues on *The Sound of Jazz*. It was because the cameramen were told by Herridge to improvise that we were able to see that. To see their souls, if you like, so clearly.

And when he did Dostoevski and Joyce and Faulkner and Melville, Herridge—again without the slightest distortion of the original—created each time a new theater of the imagination, a *television* theater. At first mysterious, then clear, intense, penetrating.

**H**e not only produced but often directed and sometimes wrote. And there wasn't any part of television he had not thoroughly taught himself. Lighting, for example. Robert Carrington, a former associate producer with Herridge, told me once: "He creates a whole world — sometimes just out of light. In *Emily Dickinson* on Herridge's *Camera Three* [a series on local and then national CBS], her house was evoked by using the back wall of the studio and a piece of canvas representing the ceiling. The rest—was made entirely by lighting." Herridge didn't need 20-foot scenery with wallpaper.

Herridge also found out what he needed to know about cameras, investigating their depths of focus and field. He would even push around the different kinds to get a sense of the problems a cameraman runs into with each of them when he's shooting. In addition, Herridge was involved with casting, very involved. A good many actors very much wanted to work with Herridge, even though it often meant a cut in their regular fee. (Herridge's budgets were usually sparse.)

In 1961, Nancy Wickwire said to me: "He does everything with such passion that he makes it more exciting to be part

of one of his shows. Furthermore, you can trust him. I've never heard him say, 'If we can only get so-and-so, a big name, we can push up the rating.' I'm always without fear when I work with Herridge. I know that five days after rehearsals begin, an agency or network man won't come in and change everything. Herridge is in charge, and the confidence we have in him gives us more confidence in ourselves."

Oh, Herridge was always in charge, all right. In 1960, I was working with him on a prime-time folk-music show for CBS. He had insisted on including a choral group that had about the same relationship to folk music as Wonder Bread has to pumpernickel. It was one of the few times we had totally disagreed, and I had been totally overruled. Brooding, I was taking some comfort in the fact that at least Joan Baez and Cisco Houston were on the show.

From the sponsor's booth, a CBS page descended with a note for Herridge. I walked over, and Herridge showed it to me. There was still a residue of blacklisting in those days. (Pete Seeger was banished from two network programs—CBS and ABC—three years later.) The note said that someone (not named) had checked out Cisco Houston, and he was not suitable for this here folk-song show. No reason given, but it obviously didn't have anything to do with Cisco's choice of chords. I gave the note back to Herridge. He took it and tore it up. That was the end of it. The rehearsal, including Cisco, went on, and for a while, I felt so good I could almost stand that milky chorus.

Now, to get somewhat personal. My relationship with Herridge began as a viewer. I had come to New York in 1953, at just about the time Herridge—a former poet (published), road gang worker, expert in 19th-century American literature, and dishwasher — had finally, at 39, found what he wanted to do with his life. He had just started writing, producing, and largely staging *Camera Three* on Channel 2. Every Sunday morning, even if I had closed

Birdland the night before, I got up in time to watch what I had never even imagined could take place on a television screen. A six-part *Moby Dick*, for instance, in which somehow four stools, some ropes, a capstan, and a platform became the consuming world of Ahab. I didn't see the white whale, but I sure knew he was there.

The marvels never stopped. A *Ballad of Huck Finn*; and the most extraordinary show I have seen anywhere, a three-part *Notes from the Underground*. Only one actor, of course; a ladder, and an overwhelming intensity. I wasn't thinking about lighting or direction. I was just stunned that so much force was coming out of that box.

I got to know Herridge in 1957 when he asked Whitney Balliett and me to work with him on *The Sound of Jazz*. Herridge and I did a number of other shows together, and became friends. In the past couple of years, as he was trying to find a place for himself again in television—after a long absence—we were in especially frequent contact. Swapping stories, but mostly planning jazz programs that never got funded. He did have one last hurrah, *A Salute to Duke Ellington* in May, 1981 on public television. But for once in his career, Herridge wasn't entirely in charge of that one; and from this experience, he learned that you could be a lot more inventive in commercial than in public television.

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**S**o, I do not come to this report on Robert Herridge as a dispassionate observer. I liked him enormously. In a number of ways, he was like Charles Mingus, with whom Herridge had a warm, tumultuous friendship. Both were almost ingenuous in some respects, and therefore quite vulnerable; but they could also be shrewdly realistic. Both also had a wildness in them—not mean but defiant. And, until their last years, it was a wild-

ness that sometimes got out of control. Like a boy who gets into a state, tries to get out of it, and has forgotten how. And both, of course, were obsessed by their callings.

One of Herridge's problems in television was that he could not stand anyone, in Huck Finn's phrase, trying to "sivilize" him. Karl Genus, a director who worked often with him, said a few years before Herridge left commercial television in 1966: "He never plays it safe. He charged into television as if it were a vast overgrown jungle, and he kept hacking away at it instead of resting in the places that had already been cleared. He's always been an enigma to the executives in this industry."

Other powers in the industry were downright furious at the very idea of Herridge. David Susskind, for whom Herridge worked briefly in the 1950s, called him "a kook." And went on to hoot at the way he dressed. "Herridge affected being a bohemian, never wore a tie," Susskind used to kvetch. "He tried to substitute nonconformity of dress for talent." Furthermore, instead of meeting with writers in the office, as responsible producers did, Herridge — Susskind told me accusatorily — met them in bars, "those little bars where people pose as artists. Herridge creates anarchy. That's what he creates no matter what he's doing."

Yet, while with Susskind's Talent Associates, Herridge produced, in 1958 for *Kraft Theater*, two of the most powerful shows ever associated with Susskind's name—Ernest Hemingway's *Fifty Grand* and Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men*, the latter a far more seizing transformation of the book than Robert Rossen's screen version. Those two productions, by the way, were the last Herridge did for Susskind. And it was on those two that Herridge demanded Susskind stay the hell out of the way until the dress rehearsal (instead of continually inflicting his artistic judgment from the top).

Maybe that's why, years ago, Susskind's final word to me on Herridge —

shaking his fists and shouting — was: “The Herridge legend must be broken!”

Well, I guess it was broken. Or rather, it was forgotten. Like the PBS coordinator for *The Golden Age of Television* who’d never heard the name before. In television, it’s the Susskinds who survive. The Huckleberry Draculas, being so hopelessly unsivilized, do not fit in.

That name, Huckleberry Dracula, came from S. Lee Pogostin, a writer on a number of Herridge shows. The Huckleberry part I’ve explained. As for Dracula, Herridge’s eyes could take on a most unsettling intensity. Pogostin once told me about a discussion he and Herridge were having at the Russian Tea Room about the “kitchen” school of television writing. “Herridge let go a barrage of language in which, like Mark Twain, he cursed for 30 minutes without repeating himself. But the cursing was merely a canenza.

“The concerto,” Pogostin continued, “consisted of what seemed to be the entire classical learning of the Western world. His face got redder and redder, and he drank his whitish-green drink with such viciousness and vengeance that innocent people who just happened to be passing the table found themselves being glared at by Dracula-eyes. The women, in particular, held their necks as if: ‘This is it! Imagine, in the Russian Tea Room! He’s going to bite us!’ Like a great storm, it was over. And there was calm. But Herridge continued to glare—with those eyes.”

Once in a great while, Herridge would come up against someone as unbending and fierce as himself. In 1960, I introduced him to Joan Baez. He immediately planned a show in which she would figure significantly, but Joan had some conditions. No one else was to appear on her section of the program. She was to have a veto over the sets behind her. And *she* would decide what she would sing. Joan was not negotiating. Those were irreducible demands. She had done without national television exposure before. She could still do without it.

Herridge could not bear being without the sound of her voice on that show, though he desperately would have preferred it to be disembodied. He yielded. Later, in the control room, turning to me who had brought him this iron maiden, Herridge muttered, “The little bitch is 19 years old, and she thinks she’s Thomas Mann.” He growled, and then: “God, listen to that voice. Yeah, we’ve got to keep this show pure—but not *Par-tisan Review* pure, you understand.”

□

**A**nd Huckleberry Dracula smiled through the window at the Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, who may have smiled back. It was hard to tell.

There was never a television series like it. The scope, to begin with. One week: Miles Davis, who until then had resolutely and sulfurously refused to have anything to do with TV. Another week: Sean O’Casey’s *The End of the Beginning*. There were originals (S. Lee Pogostin’s *An Early Morning of a Bartender’s Waltz*). And adaptations (John Steinbeck’s *The Chrysanthemums*). The death of Christ; the trial of Socrates; the huge, gentle passion of Ben Webster, and the swift, dancing brushes of Jo Jones. A Western, *A Story of a Gunfighter*, in which not a shot was fired because the terrifying showdown took place only in the mind of the hired assassin.

An astonishing rainbow, but did the colors hold? Well, it was a series of 26 shows, and I saw every one. It’s been 20 years, but I can still replay parts of those half hours in my head. They were that powerful. Emotionally, visually. And they made you think, with your eyes.

It was called *The Robert Herridge Theater*. Herridge did all the selecting, wrote a good many of the adaptations, and was involved, as always, in the camera work, the directing, the casting, and the fueling of the cohesive tension of each undertaking. As one of the directors in that series told me, “You

can't hold back with Herridge. His passion sweeps you along. And you always have to do more. It's not that he encourages everyone to make original contributions; he *demands* it."

The idea of *The Robert Herridge Theater* began with CBS Films, which usually syndicated programs here and abroad. "We figured," said one of its officials, "that we ought to have something in our catalogue with a better image than *Sea Hunt* and *Assignment Foreign Legion*."

By 1959, when the series went into production, Herridge had a hell of a track record as an original who was creating forms, lighting, and rhythms (verbal and musical as well as visual) that were unique to television. He had produced *Camera Three*, first on Channel 2 and then on the CBS network. And in the 1956-57 season, Herridge had moved into the big time with 18 shows on *Studio One*.

**W**hen he took on *Studio One*, Herridge was warned by network brass and by the sponsor's advertising agency to play it safe, to come down to the reality of the 45 million or so people who watched the series. After all, the five or six million viewers of *Camera Three* might have gone for his spooky lighting and all that other artsy crap, but this was nighttime, this was beer-and-snacks time.

Herridge ignored the advice, and also refused to hire stars for *Studio One*. He preferred actors. "I always figure," he said, "that if I yield at the beginning, I'll keep on yielding."

So it was that a large number of Americans were introduced that season to Conrad Aiken in Herridge's adaptation of *Mr. Arcularis*—the story of a dying man's gradual realization of the childhood frustrations and fears that had blocked his fulfillment as a man. A real snapper, that one. So was John Steinbeck's *Flight*. Yet, the funny thing was that Herridge's *Studio One* ran neck and

neck all season in the ratings with the chief competition, *Robert Montgomery Presents*.

That didn't surprise him. Herridge always read all the mail that came in to his shows—and they got more than most because they did make you think—and he was forever pointing out that "a high percentage of the people who write in never went to college. But they're curious. They read. And they're wide open for real emotions. The way I work, I'm convinced that if something knocks me out, it'll reach a lot of people. I've never had any problems with the fact that television is a mass medium. Television is a theater that functions in the marketplace—where Shakespeare worked—and its potential audience is everybody."

Herridge would not yield to the hucksters because he really did believe that there were millions of hungry people out there—hungry for something with real, not artificial, flavor. Nor would he yield when he was flat broke and out of work.

During one such period, in the late 1950s, he had a chance to produce a couple of *Playhouse 90* shows. *Madame Bovary* seemed to be a lively prospect for prime time, Herridge thought. Network officials agreed, except they wanted to take the adultery out of the story—it might offend a lot of people. They also told Herridge to think up a different ending. It would be irresponsible of television to seem to condone suicide as a way to solve your troubles. Herridge would have doffed his hat, if he'd had one, as he walked away.

Anyway, *The Robert Herridge Theater* came through, and that was one of the happiest periods of his life. He was almost never not working. And during breaks in the studio, or late at night, he'd be planning four or more shows ahead. When the shooting was over, when screenings began for network executives and the squash players from the advertising agencies, Herridge was delighted because almost all the reactions were more than favorable. A lot of those guys were actually elated. Even when they cried—they really did

cry during some of the screenings—they were elated at having been moved so deeply. (As during Edwin Granberry's *A Trip to Czardis*, about a mother in the Florida scrub-pine country taking her two small boys into town to see their father. Even at the end the younger boy does not realize that the reason for the trip is that his father is going to be hanged.)

But for a long time, nobody was buying. "It's an anthology. The audience, though, wants to identify with the same actors and the same plot every week. And the audience wants realism. *All* the furniture. Yet, Herridge, well, his sets are very, very spare. They just suggest. You couldn't live there. And sometimes, for Christ's sake, he uses a camera boom as a fence, and a camera mount becomes a hammock on a porch. I mean, *I* appreciate that kind of originality, but my client has to sell a hell of a lot of units, you know."

□

**E**ach of the three networks turned down the series. Of course, Frank Stanton, president of CBS, was making heartfelt speeches at the time about the urgent need for better, much better, television programming. "So why doesn't he put on *The Robert Herridge Theater*," an advertising executive said to me in 1960. "I'm a coward, I admit that. It's the nature of my profession. But God, this series is so far beyond anything ever done on television before, you'd think CBS would put it on sustaining [without a sponsor], or look hard for the right kind of institutional sponsor. Somebody who's not buying time to sell goods by the piece."

That brooding advertising executive wasn't being entirely fair. CBS had considered buying the Herridge series, or part of it, for the summer of 1959. But an act of God intervened. A package of *I Love Lucy* reruns came in, already sponsored. Too bad. That filled up what would have been the Herridge time.

Eventually, *The Robert Herridge Theater* was bought by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and nine other foreign countries. One of them was Canada, and a justified chauvinistic critic in the *Montreal Star* noted that "It is entirely to the credit of CBC that, alone of the North American networks, it recognized [the series's] worth and trusted its audience to share the experiment."

**B**ack home, after giving up on the networks, CBS Films tried syndicating *The Robert Herridge Theater* in local and regional markets: There were only some 20 takers—five of them banks hip enough to understand the reflected prestige they'd get. None of the programs, by the way, has dated. How could they? Sam Cooke Digges, then administrative vice-president of CBS Films, told me long ago that he didn't regret having bankrolled the project, despite the disappointing sales. "It'll be as good in the year 2000 as it is now," he said. "At least that's an accomplishment."

Indeed, it will be just as good in the 21st century. But who'll be watching it? And where? In a television museum, I suppose. Exactly where Herridge—who had trust in the millions—did not want his shows to be embalmed. Or at least, not have them available *only* there. After all, when WCBS-TV (though not the network) ran *The Robert Herridge Theater* in the summer of 1960, it did better in the ratings against *The Untouchables* than any other show in that spot ever had.

Herridge went back to do shows for CBS, NBC, and in 1963-65, 10 specials for Metromedia. Among the Metromedia specials were Dostoevsky's *The Sensualists* and the most fully realized hour of Duke Ellington ever shown on television. A few years ago, Herridge went back to Metromedia to get a copy. There was none. The original was gone. The Ellington tape had been erased so it could be used again. Maybe for Merv Griffin.

Herridge left commercial television in 1966 because he felt that, at last, the forces of what he called the A.B.M. (the American Business Machine) had become far too strong at all the networks for him to keep trying to survive there on his own terms. He was to learn later that the A.B.M. had also enveloped public television. Last year, for instance, Herridge entered a competition for a jazz series to be shown on PBS. He lost. "You see," a PBS power told Herridge, "it wasn't your entry that failed [Tapes of *The Sound of Jazz* and *The Sound of Miles Davis*]. Yours was easily the best of the lot. It's just that the winner came in with a lot of bread from an oil company to help finance the series."

From 1966 to 1969, Herridge tried Hollywood, which found him even more uncategorizable, and therefore unusable, than television had. He then wrote two plays on commission by the Arena Theater in Washington, D.C., and a novel. But he had to find a way back into television. That's where he had discovered his true calling, and that's where his body of work had been created. Writers, he used to say, experienced rebirths. Why couldn't a television producer?

□

**S**o, under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, he worked with some academics on a projected series of television dramas based on American history. It was not a salubrious mix. The professors fed on facts; Herridge heard voices. But he persevered, because this could be a way back *in*. Maybe, he felt, he could be born again on PBS. Despite the oil companies.

Finally, there was an opening. Herridge was asked to be what is called the creative producer for *A Salute to Duke Ellington* on PBS, a show done in conjunction with WQED in Pittsburgh and the Kennedy Center for the Performing

Arts in Washington. It was aired in May, 1981, and the preceding months were very vexing indeed for the man who always before had been in control of every element of a show that had his name on the credits.

First of all, as in far too many magazines in recent years where editing is done by committee, the notion at PBS, Herridge found, was that "creative" thinking had to be done in and by a hive of executives. And not only executives. There were swarms of lesser young functionaries who also got themselves nibbles of power. "They all have college degrees," Herridge told me one morning on the phone, "and they think that makes them experts on everything. But they don't *know* anything about someone like Duke, about where his music came from. I don't know *what* they really know anything about."

He resisted many of the hive's ukases, but yielded on some. He so needed to be back on television, to prove he still had the magic, that he allowed two performers to be pushed into that program whom he in no way wanted. With regard to these two, his only other choice would have been to lose the show—the pressures were that imperious. Somehow, Herridge pulled it off. *A Salute to Duke Ellington* was not a total astonishment, as his other jazz programs had been, but there were gloriously illuminated passages, like a Sarah Vaughan-Joe Williams duet in which Sarah, for the first time on television, forgot she was on television.

I called Herridge right after the program to tell him I thought it had worked. He was pleased, but tired, very tired. Maybe cable television, he said. Now that cable was opening up to "the arts," he had some ideas for a series there. It did not seem to be the moment to tell him that the A.B.M. (the American Business Machine)—for all the press releases about the coming cable "revolution"—was going to chew up those dreams even more quickly and ruthlessly than it had ingested commercial and public television. So we talked about Duke.

More than 20 years ago, Herridge told me: "We never did have a 'Golden Age' of television, although some very good things were done in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But if there is a 'Golden Age,' it's ahead of us."

No, it isn't, Bob. You were it. ■

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Nat Hentoff has been a staff writer and columnist for *The Village Voice* since 1958. He is also on the staff of the *New Yorker*. Among his books are *The First Freedom: The Tumultuous History of Free Speech In America*, and *Blues for Charlie Darwin*. This article appeared originally in *The Village Voice*.

## VIEW POINTS

*"...the TV talk elections night focused on money. The cost of all the campaigns around the country totaled \$1 billion, according to one commentator. Another said 300 percent more had been spent this year, though with typical TV zip he didn't quite make clear more than when or what.*

*In any case, the managers agreed it was the most expensive campaign in history. 'But then, they all are nowadays,' noted Jody Powell, the ex-White House aide. The costs are dazzling, a cost per vote that is light years beyond what any other country spends. It was pointed out, correctly, that spending didn't equal winning. But it was not pointed out that well over half the total went to buy television and radio spots. Quite apart from whether they could raise the money, in no other country could politicians spend that much.*

*That is because TV and radio stations in most countries don't sell political ads. The question now isn't whether there should be public financing of the endlessly escalating price of running for office, but whether the time to reach the voters should be for sale in this way. What would it do to politics if the broadcast media were obliged to provide fair shares of free time to candidates, and were not allowed to sell more?*

*That is the rule in most other democracies, and it is worth considering...*"

FLORA LEWIS, *New York Times*

We'd like to interrupt  
this Quarterly with  
a couple of important  
words for people in the  
television industry:

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We thought it was an idea worth trying. And so did 160 other NBC television stations — affiliates who have joined with our Flagship Stations to form a "life-saving network" across the country.

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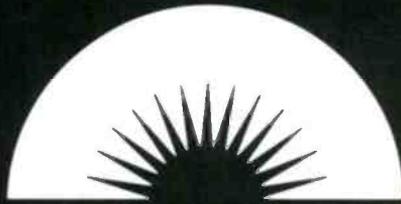
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# TELEVISION, ITALIAN STYLE

Private Commercial TV, Once Marginal and Naughty, Now Bigtime and Respectable. USA Shows Like *Dallas*, *Mork and Mindy* and *General Hospital* Are Popular.

**BY BERNARD S. REDMONT**

ROME

**A** funny thing is happening in the land of the Forum. Everybody is getting into the act of running a TV station.

Private commercial television is booming, despite the existence of a state "monopoly," known as Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI). Italy now claims a world record of more stations per capita than any nation in the world, including the U.S.

At last report, Italy had 640 private TV stations, and the numbers change almost weekly. Rights theoretically exist for a thousand frequencies. In terms of area covered, Italy has ten times the number of stations as the U.S., although the U.S. is ahead in absolute numbers.

Some call it freedom. Others call it chaos. It's very typically Italian.

Proliferation developed when private interests took advantage of newly apparent legal loopholes. The courts shaved down the government monopoly of RAI in 1976, by allowing private stations to operate "locally."

Many of the private stations are now grouped into "networks," by a makeshift system, using video cassettes. The private TV networks present their shows simultaneously, offering advertisers a national audience, by working five days ahead, and dispatching their video cassettes to affiliates by plane, train, truck and motor scooter.

RAI, with its own three networks to feed, is on the defensive. Commercial TV is thriving despite its legal handicaps and has created a \$100,000,000-a-year market for American shows.

The private TV firms are pressing for an even freer rein. RAI still holds the monopoly for broadcasting national and international news, and for relaying its broadcasts simultaneously on the air around Italy.

Privately owned television is now rivaling RAI for advertising revenue. Industry sources say public and private sectors will each earn about \$300,000,000 in commercials this year.

Most of the private networks are publisher-affiliated or directed. They operate largely out of Milan, whereas RAI is headquartered in Rome.

The big three:

1. Canale 5 is in first place among the private networks. It has 27 affiliates. It is run by a 44-year-old real estate, contracting and publishing magnate, Silvio Berlusconi, whose empire includes Milan's conservative daily, *Giornale Nuovo*.

2. Italia 1, with 18 stations, is controlled by the Rusconi publishing group, and has connections with Fiat.

3. Rete 4, with 23 stations, is led by Mondadori Publishers (over 50% control), which has interests in Italy's leading weekly newsmagazines. Mondadori's partners are Carlo Perrone (36%) and Carlo Caracciolo (10%). Mondadori and Caracciolo publish the daily newspaper *La Repubblica*, and the group

leans politically toward the socialists. Rete 4 began in January 1982. It specializes in situation comedies.

**A**nother group of stations known as GRT represents Italy's only advertiser-supported syndicator. It is a subsidiary of two of the biggest ad agencies for national newspapers, SPI and SPE.

After an ambitious start, GRT decided that operating a network of 35 stations with cassette programs and preinserted commercials on synchronized schedules was not the answer. So it weeded out 15 weak stations and gave the remaining 20 full autonomy to schedule network programs in accordance with local factors. GRT's three or four hours of daily programming include feature films, series and animations.

Another circuit, Euro-TV, with 30 stations, is linked with the Parmalat milk-products group.

In addition to this superabundance of channels, Italians also pick up Italian-language TV transmissions from Monte Carlo, Capodistria (Yugoslavia) and TV Svizzera in Switzerland, as well as French TV on Corsica.

Until 1976, when the constitutional court broke the RAI monopoly, Italians could only relieve their boredom from RAI-1 by switching to an almost equally boring but somewhat more highbrow and left-wing RAI-2.

By allowing free "local" broadcasting, the court opened the way to a virtual free-for-all. Now most big-city residents of Italy have a choice of three RAI channels and often 15 private stations. Rome offers more than 30, including one run by the English-language *International Daily News*.

For the moment, Italians don't seem especially worried about the concentration of press, television and radio interests in the hands of a few giants. The fact that the Rizzoli group owns the country's biggest circulation daily, *Corriere della Sera*, other newspapers, women's magazine and a television network doesn't

seem to disturb most people.

Canale 5, which exemplifies American-style TV in Italy, begins a typical day at 8:30 a.m. with *Good Morning Italy*, a spaghetti version of an American breakfast show. The day includes quiz shows, American-made soap operas for housewives, Japanese cartoons for children, prime-time episodes of *Dallas* (which had started on RAI), a soccer match and a Hollywood feature film ending at 4 a.m. — a longer day than anything on the RAI networks.

Berlusconi, Canale 5's chief, remarked, "They accuse my channel of being the Voice of America, but so what? Who would want to be Moscow Radio? We look to the U.S., the country with the most freedom."

His company's start-up cost was \$95,000,000 and its 1982 budget is \$120,000,000.

Canale 5's staff looks to CBS as a model. But it was a rival network, Italia 1, that signed a major deal this year with CBS. Italia 1 won exclusive rights to all programming in the CBS Broadcast International library, including news, sports, special events and some entertainment.

Not to be outdone, Rete 4 signed a deal with ABC for program exchanges including films, sports events, childrens' shows, cultural and leisure programs.

For the moment, films and telefilms dominate the scene on private stations.

Despite the private enterprise and commercial character of the private stations, Italy's Communist Party controls or influences about 29 of them, while the Christian Democrats claim about 150, and the socialists about 50.

**W**hen the local stations began in 1976, most were amateurish and badly financed. Many delved into late-night pornovision, including housewife amateur striptease shows. Italian private TV acquired a bawdy reputation with such offerings as *Hot Skin*, *Fanny's*

*Secret Diary and The Vestal Virgin of Satan.*

These raunchy peep shows were eye-openers in more than one sense and kept much of the nation awake night after night for a long time, a surprising phenomenon in strait-laced Catholic Italy.

All this has waned, though not vanished. Church leaders protested the blue shows. The feminist movement charged exploitation and demeaning of women. And in a few instances, the courts ordered some independent stations closed for obscenity, although no general program codes exist.

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The Vatican maintains a world-famous radio station, but surprisingly has never developed its own television enterprise.

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What really did in the gamy fare was that it didn't produce much commercial revenue. Raw sex doesn't seem to sell pet food, soft drinks, detergents, disposable diapers or household appliances.

In addition, the independent stations began to seek more respectability and prestige, vis-a-vis the public and Parliament.

At the same time, RAI began to loosen up, and stopped putting long skirts on ballerinas. RAI opened the door to generous doses of nudity on its own programs.

RAI even bought a risqué documentary, *AAA... Offresi (Veronique)*, produced by a women's cooperative to expose male lechery. The producers hired an attractive French woman identified as Veronique, set her up in a call-girl apartment in Rome, advertised in the press for customers, and clandestinely videotaped the proceedings for two weeks. It provoked a national and international scandal, and a public prosecution.

The Catholic Church has been slow to get into TV directly, although, like the

Communist Party, it is a major power center and influence on broadcasting.

The Vatican maintains a world-famous radio station, but surprisingly has never developed its own television enterprise, although it once was officially assigned two channels, and can make use of them at any time.

A number of explanations are suggested for the Vatican's failure to exercise this option: One is money — a serious cash-flow problem. Another is organizational — Jesuits run Vatican Radio, and the Jesuits have been in some disarray, complicated by frictions with the Papacy. The question would inevitably arise: What order would run the station — the Jesuits, another order, or the Vatican itself?

In addition, radio, particularly short wave, is basically an international medium, crossing borders easily, whereas until recent progress in technology, television has been limited to local or regional range, a confining framework for a global church.

In any event, the Pope has no difficulty obtaining air time locally or abroad, and at least one private station in Rome, Tele Sole (Channel 25) always has its antenna open to the Vatican.

The private networks are campaigning energetically for the right to link up their stations electronically and for the privilege of broadcasting national and international news — both sensitive political issues because of RAI's traditional monopoly. Berlusconi has already built a series of 15 microwave relay stations on Italy's mountain tops, which would among other things eliminate the costly and cumbersome cassette shipping system.

Neither the courts nor Parliament, however, have shown themselves to be in a hurry to change things.

What's certain is that the private stations are here to stay, and are gaining wider acceptance among listeners and advertisers. They work speedily and efficiently, with a modern sense of show-business know-how, compared to the sluggish RAI bureaucracy.

Already, advertisers can be assured that their spots will run simultaneously in a predetermined spot on private stations, say in the middle of *The Waltons* or *Dallas*.

On RAI, commercials are forbidden in the middle of a program. They are bunched between programs, often in 5-minute clusters.

It's estimated that this year more than \$600,000,000 in advertising revenues will be divided among the public and private stations, with each sharing about half.

**A**merican industry sources regard Italy as an enormous market for TV shows. In some months, Italy ranks second after Britain as an importer of American films. Italians say their TV bought almost \$100,000,000 in American shows last year, mostly destined for the new commercial networks.

Some RAI officials criticize the private networks for buying up to 80 per cent of their TV programs from U.S. distributors, and neglecting native Italian products. But RAI itself isn't ashamed to run *M.A.S.H.* (on RAI-1), *Mork and Mindy* and *Starsky and Hutch* (on RAI-2).

Italians now seem to be as familiar as Americans with *Columbo*, *Hawaii-Five-O*, *Kojak*, *Flash Gordon*, *Happy Days* and *General Hospital*.

RAI is fighting back against the incursions of the private stations — though hampered by bureaucratic red tape and political infighting. The competition has spurred RAI to make changes, mostly for the better.

The state company, a huge agency, employs 17,000 people. By contrast, the largest commercial network has less than 500 employees. Private stations often can pay better, at least for top executives.

A public service, RAI was created by act of parliament and began transmitting in April 1954. Color started in 1977.

RAI's first channel is VHF and its

second and third UHF. Channels 1 and 2 are national, and 3, the newest, is regional.

The first channel gets the biggest audience. Its news programs are conservative-flavored, and tend to show the influence of the Christian Democrats.

The second channel tends to be more outspoken and left-of-center. Many of its executives are socialists, and the staff also includes some communists.

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News programs are the most popular features on Italian TV, and they are reserved for RAI.

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The third channel, less than three years old, has no strong political flavor, and appears to be a mixture of the two others. It gets a small budget and a limited audience.

News programs are the most popular feature on Italian TV, and they are reserved for RAI, with the exception that local private stations may produce brief bits of local news.

Ratings show that half of the audience regularly watches RAI's nightly 30- to 45-minute newscasts on the first channel at 8 p.m. or the second at 7:45 p.m.

Both RAI channels maintain their own bureaus and correspondents in the U.S., Paris, London, Bonn and other world news centers. They also obtain additional footage from U.S. networks and via Eurovision.

**M**any independent observers think an Italian viewer gets more in-depth coverage of political and diplomatic events, national and international, than a U.S. set owner. (This is also true in France and Britain.) European news is, of course, strongly stressed.

But local political news often bores the audience, and is sometimes biased. RAI producers have no inhibitions about

offering large doses of "talking heads."

Representatives of the many political parties usually insist on equal time to air their views. Criticizing RAI's political news and public affairs approach, columnist Arrigo Levi says, "It's as boring as a court calendar, reporting about people who interest hardly anyone except themselves."

A recent public-opinion survey showed that two-thirds of Italians felt the private networks should be permitted on-the-air direct transmissions and newscasts. And most think they would get better news coverage if private TV were able to compete with RAI in that area.

RAI-1 begins its prime time at 8 p.m. with the news. This is followed by the movie of the week, a national or foreign series, quiz show, variety show or magazine-news feature. Prime time is over by 9:30 or 9:45, although programming goes on until close to midnight, ending with late-night news, having started at 10 a.m. with a series like *Madame Curie*.

RAI-1 doesn't use news anchor women, but RAI-2 does. Beauty or youth are not considered essential qualities. Because job security laws in Italy are so stringent, the American anchor-phenomenon of juvenilophilia and frequent changes of Harry Hairspray and Blondie Starlet newsreaders don't happen here.

RAI is a near-conglomerate, with a variety of subsidiaries. These include a publishing unit for books and magazines, including some of Italy's best art and historical books, a music record company, a commercial production, marketing and distribution firm, an ad agency and a satellite communications firm.

RAI produces or co-produces blockbuster feature films and film series — memorable ones like *Jesus of Nazareth*, *Padre Padrone*, Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, and the recent 10-hour epic *Marco Polo*, the biggest budgeted opus in RAI history. That one was originally planned for \$11,000,000, and it turned out to cost well over \$20,000,000, and some say, \$30,000,000. RAI made a deal on *Marco*

*Polo* with NBC and Proctor & Gamble, with vital participation by China, Morocco and Japan.

RAI's president, Sergio Zavoli, says he feels "we must continue our activity in the realm of production." He views the U.S. and Europe as natural partners in this enterprise.

RAI's *Verdi* is already booked for cable and PBS, and *Garibaldi*, *The Iliad*, *St. Francis* and *Christopher Columbus* are on the horizon.

RAI is in good shape financially, and spends its money lavishly to make profits. Parliament recently authorized an increase in license fees for set owners, and raised the ceiling for commercials to a healthy \$320,000,000 a year.

It costs an Italian family 42,680 lire (about \$30) for a license for one or more black and white TV receivers, with the right to any number of radios thrown in free. Color costs 78,910 lire (about \$56). Radios alone cost 3,630 lire (\$3).

Italy had at the end of 1981 some 13,500,000 licensed TV sets owners. Barely a third of the sets are equipped for color.

The average adult, according to Nielsen reports, views TV for 4 hours and 26 minutes daily.

The Italian line scan system is the European 625, permitting a better image definition than the U.S. 525. Color is the PAL system, adopted in early 1977.

Despite its sneers at the private networks for using too much American fare, RAI recently stocked up on 26 hours of *Trapper John* and *Fall Guys*, plus items like *Alice*, *Married*, *Woodstock*, *The Rose* and *Simon and Garfunkel in Central Park*. RAI also bought *Godfather I* and *II* and *Shogun*.

RAI people say, "Our audience is as high as ever, and even growing in certain time slots. If the commercial networks claim increased audience strength, it can only mean that the total audience is growing."

RAI estimates its audience nightly at 22,000,000 to 25,000,000 viewers. Total Italian population is 57,000,000.

RAI has allocated almost \$120,000,000

to its three channels for production this year, and an additional \$90,000,000 to the three news and information departments, radio and regional centers.

The agency is controlled by a kind of watchdog committee of deputies and senators, which appoints the board of directors. All major parties are represented according to their parliamentary strength. A 1975 reform set the pattern for giving the main political movements a share of control.

The future will certainly see something of a telecommunications revolution that will include cable, satellites, videotext and interactive video terminals.

RAI will begin experimental service via direct broadcasting satellite in 1986, and *Italcable* is planning to lay an underwater transatlantic fiber optic cable in 1987 to provide a TV hookup for instantaneous transmission of hundreds of TV programs to and from the U.S.

Regulating the current turmoil is nothing to what problems the future may hold. Socialist minister for state enterprises Gianni De Michelis says that "anyone who thinks that regulating the private airwaves ends our problems hasn't understood where we're headed at all."

De Michelis says that the issue that's being hotly debated in Italy today — whether private networks can transmit simultaneously by using relay stations or only by shipping pre-recorded cassettes — "will sound quaint if not downright medieval by the end of the decade." ■

Bernard S. Redmont, a former correspondent for CBS News in Paris and Moscow, now directs the Broadcast Journalism program at Boston University's School of Public Communication. He visits Italy frequently. Redmont's analyses of French and Soviet television appeared previously in *Television Quarterly*.

## “ QUOTE... UNQUOTE ”

*"It is one of the unavoidable tragedies of television that it seems to have dulled audiences by giving them a richness of good entertainment. We are in the habit of speaking in hushed, respectful tones of the comedians of yesterday and referring rudely to those of the present, but we are often unfair and illogical in doing so. There were giants in other times, but often their reputations were based on two or three vaudeville sketches and five or six movies. Television's insatiable appetite for new material means that Sid Caesar in one television season burned up more humor fodder than ten vaudeville comedians would during their lifetimes. Every week Caesar was obliged to come up with a new act. Bert Lahr, one of the greatest revue comics, once soberly considered Sid's obligation and flatly announced, 'it's impossible'"*

STEVE ALLEN, in his book *Funny People*.

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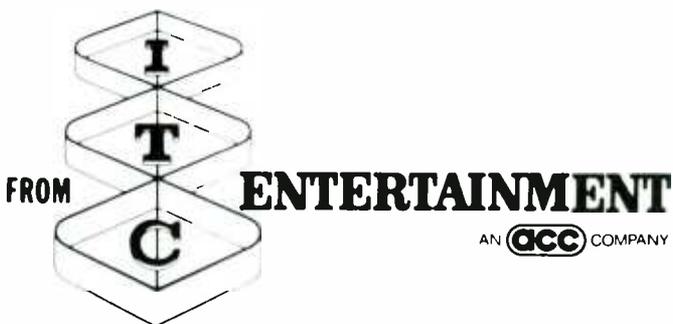
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# LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON — THE NEW LOOK

Modern Soap Operas Would Have Shocked The Fans of Radio's *Our Gal Sunday* and *Helen Trent*. A Study of The Lively Art Of The Serial, Its Formats and Themes.

## BY DOROTHY VINE

**F**ADE IN: A lush, deserted tropical island, palm trees languidly swaying over wave-drenched, semi-nude lovers stretched out at water's edge locked in passionate embrace...

**F**ADE IN: An unmarried couple in bed. She unbuttons his shirt and repeatedly kisses his chest. She tells him, "I want to be the best lover you ever had; I want you to want me so much you cannot stand to be without me..."

**F**ADE IN: Along the Seine's Left Bank, strolling hand-in-hand, two lovers enjoy the actual sights and sounds of a spring day in Paris...

It may come as a surprise, or perhaps even a shock, to non-soap watchers that these are not scenes from a high budget or x-rated feature film, but from recent episodes of *Search for Tomorrow*, *Days of Our Lives* and *One Life to Live* respectively.

Gone forever are the stereotypes associated with soap operas — housewives in long, lingering talks over countless cups of coffee in tiny kitchens and/or drab living rooms. Here to stay and proliferate are young, attractive people pillow-talking in ruffled beds, on sofas, floors, tropical isles, in gardens and even haylofts. Married or not, they are shapely, show lots of skin and an unquenchable stamina for passion.

Actual location shooting, racy dia-

logue and titillating situations are not the only changes that have taken place since the 15-minute *Clara Lu 'n Em* became the first network radio daytime serial in 1932. Following the success of that show, daytime serials proliferated every year, growing closer and closer to the soap opera form as we know it today, until by the early 40's, there was a total of 33 providing an all-day marathon for listeners — starting at 10 a.m. and continuing until 6 p.m. They were, of course, all performed live and continued that way until the last one died in 1960.

Contrary to popular belief, the death knell for radio serials was not caused by the defection of listeners. According to Raymond William Stedman, in *The Serials*, "Listeners as well as advertisers still loved them. But the belief of a network and its advertisers in daytime serials mattered little to local affiliates which in the days of television competition gained little from network radio programming. The fees stations received for carrying the network's offerings were much less than those they could obtain by selling the same time locally. Accordingly, CBS Radio's affiliates asked, then demanded that network offerings be reduced substantially to free more hours for local sales. That, at last, was the death sentence for radio's serials."

Daytime serials had been waiting in the wings to come to the new television medium as early as 1947, when the first real soap opera, *A Woman to Remem-*

ber, was aired by New York's Dumont Studios. But the honor for the first sponsored daytime television serial went to CBS, *The First Hundred Years* in 1950. In 1951 Roy Winsor created two landmark soaps, *Search for Tomorrow* and a few months later *Love of Life*. *Search*, which switched from CBS to NBC in 1982, is still alive, but *Love of Life* bit the dust in 1980.

*Search* provided another landmark in that it introduced Mary Stuart in the pivotal role of Joanne, which she plays to this day. However, the character and the story line are no longer pivotal in the layers of storylines involving other characters — mostly young ones.

The only actress in a soap to outdistance Ms. Stuart in longevity is Charita Bauer, who has played the matriarch of the tentpole Bauer family in *Guiding Light* since the radio days of 1950.

The only soap to transfer successfully from radio to television, *Guiding Light* is still one of today's top-rated soaps. It celebrated its 45th anniversary this year and is the longest running continual show in the history of entertainment. Beginning on radio on January 25, 1937, on television on June 30, 1952, it was simulcast for two years in both media, with the same actors and scripts. It gave up the radio ghost in 1954.

Charita Bauer remembers how it was during the years of radio and then the simulcast. "Although radio had its pressures, there was a lot more time for fun. Radio was a gravy train and we didn't know it — we all thought we were working so hard because we were all trying our best always.

"When we did both the radio and the television show, there was a lot more pressure. We did the television show in the morning at Liederkrantz Hall and then we'd all walk down together to the CBS studios at 53rd and Madison to do the radio show. It was a breeze to do the radio after we'd already had our rehearsal and done the television show.

"When we went to television, there were staff additions. We had a makeup person, but not enough time to have it

done properly and we did our own hair, which meant mine usually looked like an unmade bed. At the beginning, wardrobe was very casual and I remember bringing my own clothing from home.

"Since television was a few steps closer to theater than radio, there was no problem for actors with theater experience to make the switch. But doing a 15-minute television show was not easy because, A, it was live and B, there were about two or three or maybe four people working on one day and it meant you had a lot more work to do within that period. But I was younger then and, speaking for myself, more lighthearted."

**T**he move to television changed more than attitudes. There were many ramifications and more attention had to be paid to production values, including sets, lighting and sound. Also changed was the earlier cavalier attitude to makeup, hair and wardrobe that Charita Bauer recalls. There was a rush to find people experienced in those fields. But no one would have believed back in those halcyon days that makeup artists would be just that — artists — and that an actor in a soap opera would be aged as Jack Betts was recently on *One Life to Live*; that an actor would be 'mummified' from poison gas as Robert Burton was in *Texas*; and that several actors would be 'frozen alive' as they were in *General Hospital*.

The technical experts were all part of the intricate path that led to soap operas as they are today — the darlings of the public and the network accounting departments. The long journey cannot, of course, be detailed in anything less than a volume. Only some of the highlights can be noted here.

Like the Broadway musical comedy, soap opera is a true American popular art form. It was created in Chicago by a handful of people whose names are now part of the recorded history of the genre. At about the same time, Frank Hummert, an advertising agency executive, and

Irna Phillips, a schoolteacher/actress turned writer, were working separately, developing the earliest soaps.

Ms. Phillips' *Painted Dreams*, aired in Chicago, was almost a prototype for the soap operas which were to follow and Ms. Phillips herself played one of the roles. The show, however, proved only a pioneering effort since it did not find a sponsor.

The earliest Hummert offering (written by Charles Robert Douglas Hardy Andrews), *The Stolen Husband*, was a failure, but Hummert, working with his future wife, learned how to produce serials. Their efforts proved successful in later years, when they created classics like *Just Plain Bill*, *The Romance of Helen Trent*, *Ma Perkins*, *Our Gal Sunday* and *John's Other Wife*.

Also writing soaps during the early radio years was Elaine Carrington, a successful magazine writer who created the long-running hits, *Pepper Young's Family*, *When a Girl Marries* and *Rosemary*.

In 1933, Irna Phillips introduced her first radio network serial, NBC's *Today's Children*. It was almost identical to the story and characters of her earlier *Painted Dreams*, which the courts decreed belonged to the Chicago Station WGN, where she had worked when she created it. Ms. Phillips was an innovator and in her creations like *Guiding Light*, *The Brighter Day* and *The Right to Happiness*, her story lines all grew out of characterization. She was also the first serial writer to introduce such professionals as doctors and lawyers into her stories, rather than the traditional blue-collar people.

Once the soaps came to television, Irna Phillips became the leading and most successful creator/writer. She produced a protégée, Agnes Nixon, who had developed as one of her dialogue writers. Mrs. Nixon, in addition to serving as a writer, created several of the longest-running and most successful television soaps, including *Search for Tomorrow*, *One Life to Live* and *All My Children*. But that was all still in the

future — as was the increasing use of staffs of dialogue writers.

When Irna Phillips waged a two-year running battle with owner/sponsor Procter & Gamble of *The Guiding Light*, to lengthen the 15-minute show to 30 minutes, they refused. To assuage their lady-with-the-golden-touch, they gave her the go-ahead to create a new half-hour show. The precedent-breaking *As the World Turns* was the result, and it proved an immediate and outstanding success. On the same day it started (April 2, 1956), Procter & Gamble premiered *The Edge of Night*, another phenomenon in soap opera history because its story lines concentrated on murder, mystery, suspense and political corruption. Today, those subjects are common on soaps, but were a rarity at that time.

After the phenomenal success of *World Turns*, length of the soaps became a major issue as the networks watched each other's moves very carefully. By 1968, all the daytime soaps were one-half hour long. In 1975, NBC took its *Another World* to one hour and followed with the stretching of *Days of Our Lives*. CBS, not to be outdone, took *World Turns* to one hour. In 1976, ABC, which had entered the television daytime sweepstakes as late as 1963 with *General Hospital* at 45 minutes, increased its *One Life to Live* to the same odd length. Eventually, both went to one hour.

In 1980, NBC experimented with the 90-minute format for *Another World*. When it proved a failure, they rolled it back to one hour, with a one-hour following spinoff, *Texas*. Today, only *Ryan's Hope*, *Search*, *Edge of Night*, *The Doctors* and *Capitol* remain as half-hour shows.

Lengthening shows meant more work for the writers and the number of dialogue writers increased. These writers work from the 'breakdown' of daily scenes from the long-term projected story created by the head writers. More directors were also needed and added to staffs. Using different writers and different directors created the problem of

coordinating the individual styles so there would be a smooth, unseamed continuity from one episode to another in the look, sound and overall style of the show. This became the responsibility of the head writers working with the producers.

**I**n addition to the show length, other aspects preoccupied the soap world. With the refinement of hardware, including cameras, sound equipment and the development of videotape, live shows gave way to tape. Mary Stuart remembers when *Search* went to tape.

"It was in 1968," she recalls. "We really just went live on tape because once we started, we didn't stop — we just went right through. There was no real difference then. The difference is now; we can stop tape and edit, the way they do in feature films. But in those former days, there was no way to edit. It didn't occur to anybody and besides, we had no budget for it. Also, we'd all been trained to do it live and we had that discipline. Nobody today thinks in terms of seven-page scenes, which were automatic for 26 years. Now scenes are short and fast and three pages is considered a long scene."

Although many soap opera veterans talk nostalgically about the good old pre-tape days of live shows, some, like Charita Bauer, are glad to see certain aspects of those days gone forever. "There were no cue cards or teleprompters in those days," she remembers, "but if we went up, as actors sometimes do, someone would throw us a line and we'd just go on. One day I had a scene with Gary Pillar, who was then playing my son, Michael, and one of us went up. It may well have been me, but I'll be honest with you, I don't remember because what followed was so horrendous, it wiped all the other details from my memory. Nobody threw us a line or said anything to fill in the void.

"Suddenly this nervous stage manager, who was never anywhere he was

needed at any time, and was then at the far end of the studio, started to shout out lines at us across the entire studio — and just kept on shouting. I'm sure inside the control room, they were pushing buttons to cut off his voice, but it was horrendous. I think that was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I don't know how we all got through the scene — obviously, we must have, but I don't remember any of it!"

Tape has obviously solved that type of problem, which in retrospect seems comical rather than horrendous. But tape was to change the medium in other ways. Producer Gloria Monty, credited with turning *General Hospital* from a patient ready for expiration to super-health as the number one leader in daytime when she took over the show in 1978, confirms that tape changed not only the working habits of daytime, but also its look.

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New technology did more than change studio shooting. It freed the soaps from the confines of the studio.

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"When I was with *The Secret Storm* in the early '50's," she reminisces, "we didn't have the use of one-inch tape, so we couldn't do the editing we do now. Tape enabled us to shoot film-style, so we could go from one set to another and have faster-paced scenes. We were able to get people out of the kitchen set and have many more people in scenes. We didn't have to go from one scene with two people to another scene with two people. Having the use of one inch tape and having our own editing machines has made a tremendous difference. Also, I use five cameras instead of the usual three, giving us greater freedom. We now have a better sense of flow and movement and in the one-hour format, we're able to tell much more story."

The new technology did even more than change studio shooting — it freed the soaps from the confines of the studio.

Tentatively at first, with short jaunts into neighboring streets and parks, the soaps left the traditional living room and kitchen sets. *As the World Turns* taped a wedding in a real church for two of the leading young people whose romantic storyline had become very popular. The venture was considered innovative and exciting at the time. New locations were sought and when Ryan's Hope went to Ireland for the wedding of Mary Ryan and Jack Fenelli, two storyline principals, the race was on!

After those early beginnings, the soaps have continued to roam the world. Since location shoots to the Caribbean and Bahaman Islands, as well as to states like Vermont, Texas, Arizona, Florida and California no longer create any ripple of publicity interest or excitement, globe-trotting has increased. To compete for audiences and the all-important ratings, crews and actors have been packed off to places like Paris, Greece, Switzerland and Hong Kong.

But Gloria Monty points out those trips don't necessarily have a direct effect on ratings. "Exotic remotes involving great logistics and costs are not necessary for the success of a show," she says firmly. "Our show has remained number one for quite a while without going on any foreign remotes. We haven't yet gone outside of California (the show is produced in Los Angeles). I go out only when I feel the story actually needs it because it just cannot be done inside."

"When Luke went on a hiking tour recently, we needed real sunlight, water and the feeling of fresh air, and there was no way in the world I could ever have done those scenes inside. We found Franklin Canyon, which was 15 minutes away, literally around the corner from us."

"Last summer, we even built our own island in the studio and it was so successful, we got countless calls from viewers asking where the island was because they wanted to go there."

But other soaps are willing to bear the discomforts and the costs. Soaps have

traditionally been the greatest source of net revenue to the networks because their production costs were lower than prime-time shows, returning a higher ratio of profit. Do the producers who decided to go abroad and deal with the costs, the logistics of transporting cast and crew and the difficulties posed by foreign governments' laws and regulations believe that the remotes get results? Producer Nick Nicholson, of *The Edge of Night*, has some answers and interesting opinions.

"We went to Switzerland to climax a story and it was effective," he says. "It was something that could not be done in the studio. Not only did it enhance the story, it enhanced the ratings. In our opinion, the expenditure for a remote, especially for one that far away, paid off. When the ratings went up for the period the scenes aired, we could only hope to hold on to the new viewers we had picked up."

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### From simple familial and romantic problems, the soaps went to relevant issues.

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"As for future remotes, it's a matter of evaluation. If there's an unlimited amount of money, a bottomless money well, so to speak, you can do remotes all the time. We do 250 shows a year, so to maintain the pace of doing remotes regularly, we'd have to add two extra units. But if you have a budget to maintain, you have to evaluate whether the remote is going to pay off. If other shows are going to spend more money on remotes, I don't know. I can only speak for *Edge* and *Edge* will only spend money on remotes if it pays off."

**A**nother noteworthy change occurred in subject matter. From simple familial and romantic problems, the soaps went to relevant issues. Agnes Nixon is credited as the bravest and most innovative exponent of real-life causes in soaps and has

created story lines ranging from teenage runaways and prostitution to solar energy and VD, as well as inter-religious marriages.

But other soaps, including the trend-setting, California-produced *The Young and the Restless* which premiered in 1973, dealt forthrightly with such subjects as mastectomy, rape, mental illness and incest. Women in soaps went from being housewives to doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists and business executives with all the attendant problems and traumas of those professions.

**A**nd of course sex, in all its guises — sometimes including even married love but always excluding homosexuality — has proven the hottest topic in the soaps. The broadening of sexual horizons in the soaps attracted the attention of the national print and broadcast media and involved even the non-soap watching populace in controversy.

ABC's catch phrase "Love in the Afternoon" was "anything goes time." Although total nudity has not yet been attempted, in *Days of Our Lives* a teenage actress in a pornography-modeling story line coyly turned her back to the camera and, looking over her shoulder, untied her bra strings. In *The Young and the Restless*, a young, nubile blonde, lying prostrate on the beach, had her husband playfully untie the string on her bikini bra. And in *Guiding Light*, the resident vamp/bitch tempted a reluctant suitor by "flashing" him. With her back to the camera, she dropped her fur coat, revealing bare shoulders. Then the camera panned the dropping coat to the floor and her bare legs.

CBS' *Capitol*, the newest addition to the daytime lineup, which started in March of this year, uses some of the raciest dialogue in soaps. Executive Producer John Conboy — who served in the same capacity for *The Young and the Restless* and changed the look and the tone of soaps forever — says: "I think less is more where sexuality is con-

cerned. It has to be very carefully produced, and I would rather do it in dialogue than in bed. You can get people more excited about a scene between two characters who want each other, if the desire is inherent in the dialogue and the story and the audience wants those two characters to be together, and if the scene is properly directed, than about a scene where you take off characters' clothes and throw them into bed together because you don't know what else to do with the scene.

"I think permissiveness, so far as the audience is concerned, hasn't changed all that much during the nine years since I put *Young and Restless* on the air. There is still a tremendous morality in our audience that I think you have to pay careful attention to. I think you can shake it around a little bit but you have to always know it's there."

Despite that, *Capitol* continues to do both bed scenes and highly overt sexual scenes. It was, after all, love and sex in the afternoon that made the soaps a favorite topic of conversation and made international stars of its actors. A highly praised but relatively unknown theater actor, Anthony Geary, who had appeared without a great stir in previous soap appearances, became a media hero.

In the past year, his picture graced the cover of every national magazine, filled the fan magazines and tabloids. He made news in feature stories as well as in gossip columns and appeared on most major television talk shows. His serial career was capped when he won the 1982 Emmy Award for Outstanding Performance as Luke Spencer in *General Hospital*. He became the most publicized and popular performer in the history of the medium.

In the female sweepstakes, glamorous Susan Lucci seems to be way ahead of the pack. A highly proficient actress in both comedic and dramatic scenes, she is perhaps the most instantly recognizable woman in daytime as Erica Kane in *All My Children*.

Comedy, which figures prominently

in story lines with both Susan and Tony, was never a strong point in the soaps. For a long time it was relegated to the low-key comedy of Stu and Marge Bergman in *Search for Tomorrow* (played respectively by Emmy Award-winning Larry Haines and the late Melba Rae). Comedy started to raise its welcome head more often with the introduction of the bumbling attorney Cliff Nelson (actor Ernie Townsend, *Edge of Night*), the even more bumbling blue-collar worker Floyd Parker (actor Tom Nielsen, *Guiding Light*) and Vivien, the maid (actress Gretchen Oehler) in *Another World/Texas*.

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Today, actors well-known in soaps moonlight on Broadway, in prime-time television and features and have been honored in all fields.

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Today comedy is alive and well, and in some cases already overdone and often forced. But the highlights of the new comedic trend in soaps are personified by Emmy Award-winning Dorothy Lyman as Opal Gardiner in *All My Children*, Tina Johnson (Lurlene Harper, *Texas*) and Diane Neil (Ruby Wright, *Texas*) who are daytime's answer to Lucy and Ethel and Laverne and Shirley.

**M**aking daytime respectable and taking it out of the range of smirking satire was effected when the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences initiated the Daytime Emmy Awards Show in 1974. This year's Ninth Annual Awards Show was telecast live from a leading New York hotel ballroom and drew a 33 share and a 9.3 rating in the Nielsens — healthy by any standards, especially since it was up against the number-one show, *General Hospital*.

Today, actors well-known in soaps moonlight on Broadway, in prime-time

television and feature films and have been honored in all fields. Helen Gallagher, who plays Maeve Ryan in *Ryan's Hope*, is a two-time Tony Award winner; veteran actor Henderson Forsythe, who plays Dr. David Stewart in *As the World Turns*, has taken a Tony Award home once and young Mary Gordon Murray (Becky Abbott, *One Life to Live*) won a Tony nomination for her starring role as Belle Poetrine in the revival of Neil Simon's musical *Little Me*.

For the past year, another phenomenon was noted in the soaps. Actors who had made their mark in other media were flocking to the soaps either in guest-star appearances or in short-term recurring roles. When Joan Crawford did a week's worth of appearances substituting for her ailing daughter Christine in *The Secret Storm* in 1968 (pre *Mommie Dearest* days), it was considered a rarity. Today, nightclub and Hollywood performer Sammy Davis Jr. has reprised a character role in *One Life to Live*, Hollywood's Zsa Zsa Gabor did a character role in *As the World Turns* and Broadway's Gwen Verdon did a character role in *All My Children*. Oscar nominee Howard Rollins (*Ragtime*) is playing a recurring part in *Another World* and all-media star Elizabeth Taylor spent a much-publicized week in *General Hospital*. And without exception, all have praised the daytime actors, calling their own stints in the medium the hardest work they had ever done, and the most demanding.

Other-media stars in soaps have started a lively controversy: do guest stars enhance, or distract from, the story lines the fans love so much? And while the controversy continues to rage, the trend continues to grow.

In fact, the whole trend of soap operas continues to grow. With their introduction to cable television, they may soon be taking over in that medium. Emmy Award-winning Douglas Marland, until recently head writer for *Guiding Light*, has created a soap, *A New Day in Eden*, for cable television. "It wouldn't work in

daytime network," he says, "because it's R-rated with lots of leeway in language and situation." Reports from those who have already seen the pilot reveal that it is one of the most interesting concepts in soaps today. Certain scenes have been shot two ways — with nudity and with no nudity. Decision on which to show will be made for the markets and times in

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Will soap operas eventually reach a saturation point, or are they here to stay indefinitely?

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which the show is aired. It may mean a new day for soaps and cable television — and through competition may change network soaps.

**W**ill soap operas ultimately reach a saturation point, or are they here to stay indefinitely? Mary Stuart remembers the prediction of Irna Phillips when it all began. "The soaps will eat each other," Irna told me. "Eventually, there'll be too many and they'll kill the golden goose."

Veteran Mary Stuart adds: "I think we're sort of doing that already. They're fighting each other, instead of supplying the market. I think soap operas are terribly important and people will always look for them and find them. They're like wonderful books to read and reread; they're close friends you never lose touch with."

The opinions are interesting, but are not definitive pronouncements. Anyone who could predict with certainty the future of soap operas could build a reputation and make a fortune.

All signs point to the fact that soaps are here to stay. They dominate daytime and even though many come to the end of the road, the networks prove their faith by having replacements continually in development. Nighttime shows like *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, *Knots Landing* and

*Flamingo Road* have been dubbed 'nighttime soaps'. Their enormous success proves there's a place for a real soap opera on nighttime. Fans who are not at home during the day tape their favorite shows on their VTRs and watch the cassettes at night. But why settle for the ersatz when the real thing could easily be transferred?

There's certainly an audience for it. Soaps which once attracted a predominantly 18-49-year-old female audience have gone far beyond that boundary audience. Additional viewers now run the gamut from retired men and women and the homebound handicapped and ill to high-school and college students and young teenagers. At personal appearances by soap stars, children as young as eight say they watch soaps with the approval and advice of their parents and that they understand and love them.

The respectability of soaps is evidenced by their inclusion in college seminars and writing courses and by their use in psycho-drama to help emotionally disturbed people. Soap watching, once an "Oh-no-no" with self-styled sophisticates and intellectuals is now out of the closet. Business executives, college professors, politicians and great entertainers watch soaps.

What the soaps do best — their strength and allure — is the limning of the human condition in all its aspects... the joys, the sorrows; the triumphs, the defeats; the ecstasy and the pain of the mind, the body and the spirit; family love and conflict; the interrelationship of the generations; secrets of the mind and heart; self-revelation and self-deception; treachery, deceit and hypocrisy; suspicion and trust; loneliness, alienation and friendship; hope and despair; the pain of loss, the gratification of survival; surprise/disappointment; winning/losing. And the ultimate — life and death.

And romance. Always romance and the many faces of love. Fans who can no longer recall the twists and turns in the *General Hospital* story lines of the Ice Princess and the Left-Handed Boy still

remember the romance of Luke and Laura. Fans who have forgotten the drug smuggling caper in *All My Children* still remember the romance of Phil and Tara. And the popular triangle of Steve/Alice/Rachel in *Another World* was resurrected this season, after seven years, in an effort to win back viewers.

Large doses of romance, fantasy, wish-fulfillment seasoned with some excitement that can be savored in the safety of one's home and the intensity and intimacy of one-to-one relationships of people one can identify with and care about—these are the forces which will keep the soap operas spinning and keep the audiences in the same orbit. ■

*Dorothy Vine is a magazine writer whose speciality is the television serial scene.*

“  
QUOTE...  
UNQUOTE  
”

*“We are in a profession that has the technical skills to do amazing things. We can show that there are enough rings of Saturn to name one for each living Astronomer. We can broadcast live from the moon, or anywhere on our globe. We can replay the winning Super Bowl touchdown from 14 angles. We can freeze a face at the moment of highest emotion. We can show the split second a bullet enters the President's chest. We can show, in color with fantastic clarity, the bombing of Beirut. We can do that. But so can a lot of others who are becoming more and more competitive for viewers' time.*

*It is time to begin to believe in the power of content quality. All the splash and flash of the production elements, the empathy of our anchors, the wonder of the technology — everyone has that. But, it can't match the moment when the content — words and pictures and sounds — comes together to give the audience the closest approach yet to a true representation of reality.”*

*RICHARD D. YOAKAM, panelist,  
Radio-Television  
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## THE FCC RULES ON FINANCIAL INTEREST AND SYNDICATION

**B**attle lines are drawn for what promises to be the major conflict of this decade in the television business. At stake are many hundreds of millions of dollars. Also at issue is control over the programs the public sees on television.

The Federal Communications Commission is taking another look at its 12-year-old rules, which eliminated the three television networks from holding financial interests in programs they do not produce (this went into effect August 1, 1972) and which forced them out of the program syndication business (effective June 1, 1973). Now, the networks want back in and the presumed beneficiaries of the rules — the creators and producers of the programs — are fighting any change.

Mark W. Fowler, a communications lawyer, came to the job of FCC Chairman with a deep commitment to de-regulation. This was in line with candidate Ronald Reagan's campaign pledge that he would do as much as possible to stop the Federal government's interference with business. Fowler entered the doors of the FCC with a promise to review those FCC rules and to eliminate all that had outlived their usefulness.

The review opened the doors for the networks to argue that the onrush of new technology — meaning bigger cable systems, over-the-air pay TV, communications satellites, video cassettes, video discs and the potential for many low power TV stations — had obliterated the

need for such restrictions. With so much new competition, the networks maintain, the nation needs a free market in which all comers compete equally. Archaic rules are making it difficult to compete with the new technologies for quality programming.

From Hollywood and New York have come vigorous protests. The producers and their supporters see the threat to the networks as being overblown. They argue that penetration of the new technology has not yet developed to a competitive level, nor will it achieve that position in the foreseeable future. It's too soon, they claim, to abandon the restrictions on the networks.

So on the one side there are the networks. On the other a coalition of producers, syndicators, the National Association of Television Program Executives, the Station Representatives Association and the Association of Independent Television Stations, together with a number of station groups.

Both sides have sought allies for the fight. At the time of writing, the Association of National Advertisers seemed to be leaning toward the producer's side. Managers of TV stations affiliated with CBS, on the other hand, had already endorsed the network's position.

The battle became urgent on July 21, 1982, when the FCC released its Proposed Rule Making with a review of network studies done by the Commission. Such studies date back to 1938 and in the interim the FCC has rarely

been without a group of scholars, economists and attorneys who studied the impact of networks upon broadcasting.

The Commission's carefully worded conclusion: "... the Commission finds it appropriate to consider whether the public interest would be served by the deletion or modification of the syndication and financial interest rule."

Any interested party was given until January 26, 1983 to file comments. (Under the unwritten rules in Washington, D.C., nearly all interested parties wait until the last possible moment to file: this keeps the opposition guessing as long as possible about the precise data and arguments the other will use.)

After all the arguments are received, the FCC allows a second round of comments in response (until April 26, 1983 in this instance.)

Specifically, the FCC asked about the present state of the program market; whether program producers need to be protected from undue network influence; the arrangements made between producers and networks to spread financial risks and rewards; whether the rules resulted in a balancing of bargaining power; the relationship between the rule and the consent decrees all three networks signed with the Justice Department; the effect of elimination of the rules upon independent TV stations; and the need for FCC regulation in this area.

Meanwhile, all competing sides continue to study, analyze and debate the merits of "The Latest Network Inquiry" (Docket 21049) that was begun in January, 1977. During its four-year existence the Special Staff, headed by two consultants and specialists borrowed from other FCC departments took careful notice of the Consent Decrees that all three networks had signed with the Department of Justice (The signing of a Consent Decree is not an admission of wrong-doing; only a promise to stop some practice that the Justice Department is willing to argue is illegal before a court). In this instance, the networks were prohibited from acquiring finan-

cial interest in programs from outside sources and were barred from the domestic syndication business.

The Special Staff concluded that while the networks were confined, "the producers (that) the rule was designed to protect are themselves powerful actors in today's program marketplace. The top ten prime time network program suppliers during the 1977-78 season were Universal, Warner, Spelling-Goldberg, Lorimar, MTM, Columbia, MGM, Paramount, Aaron Spelling and Twentieth Century-Fox."

The original Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR), which reduced the number of prime time hours that a network could occupy on an affiliated station, is not questioned. In effect, the local station owns 7:30 p.m., week nights and the networks say they have no intention of changing things.

Here are two views of this significant controversy. CBS/Broadcast Group President Gene F. Jankowski presents a network view for repeal of the rules. The case for retention is argued by Dr. George Back, formerly executive director of the National Association of Television Program Executives, who now heads his own independent syndication company. ■

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## Rules Serve The Public

BY GEORGE BACK

**A**ll of us want the same thing — a healthy thriving, growing, improving, meaningful television industry that accurately reflects the aspirations of our society. The society is more important than our business and should have the best. We can also agree on that.

The conflict arises over the best way to achieve these goals and, quite plainly, the best way is not found by stifling creativity, encouraging monopoly and denying the public access to the best and brightest minds the nation can

produce. Here, one can plainly see the dangers. The persons who conceive, who create and who execute the finest entertainment need some assurances that in the event their efforts bring forth that rarest of happenings, the big hit, they should reap the rewards.

Over the past 12 years, we have seen this industry grow, expand and reach for new dimensions. Choices available to the public have become greater without inflicting any real harm on the stockholders of the television networks. Indeed, the very networks that now claim to need blessed relief are the same networks that claim elsewhere — and without a change in FCC rules — that their future has never been brighter.

NBC President Grant Tinker recently was quoted in *Advertising Age* as saying that free TV will experience an 11 percent annual growth rate through 1990, attaining \$29 billion in revenues and staying ahead of its nearest competitor, Cable TV.

Even more ebullient was the CBS Vice President in charge of research for the CBS/Broadcast Group, David Poltrack. He said: "Television network affiliates will have nothing to worry about. They are now and will remain, at least until 1990, the dominant video medium in the U.S. Indeed... in dollar terms, their dominance will be greater than ever eight years from now."

Jim Duffy, President of ABC-TV, also appeared untroubled: "The picture of today's marketplace is a healthy and prosperous one for the networks." Appearing before the TV Academy, he forecast 1990 network revenues of \$14-15 billion, compared with the present \$6 billion. Future advertising revenues for cable systems, he added, would be little more than one-tenth of network 1990 revenues.

The networks want it both ways: Protection from any possible threat posed by the newer media, along with the right to be a participant in the newer media they claim is threatening them. This is what philosophy teachers call "circular illogic" and the networks have

used it skillfully before the FCC for decades, arguing — in the past — that pay TV would ruin the communications business, but always reserving the right to enter pay TV if it became successful.

The confident network leaders are secure in a knowledge of broadcasting history that the networks have the muscle to overpower the new media. This is a simple fact of life that has been with us since the FCC issued its Sixth Report and Order in 1952, skewing the allocation of channels in such a way that the three organizations that had provided network services in radio were certain to play exactly the same roles, with exactly the same results, in the new, exciting field of national television.

Even that assured place at the cash window isn't always enough. Stripped of verbiage, what the networks are saying is: "We put up the money; we take some of the risk and, therefore, we should be allowed to hold syndication rights in the show that we exhibit."

A look at the past may explain the future. The 1970 rules came into existence according to the 1970 FCC Report and Order, because: "The Commission found the networks' abilities to acquire subsidiary interests in the programs chosen for network distribution posed a conflict of interest for the networks in selecting between programs in which such rights could be obtained and potentially better programs in which such rights were not available.

"... we concluded that the presence of networks as significant domestic syndicators is inherently undesirable since it was thought that networks would thereby be in the position of selling programs to independent stations which would be competing for audience with local network affiliates."

In simpler language, program creators had complained about working in an atmosphere where "we have only three stores in which to sell our goods."

The Consent Decrees signed by all three networks contained four Justice Department assertions:

(1) Ownership and control of television entertainment programs broadcast during prime evening hours were concentrated among the three networks.

(2) Competition in the production, distribution and sale of entertainment programs, including feature films, has been unreasonably restrained.

(3) Competition in the sale of TV entertainment programs to the three networks by outside suppliers has been unreasonably restrained.

(4) The viewing public has been deprived of the benefits of free and open competition in the broadcasting of television entertainment programs.

NBC signed the agreement in 1978; ABC and CBS in 1980.

We are told that the networks have been handicapped in the marketplace, yet the networks have enjoyed an average of a 15 percent increase per year in the sale of time carried within programs produced by outside sources. Just why network advocates feel that they should share anything other than the very profitable sale of those minutes remains a mystery to me. An advertiser must pay \$130,000 to \$160,000 for a 30-second spot in a hit show, but no network has ever gone to a producer and offered him a share of the increased value of a spot in a show that he created. "What's mine is mine: What's yours is partly mine."

The issue to the public is diversity, often stressed as the key element in the FCC's determination of the "public interest, convenience and necessity." To those advocates of what they call the "free market," one must say that the restrictions on networks have fruitfully added to the competition. Oligopoly (competition among the few) is not only an ugly word, it is a condition that guarantees a stagnant industry. Competition among only the few puts a halter on innovation.

The three television networks already enforce an exclusive monopoly on production of network news and documentary programs. Under the cover of "control of content" and "network responsi-

bility," only the news departments of ABC, CBS and NBC can get into the reality field of national programming. If the rules are repealed, the monopoly will be network participation in syndications rights. Clearly, as in the past, a classic conflict of interest would condition program choice, particularly in the close-call situation.

Regardless of goodwill and even genuine efforts to retain objectivity, experience strongly suggests that financial imperatives must ultimately prevail over quality considerations.

Granted there are intelligent, conscientious program executives striving to build the best schedules for their networks — it is nevertheless a truism that a system built on three gatekeepers is built on a bottleneck that restricts the creative flow.

**T**he parade of additional consequences that can be depended upon to issue from the repeal of the rule is almost endless. On the station side, affiliates would be pressured into granting clearances they might wish to retain, putting them at a disadvantage when competing with the network in spot sales. Pricing would be determined by the network. Any station operator will tell you that a decrease in the number of options will drive up the price of what remains in the market. This means that programs will become more expensive.

Advertising revenue will be lost because a network, working in syndication, is in the position of controlling primary network dollars and secondary network dollars. A station's advertising revenues are tied closely to network sellout levels.

At the moment, networks are forbidden to sell any segment of local time or of being the sales representative for any station outside those they own themselves. Repeal of the rule brings the networks right back into the "rep" business, and this isn't even mentioned by the FCC Special Staff.

The head of the CBS Board of Affili-

ates outlined the options in a letter to affiliates, in which he gave the reasons for opposing, supporting or staying neutral about repeal of the rules, as reported by Maurine Christopher in *Electronic Media*. If the rules are lifted, he said, the networks could invest more in maintaining and/or improving programming. Perhaps.

Actually, repeal of the rules would permit paying less to the program producers. It would dampen the creative spirit, shrink the programming available to independents by reducing the number of program producers. Producers' access to the public would thus be severely restricted.

The second reason given to affiliates for supporting repeal is that the networks need "downstream revenues" to compete with HBO and other rivals for competitive programming; if these downstream revenues make the networks more profitable, they may stop pressuring affiliates for additional commercial or program time. Maybe then the networks would pay higher rates to affiliates. And, if the networks were making more money on conventional TV, software ventures may seem less attractive...

But the reason cited that should alarm both the FCC and the public is the final one: The networks, if allowed to get back into syndication, could help affiliated stations fight off in-roads of the independents, who score so well with viewers and advertisers with the choicest off-network re-runs that are scheduled against network shows.

Network managers are only human, and they would welcome a chance to "bundle" programs offered to stations on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Even now, the network owned and operated stations tend to control access programming, mainly because a producer finds it important to guarantee his program a place in the top markets in order to establish a base for a national project.

Those 15 stations that are owned by the three networks pose still another problem if the rule is killed. Would the

networks knowingly benefit any station that competes with them? Or would the network hold back programs that might do well against the network's own station?

Nearly everyone in the business of creating new programming knows that the number of syndicated program suppliers have grown under the FCC's rules. There were 122 such suppliers in 1971 and 1981 there were 184. The number of Primetime Access Program Producers has also increased: In 1971, there were 10; now there are 42.

I, personally, know many persons who would not have entered the program supplying business without the FCC's financial interest and domestic syndication rules. Many of them tell me that without the rules, they will be forced to get out of the business.

One can easily say "let the players play," only to recoil in horror when the largest, strongest or meanest players abuse and injure the smaller, weaker or gentler participants. For this reason, in America, every contest — from the two person competition in a boxing ring to the specialized mobs that contest a pro football match — is watched over by a neutral referee. The players are allowed to play, but none is given an unfair advantage.

When the FCC decided to receive comments on a proposal to change the rule, Commissioner Abbott Washburn advised caution. He wrote:

"In my opinion, the rule, up to now, has served the public interest. Rather than being concentrated in the three commercial networks, control of entertainment television production and distribution has been dispersed among multiple power centers. This has resulted in an increase in the number of strong independent producers and the birth of new firms engaged in distribution and syndication. The viewing public has benefited by a wider choice of prime time TV fare.

"Thus, the programming market, in my view, during the decade of the rule's existence, has achieved a healthy

balance. All parties involved have been busy and prosperous. The amount and diversity of programming available to the viewing audience has steadily increased."

In other words, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." ■

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## The Rules Have Failed to Work

BY GENE JANKOWSKI

**O**ne would expect much of the debate about repeal of the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules to be partisan, but it has also become heavily laden with misinformation, speculation and invention, and there is no need for this. Whether the Rules are to stay or go, it is in everybody's interest to have the decision reached with a clear view of what is involved, and what is not. To that end, I would like to make a number of points.

Most importantly, it was the Commission's own Network Inquiry Staff which found that the rules have not only failed to work, but have actually had a perverse effect. For example, diversity of program supply to the networks has not increased; it has declined. In 1970, before the rules were adopted CBS purchased prime time series from 25 suppliers. By 1980, with the rules in effect for eight years, the number of suppliers had dramatically shrunk by over half to 12.

In 1970 the top eight suppliers of prime time series programs to CBS provided 54 percent of the schedule. By 1980 the top eight had increased that to 97 percent of CBS prime time series. Clearly this is not the effect the FCC intended or the creative community had anticipated.

Why did this increased concentration of program supply happen? In large part, because the Financial Interest

Rule prevents networks from dealing directly with producers as a source of financing for program development. Because we do not have the flexibility to participate in the profitability of a program over its entire usable life, we do not have the ability to offer program producers more than a flat network license fee. This license fee in itself cannot be offered as risk-capital. That is what removal of the rule is all about. Repeal would immediately increase by at least three the number of sources available to producers for venture financing of a program proposal.

As the debate rages on, a number of emotionally appealing misstatements have been repeatedly made in opposition to repeal of the rules. I would like to correct a few of the major items of the misinformation which are currently circulating.

*The FCC adopted the syndication rule because "without restraint (the networks) abuse their power.*

*Comment:* This is not correct. The FCC's adoption of the syndication rule was not based on any documented anti-competitive behavior by the networks, nor were any abuses demonstrated by the FCC. In 1970 the three network share of the syndication market was slightly over 10 percent and there was no finding of network dominance. In the late 1970's, the FCC concluded again: The "market was competitively structured prior to (the rules') imposition"...

"Our analysis shows that the Commission's regulation of program supply has largely failed to achieve the Commission's stated objectives"...

The Rules have "disrupt(ed) an efficient risk-sharing arrangement between networks and program suppliers and increas(ed) concentration in program supply"...

*The networks admitted abuses by signing consent decrees with the Justice Department.*

*Comment:* This is not true. In the words of the Justice Department, the consent decrees were agreed to "without . . . any evidence against or admission by any of the networks" with respect to any of the antitrust allegations brought by the Government. And that wasn't boiler plate.

*The "rules were established based on clear, documented records of economic fact."*

*Comment:* This is untrue. The documented record, as established by the Network Inquiry Staff, showed that the rules have failed to meet their objectives and they constitute a disservice to the public interest. The staff also indicated that increased concentration in program supply to the networks most likely had developed since the rules were passed.

*The networks argue that the new technologies threaten their businesses and that the syndication rule should therefore be repealed.*

*Comment:* The new technologies undermine the reasoning on which the rules were based. The rules penalize the broadcast networks but allow other companies to compete unrestrained in the provision of television entertainment across a variety of technologies.

*The networks might coerce affiliates into accepting syndicated programs or discriminate against independent stations in favor of affiliates.*

*Comment:* These accusations have no basis in business practice or business sense. Before the syndication rule, independent stations actually acquired a greater percentage of their syndicated programming from syndication units of the broadcast networks than did network affiliates. In any event, there is no evidence that the networks forced affiliates to accept network-supplied syndicated product.

*The networks are also accused of potentially withholding television programs from syndication.*

*Comment:* The Network Inquiry Special Staff concluded such abuses had not occurred before the rule was passed. However, even assuming networks could invest in syndication rights, they would obviously want to syndicate programs promptly to recover those investments.

*Based on the unfounded "warehousing" accusation, it is claimed that Hollywood guild members would be denied residual payments because the networks would have "control of residuals."*

*Comment:* It was only after the Screen Actors' and Writers' strikes that these guilds secured shares in pay television and home video revenues. The studios against which the guilds struck are leading suppliers of programming to pay television and home video industries.

*It is asserted that if the syndication rule were repealed that the networks "will own everything."*

*Comment:* Off-network programs distributed by the movie studios were among some of the most successful in syndication before the rule was passed. M\*A\*S\*H — one of the most successful off-network programs in the history of syndication — is a case in point. It was licensed to CBS by Twentieth Century-Fox before the syndication rule was passed, yet Twentieth Century-Fox retained syndication rights. Repeal would simply allow both producers and the networks to negotiate unimpeded for syndication or financial interests.

In sum, what we seek is a careful review of the facts at issue. There is, for example, a "before and after" record. There is also the exhaustive FCC Network Inquiry Staff study, which cannot be said to represent any of the special interests involved in the debate. We are confident that any such review will reveal quite clearly that repeal of the rules will work in the best interest of the broadcaster, the creative community and the public. ■

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## **THE REAL CAMPAIGN: HOW THE MEDIA MISSED THE STORY OF THE 1980 CAMPAIGN**

by Jeff Greenfield

New York, Summit Books, 1982, \$15.95

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### **BY THOMAS E. PATERSON**

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For some time now, scholars have argued that the news media fail to emphasize the issues of presidential election politics. For example, my studies of the 1972 and 1976 campaigns (*The Unseeing Eye, The Mass Media Election*) revealed that reporters were intent on covering the horse race. Election news in each of these campaigns contained nearly twice as much information about the candidates' competitive positions, strategies, and glad-handing as it did about their policy stands, leadership abilities, and public records. The conclusion from this was that the news media were doing little to help the electorate make its choice. With so much of the news focused on the election as a race, voters were not getting much of an indication of the candidates' leadership and policy directions.

This perspective on the media's handling of campaigns has found an ally in a journalist: Jeff Greenfield, commentator on the CBS Morning News. His *The Real Campaign* describes in detail how

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Thomas E. Patterson is chairman of the Political Science Department of Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship.

journalists downplayed the issues of the last election.

Greenfield's version of the argument lacks the precision of academic studies, which have depended on detailed content analyses of election news to document the media's lack of concern with substantive matters. And Greenfield's assertions are made without guidance from audience surveys, which scholars have found invaluable in pinpointing the actual effects of news coverage on the public. Nevertheless, Greenfield's analysis is penetrating and thorough, as well as being enjoyable to read.

Greenfield relies on case studies to make his argument. He proceeds chronologically through the 1980 campaign, beginning with the Bush, Kennedy, Reagan, Anderson, and Carter nomination campaigns, then reviewing the Republican and Democratic conventions, and finally analyzing the Anderson, Reagan, and Carter general election efforts. From these examinations, he concludes that the news media, in addition to being obsessed with the competitive aspect of an election, have much less impact on its outcome than is commonly assumed. If not ineffectual, the media are, in Greenfield's eyes, far from being the powerful election force that they typically are said to be.

Take, for example, the chapter devoted to George Bush's primary election strategy. Bush's aim was to take advantage of the "politics of momentum." This notion, as Greenfield outlines it, holds that a candidate, by

winning early in Iowa or New Hampshire, will gain the media attention and psychological aura that will make his candidacy irresistible to voters. Allegedly, this was the process that swept Jimmy Carter to the Democratic nomination in 1976.

But the strategy did not gain nomination for Bush in 1980, and Greenfield identifies the reason: unlike the Democrats in 1976, the 1980 Republican race included a candidate who had a substantial and loyal following within the party. This candidate, of course, was Ronald Reagan. Despite the fact that Bush struck first by winning the Iowa caucuses, Reagan won out. So much for the politics of momentum. Ditto for the myth of the all powerful media.

Each of Greenfield's chapters is solidly constructed and tightly reasoned. He obviously spent hundreds of hours pouring over television news tapes and newspaper copies in gathering the raw material for his book. And surely, his two major conclusions—that the media are obsessed with the competitive aspects of election politics and have less power than is usually claimed—cannot be argued.

Nevertheless, as polemics invariably do, Greenfield overstates his case at several points. Indeed, what he says of other theories can be said of his: "The problem with . . . these [other] theories, as with so many other notions about politics and the media, is that they do not match up with the facts—or, rather, they each match up with some facts, but not with others."

An example is his conclusion about the politics of momentum. Only in a gross sense—the fact that he did not win nomination—does Bush's candidacy invalidate the momentum theory. Bush was a nobody until winning the Iowa caucuses, and then quickly was a candidate to be reckoned with. Bush trailed Reagan 32 percent to 6 percent in the polls just before the Iowa caucuses. Within days of their completion, however, the polls indicated Bush was tied 27-27 with Reagan. The only intervening

event was the Iowa encounter and the floodtide of publicity that the news media centered on Bush when he won there. The momentum he gained from this may not have gained him the nomination, but it propelled him into the position—one he kept—of Reagan's chief opponent, a position that eventually persuaded Reagan to select Bush as his running mate. The Vice-Presidency of the United States is not a bad consolation prize for a man who previously had not been able to win even a statewide elective office.

There is another slightly bothersome aspect of Greenfield argument. He commits the classic sin of journalists—namely, thinking that the news media can organize public opinion. In his final chapter, he asserts that the press can guide the voters to their rightful choice of a President. What is needed, he says, is a determined effort by reporters to "search for the real campaign" and to convey it faithfully to the public.

Almost alone among journalists in this century, Walter Lippmann has understood the fallacy of this view. He saw that the public's fate rests inevitably on its political institutions. When these are flawed, as our electoral system surely is, the public's influence will be inconstant and muted. "The press is no substitute for institutions" wrote Lippmann. "It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and interruptions."

Nonetheless, Greenfield's book is a necessary corrective on traditional journalistic views of presidential election campaigns and the media's influence on their outcomes. Its exaggerations are minor compared with its insights. *The Real Campaign* deserves a full and careful reading. ■

## **TV AND TEENS, EXPERTS LOOK AT THE ISSUES**

**Edited by Meg Schwarz,  
Action for Children's Television**

*Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., \$13.95*

### **BY RAY HUBBARD**

Issues indeed! Adolescents are what the experts are looking at in this fascinating book (despite a pompous title which is enough to frighten away any self-respecting broadcaster.) But teenagers do watch television—some twenty-three hours a week—and broadcasters, who spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on audience research, could do worse than rush right out and plunk down thirteen-ninety-five on this book. If they are parents of teenagers, it will be an absolute revelation and may well change their lives.

*TV and Teens* is a well organized series of short, lively essays that get right to the point. All too frequently the point is that broadcasters are neglecting our adolescents, but we already knew that. What is really interesting is the way that an examination of our young is also a broad look at the contemporary family, our culture and our relationships. The essays cover every aspect of teenage life from fast food to sex and job opportunities.

ACT has assembled a top-notch group of experts who contribute in their fields. The contributors range from broadcasters such as Norman Lear and Squire Rushnell to minority advocates like Topper Carew to a long list of physicians, nutritionists and sociologists. Tucked in-between are authors of best-selling books for adolescents, lawyers, journalists and reporters. There is even a piece written by a Grey Panther.

A powerful theme emerges again and again—the search for identity and role

models. One authority states that an adolescent's prime danger is identity confusion and that they find little help from television finding as they do only the Fonz or Laverne. There is little attempt to portray teenagers that are not some script writer's idea of a stereotype. No wonder that there is a large teen audience for *General Hospital*. At least the young people on the soaps, though caught in the toils of plot, have somewhat human reactions. Joan Lipsitz of the Center for Early Adolescence has said that the media "present insulting stereotypes of adolescents that would be unacceptable were they applied to racial or ethnic groups."

Now that the NAB Code, with its archaic, Comstockian prohibition against the advertising of contraceptives, has been officially abandoned, perhaps broadcasters will take a deep breath and a new look at such commercials. At least they should take a look at the essay written while the code was still in effect by attorneys Harriet Paul and Eve Paul.

Over a million young women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen become pregnant each year. Most of them are unmarried and most of the pregnancies are unintentional. Despite appalling statistics, the Code persisted in ignoring the problem. As the authors wrote, "One argument in support of the code prohibition is that television reaches children and adolescents. This argument, however, reflects an ostrich-like attitude about teenage sexuality. It has been wrongly assumed that youngsters who do not know how to protect themselves from pregnancy will not engage in sexual activity. Statistics prove the folly of this view... U.S. teenage childbearing rates are among the world's highest."

A careful reading of *TV and Teens* reveals that beside the million unwanted pregnancies, the runaway rate has doubled since 1970. Young people are starting to drink at the age of twelve. Almost everyone has experimented with drugs at one time or another. Teens have the highest rate of poor nutrition among any age group. Suicide is the

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Ray Hubbard, long associated with Group W and Post-Newsweek Stations, now heads his own company, Unicorn Projects, Inc., currently producing *Castles*, based on the David Macaulay book, for PBS.

second leading cause of death among teens. Perhaps the broadcasting industry doesn't know that one of its audiences is in trouble, overlooked, ignored, underserved. This thoughtful collection will give them some first-rate research and even some helpful suggestions of what television and radio can do to help.

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## **SIGN-OFF: THE LAST DAYS OF TELEVISION**

by **Edwin Diamond**

*MIT Press, 273 pages, \$17.50*

## **THE CRYSTAL BUCKET**

by **Clive James**

*Jonathan Cape, 238 pages, \$11.95*

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## **BY HARRIET VAN HORNE**

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For your media shelf, two excellent books. Each, in its way, is instructive, shrewd, cranky and, in the case of *The Crystal Bucket*, hilarious. Assaying both books, the temptation to quote is overwhelming.

Diamond's book takes on TV news, the electronic church, sex in soap opera and political campaigns. It's the work of an honest, troubled critic who believes that TV can be better than it is. One may quarrel with the sub-title, however. *The Last Days of Television* is not only misleading, it falls into the category Diamond rightly despises—the tease, the come-on, the phoney bait. Nowhere in the book does he predict the demise of television. He is, rather, taking a hard look at TV in its prime and forecasting a future in which the industry will see its economic base shifting as new technologies fragment the audience.

Cable, video discs, home cassettes, satellites, dish antennae, pay TV—all will combine to alter the character and content of our daily viewing. "But it will take years for all this to happen", the author concedes. In the meantime, he

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Harriet Van Horne, TV critic and columnist, is contributing editor of *Television Quarterly*.

expects the networks will adjust to changing tastes. Let nobody expect network TV to fade away like vaudeville in the late '20s.

The focus on this book is mainly on news and informational programming. Source material came largely from the News Study Group of the political science department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The NSG archives include 1000 hours of catalogued tape going back to the Eisenhower-Stevenson campaign of 1952.

Edwin Diamond has no patience with those who would dismiss television as too ephemeral to merit scholarly study.

"To understand the what, how and why of television is to begin to understand the complex, contradictory workings of our society, particularly our public life", he writes. "To look at television is... to look at ourselves, today and tomorrow."

As a veteran journalist (*Newsweek*, *The New York Daily News*, the *Washington Post*), Diamond is certainly qualified to pass judgment on the way TV covers the days of our lives. His chapters on TV news are by far the best in the book. He is particularly disturbed by the trend to "disco news". That's his vividly accurate term for journalistic "hype", for the frenetic pacing of stories that can be delivered in a single breath.

In blunt terms, Ed Diamond can't stand news that's packaged with a disco beat, i.e., quick (15 second) sound bites, computer graphics. His lip curls at the thought of a director in the control room snapping his—or her—fingers and muttering "Hit it!"

To be sure, we do not encounter "disco news" on the networks' evening roundup—not yet, anyway. So far "disco news" is a corruption limited to local stations. Responsible for the technique, the author asserts, are imperfectly educated young people who spent their formative years beside the small screen.

"Cronkite, Chancellor, Reynolds and the executives who have nurtured them over the last thirty years... came from newspapers, wire services or magazines",

Diamond points out. "They were trained in the print information model."

It is this older generation, we are advised, that gave TV news its dignity, credibility and prestige. He despairs of the generation that has caught the falling torch.

Young TV newsmen (and women) lack the seasoning that can only come with apprenticeships involving the printed word. All they know is "the world of the fast-paced two minute 'stand-upper' and the ten second 're-act.'"

In bolstering his thesis, author Diamond is not adverse to naming names. He calls Tom Snyder a "para-journalist"—a useful term—and adds that Snyder's typical notion of high-level, moral debate "involved two parish priests arguing about whether slain underworld figure Carmine Galante should be accorded a Catholic burial."

Is Diamond making a reasonable complaint about TV news in general? A defender of the medium might say that news coverage has grown more superficial in recognition of the rising illiteracy and shrinking attention span of the TV audience. Even so, Mr. Diamond's questions are valid. Why, he wonders, must audience attention be flogged so frantically, even on a big news day?

TV news executives, in Diamond's view, have a distorted picture of the audience. He insists that there is a thoughtful, knowledgeable public out there, avid for facts, not hokum, not jokey weather forecasts, not two minute interviews that fail even to open up a subject.

Of Ted Turner's snappy, streamlined CNN—all news, 24 hours a day—Mr. Diamond says, "I have seen the future and it doesn't work—yet."

Granting that CNN offers more news than the networks, often getting there first with live coverage, critic Diamond still finds CNN a disorganized mess. The correspondents, all but Dan Shor and a few others not shaped by the video age, write badly, he observes, and their reports "lack depth", as well as proper syntax. Some of them dress badly (buttoned-up vests, no jackets) and they mis-

pronounce the most commonplace words.

On virtually every page of *Sign-Off* there is a judgment, a prediction or a proposition one either hails as profound or disputes as ornery and extremist. That may be the charm of this book.

□

The irreverent Clive James, author of *The Crystal Bucket*, was TV critic for the *London Observer* from 1968 until very recently. Now he has crossed the street to become a TV writer and commentator, embracing that which he so often deplored.

And such deploring! The collection under review here is wildly funny and eminently sensible. It is neither insular nor too special for the Yankee reader. Mr. James has watched his share of American TV, some of it via imports, some of it on his regular visits to these shores. He is, admittedly, a snob in his tastes. When a program delights him, he all but weeps for joy. Unlike most TV snobs, he has an eye for the excellence that is sometimes found in regularly scheduled commercial programs.

"*The Rockford Files* is consistently engaging and often very sharply written", he notes. "Even *Charley's Angels* has some sort of virtue, if only as an indication of the true depth to which feminism has penetrated the American networks."

Toward another American import he is less respectful. "I came to mock *Dallas*", he writes, "but I stayed to pray. In how many directions could Sue-Ellen move her mouth? Which of the four ladies would be wearing the bra next week? Would Jock's love for Miss Ellie survive her mastectomy?"

Once in a while, we are graciously informed, the American TV product surpasses the British; our "documentary dramas" take special honors in *The Observer*. *Washington Behind Closed Doors* and *Blind Ambition* struck him as first-rate but impossible to duplicate in the British milieu. Then comes this utterly fascinating observation:

*"In America, where everything is out in the open, the framework of a screenplay is already there in the Congressional Record. The naive candor of open government survives onto the fictional treatment, giving it the freshness of an adventure story."*

James is particularly good on David Frost's interviews with Richard Nixon. At last, he writes, Nixon was getting started on his true career—show biz. Both Nixon and Frost, he observes, are "role players".

"At a level too deep for speech, they understand each other well", says a particularly perceptive passage. "Frost knew he could talk as toughly as he liked, and Nixon would go on sitting there. Nixon knew he could talk any nonsense that came into his head and Frost would still not call the deal off. Neither man is capable of doubting that an historic occasion should be a performance."

When it comes to scathing reviews, James has no peer. But—and it's an important 'but'—he is funny. He gives the back of his hand to *The Incredible Hulk*, the Miss World contest, the Academy Awards and *Jesus of Nazareth*. (Of the latter, "Oodles of serenity but not a hint of a nimbus. . .")

Casting a cold eye on U.S. infiltration of British TV, James writes, "If you took the violence out of American television, there wouldn't be much left. And if you took American television out of British television there wouldn't be much left, either. Without imported series our programme planners couldn't fill their schedules. Whether schedules ought to be filled is another question."

Visiting Chicago, critic James wrote home to his readers, "If only the quiz shows were the worst programmes, American television would be merely disgusting. There are, however, the evangelists, any one of whom is enough to make you fall to your knees praying to see a quiz show. . ."

Jimmy Swaggert, a Canadian TV preacher, merits a direct quote: "Two prostitutes off the street, and they *knew!*

They knew when they got saved. You gonna know when you get saved, you gonna know, you gonna know. . ."

Jimmy, we are told, looks like a quiz show host—and that's not exactly the desideratum in looks. "Each quiz show host looks as if a team of cosmetic dentists had capped not just his teeth but his whole head. On top of the resulting edifice flourishes a wad of hair transplanted from the rear of a living buffalo. . . A quiz show host is as ageless as a Chinese politician. . ."

That's the bawdy, irreverent James. He can also write brilliantly about music, Shakespeare, cricket, politics and the idiocies of game shows—"a formula too dead for variations." After a while, James' cool eye notes, "the spectacle ceases to be human."

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## COMMUNICATIONS TOMORROW: THE COMING OF THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

*Bethesda, MD, World Future Society,  
1982, 160 pages, \$6.95, paperback only*

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### BY DAVE BERKMAN

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*"If a picoprocessor could be combined with memory of comparable speed and compactness, and the resulting picocomputer were implanted in a person's skull and interfaced with the brain, that person could have more computer power than exists in the world today."*

*Communications Tomorrow* from which the quotation above is taken, is an anthology of articles which have appeared in *The Futurist*, the journal of the World Future Society.

Like that little girl of child rhyme fame, this book can be—and often is—very, very bad; and occasionally even horrid.

So bad, that in one instance, a contributor (embarrassed by the company

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he's keeping?) warns us:

*"Unfortunately, many futurists... appear so eager to know something that others don't that they rush headlong into 'revelation.' And there is a regrettable tendency toward what the ancient Greeks called hubris—the kind of reckless arrogance that makes a human think he is the equal of the gods."*

But—also unfortunately—this is from the same contributor who, a few paragraphs earlier, has just gone off on Standard Futurist Rhetorical Rap #14, about how

*"The people who control information—control access to it, control understanding of it, control interpretation of it—are the people who will be the gatekeepers in the new age."*

The microprocessor—that little doohickey on which most of the future-casting in this anthology rests—is a neat device. And so were the internal combustion engine and the broadcast receiver—the two 'technologies' of the 20th Century which *did* make for significant change in our lives. But that's because what *they* did is make for *reasonable* extensions of what we are all about. We could go somewhere quicker; and we could be informed and entertained while going, or while at home.

The difference between the car and the airplane, (or the radio and the TV receiver) and the microchip, is that whereas the former have been employed only up to those capacities which made for such reasonable use, futurecasters are projecting uses of the chip which, while possible, go far beyond any practical applications. What futurecasting projectors of the ultimate microcircuitry forget, is that a series of chips with 64,000—or, pretty soon, 256,000—bits of random access memory (RAM), even if they can be produced and sold for only \$50 each, may have no more practical potential than would the equally achievable 12,000 horsepower engine in our family car. Even if I can soon buy the equivalent of the late 1960s IBM 360

for a few hundred dollars, whatthehell am I going to do with it?

Indeed, as one contributor states. "It is hard to imagine what we might do with the equivalent of 10 large computers compressed to the size of a wristwatch." (True to futurecaster-form, this does not prevent him from going on for three, 3-column pages about what he can imagine.)

The operating assumption of most futurecasters seems to be, if the capacity is there, you must conjure up a way to use it *all*—every single bit. Thus, in another essay in this book, after "Bill" uses his home computer to work out some finances, his wife, "Susan," is compelled to go through an exotic computer exercise to plan that evening's meal in a kind of Parkinsonian scenario—in which a trivial task expands to fill computer capacity—we follow Sue through the following:

COMPUTER: Quick, slow cooking, or prepared?

SUSAN: Quick.

C: Fish, chicken, beef, or meatless?

S: Chicken.

C: American or other?

S: General.

C: Familiar?

S: Yes.

C: Expense?

S: Moderate.

C: Your files show you have cooked the following dishes two or more times during the last year: chicken Tarragon, Chicken Kiev, Quick spaghetti with soup and bacon, Quiche Lorraine.

S: Can Chicken Kiev be cooked in the microwave?

C: Yes.

Just how *did* our meals 'get planned' before the advent of the 64k RAM chip? How did we sustain ourselves when what we ate was based on little more than, "I haven't made chicken and rice for a couple of weeks now. Let's have that tonight"?

In short, the problem with so much futurecasting—as is also true of so much

of current writing about the trendy, TV-related "new technologies"—is that it too often makes the uncritical leap from that which *can*, to that which *will*.

In all fairness, the 25 selections included in *Communications Tomorrow*, divide, roughly, into two types: the passionate; and the dispassionate.

It is the 'passionate' which make the leap from *can* to *will*. The 'dispassionate' articles stand back and look to some practical application of electronic microprocessing.

Thus, for example, one, on the role of paper in a VDT world, opens by noting that even in a demonstration 'paperless' office, you "cannot help noticing that in the midst of all the wonderful machines stands a wastebasket..." This piece then goes on to make some reasonable predictions as to what will be stored electronically, and what will always need to be made available in hard copy on plain old paper.

Another article, on libraries, runs counter to most futurecasting in that it does not dismiss the book as an anachronism. The library of 2010, this selection predicts, "will not be an unfamiliar place to a present-day librarian because the book collection will still dominate." The major role of the computer will be in cataloging and in providing bibliographic resources.

Still another article looking at computer and cybernetic applications in business, makes some reasonable predictions about the role these can play in manufacturing.

And a piece on VCRs predicts they will become what, in fact, they have turned out to be: "a way to control which programs people watch and when they watch them..."

These are the "dispassionate."

The "passionate" compose not sonnets, but prosaic jargon, such as: "The information revolution is upon us. What steel, petroleum, and the induction motor were to the industrial revolution, computers and semiconductors will be to the post-industrial society."

According to this same writer, "By

1976...50%—fully one-half [of the American workforce]—were in information." That's "in information"—not service, a separate category, which he specifically asserts accounts for another 17%.) Since this is 1982, and this writer insists that those of us "in information" in the year 2000 will total 66% of the workforce, this means that today something over one-out-of-every-two-people we ask on the street, in a restaurant, or passing us in the shopping center mall, will answer "Yes," when asked, "Hey, are you employed 'in information'?"

This unchallenged 'employed-in-information' gambit is one of the favorite gimmicks of the futurists. But stop for a moment, and ask yourself—even if we define "information" to mean "data," and we include every Visa and Mastercard posting clerk, every first grade-through-college teacher, and every secretary, how do we come out remotely close to 50%? (In a time when garbage collectors become "sanitary engineers," then I guess that any of us who, in the course of our work, have to talk at sometime to someone—i.e., communicate information—are, ergo, "in information.")

If even 1/10th of the mainly swell things predicted in the articles which make up this book come to pass—then the future will be a really great time in which to live... I can hardly wait. ■



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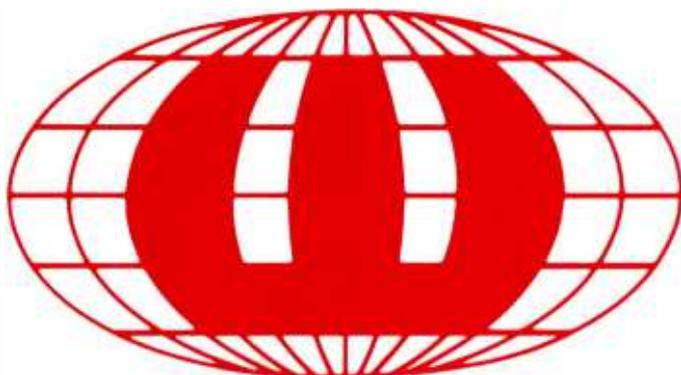


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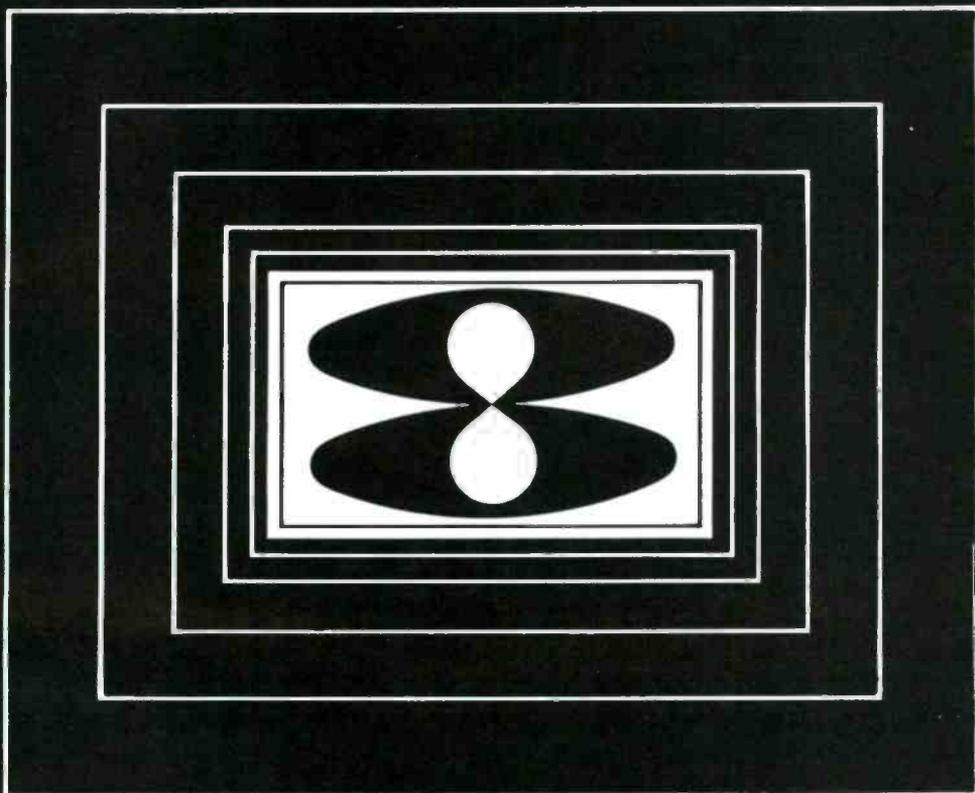
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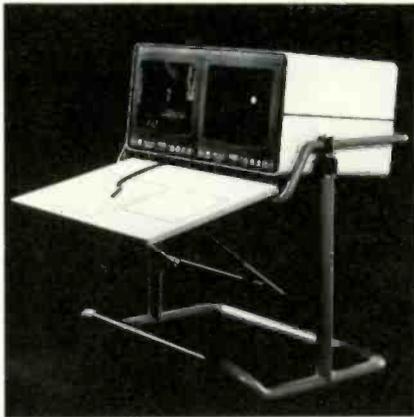
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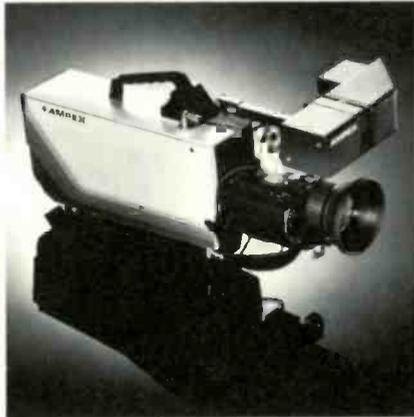
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