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Edward R. Murrow on the CBS Reports program "Harvest of Shame."

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Reuven Frank: An Appreciation

Reuven Frank did not become the President of NBC News because he wanted to. He did it because he had to. | **By Richard C. Wald**

Itall started in 1967. Julian Goodman, who ran the News division on a daily basis, was promoted in the largest single jump in television corporate history from Executive Vice President, News, to President of NBC. Bill McAndrew, the head of NBC News was ill and they both put the arm on Reuven to take on the job of executive vice president “just for a few months.” He was perfectly happy to stay forever as Executive Producer of *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*. They promised he could go back.

Then the world blew up.

Bill McAndrew died soon after, in 1968, the year of Lyndon Johnson’s decision not to run, campus riots, Vietnam protests, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, with a Presidential election thrown in. Reuven was forced into staying on as President of NBC News.

It gave him enormous clout for a while. Once, in 1968, when he had booked an hour to explain the post-Johnson political landscape, the head of the entertainment division came to tell him that a beer company wanted the same hour and the network was

going to give it to them. Reuven just stared at the man and the five assistants who came with him. He never said a word as they all explained how good it would be for the company. Then they looked at him. He looked back. They went over the arguments again. He said nothing. Finally, the entertainment guy got up and led his troops out saying, “God damn it, you are not a company man! There will be consequences.”

And he was right. After a while, the consequence was that the head of the entertainment division went away but News, and Reuven, stayed.

The man who began his career at NBC watching newsreel cameramen and editors plying their craft in a warehouse of a building on 125th Street, established many of the rules we all played by. He didn’t listen to fools but he did listen to everyone who worked for him.

He never intended to be in broadcasting. He was born in Canada in 1920 and the bachelor’s degree he ultimately got (at City College) was in social science. In World War II he rose to the rank of sergeant and he secretly liked it. But after he graduated from

the Columbia University School of Journalism, he went into newspapers. As he told the story, the city editor of the Newark (N.J.) *Evening News* hired him because Reuven's student-written stories were double spaced. The city editor liked double-spacing. The only reason he left newspapering was because he got married to Berenice and wanted a few more nice things. A friend in the then brand-new television-news business offered him a job that paid about \$20 a week more than *The Evening News*.

But all the preceding is merely biography. Once at NBC, he became Reuven Frank. It was the era of formation, when the people in it were figuring out how it should work. His memo in 1963, written when Huntley-Brinkley went from 15 minutes to a half hour, fixed little things like how you should do reverse shots and cutaways and big things like the point of television (it's the pictures) and its power: "[It] is not in the transmission of information but in the transmission of experience."

He loved a good narrative in pictures and it may be that the thing of which he was proudest was "The Tunnel," the only documentary ever to win both an Oscar and an Emmy. It was about a group of 59 determined East Berliners escaping into the west. The State Department tried to kill it. Advertisers ran for the hills. And NBC put it on, to its glory and its growth.

His was a career of constant achievement. He invented the system of sub-control rooms for conventions (he said he saw it first on an aircraft carrier) that controlled Chet Huntley and David Brinkley and John Chancellor and Frank McGee and Sander Vanocur and Edwin Newman as they showed

America how to report politics on the air. One night in 1968, their coverage of the Democratic convention got more viewers than everything else on ABC and CBS combined and set back Walter Cronkite's career for years.

He didn't stay as President of NBC News forever. He left in 1973. I was his successor. He came back again in 1982 for two years, when NBC was in trouble again. By that time he had invented *Weekend* and *Overnight*, appointed Tom Brokaw as the anchor of what was now called *NBC Nightly News* and taught yet another generation of journalists how to make a narrative structure out of pictures and not let the words get in the way. He is the guy who, in 1963, before Tom Wolfe and a younger generation went on about The New Journalism, told his troops that they had to borrow the techniques of fiction to make the world of fact interesting and valuable to a mass audience.

When he retired, he wrote a book, *Out of Thin Air*. He wrote perceptive and fascinating columns for *The New Leader*. He did a little lecturing. He collected honors. He kept in touch with the people in broadcasting who mattered to him. And he remembered to be outraged by attempts to stifle speech.

His sons, Peter and James, spoke clearly and well at his funeral and they recalled his humor. He would have liked that. And in the audience were three generations of journalists to whom he had listened. He would have liked that, too.

Having served as President of NBC News from 1972 to 1979, Richard C. Wald is the Fred Friendly professor of broadcast journalism at the Columbia University School of Journalism.

Where Are the Documentaries of Yesteryear?

All three networks focused attention on racial and economic inequality in the 1960s. | By Greg Vitiello

We live in an age when criticism of our government and our place in the world is too often branded as disloyal. It wasn't always. In fact, for close to two decades, from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, television documentary filmmakers consistently directed a salutary critical lens at our society's key institutions. Hardly anyone was exempt from their scrutiny: not the mining interests, farmers, bankers, military, nor the U.S. government itself. Who were these critics? Not just a radical fringe, but filmmakers whose work appeared on the three major networks and on public television.

The early network documentarians deserve special praise for speaking out at a time when the television medium was subject to a Cold War-driven blacklist. In this climate, CBS' 1951 introduction of *See It Now* was particularly noteworthy. Its creators, Edward R. Murrow and Fred Friendly, were veterans of radio journalism. Murrow, in particular, had imprinted himself on the public consciousness

with his wartime broadcasts from the rooftops of London. However, his stardom carried no immunity from the national paranoia induced by fear of the Red menace. In fact, Murrow and Friendly started gradually before scoring a journalistic success with their 1953 documentary "Christmas in Korea," which captured the human drama of a distant war. On the heels of its report from Korea, *See It Now* followed up in 1954 with a succession of programs dealing with the insidious impact of McCarthyism on American society. (See the Winter issue of *Television Quarterly* on the feature film, "Good Night, and Good Luck," for a more substantive discussion of those broadcasts.) Those documentaries brought their creators widespread acclaim, but eventual muzzling by CBS Chairman William S. Paley, who feared the loss of sponsorship dollars. By mid-1958, when CBS cancelled *See It Now*, a disillusioned Murrow took a leave of absence. And the heady freedom displayed during those several years seemed a thing of the past.

Later that same year, the networks



Edward R. Murrow on the *CBS Reports* program "Harvest of Shame," November 25, 1960.

were rocked by a scandal involving NBC's *Twenty-One*, one of several quiz shows that had riveted the public. Suddenly, all three majors announced documentary series: *CBS Reports*, which first aired in 1959; ABC's *Close-Up*, which premiered in 1960, and NBC's *White Paper*, also launched in 1960. Perhaps it's cynical to link these two phenomena too closely, but the networks apparently identified documentaries as a way to repair their tarnished image.

All three networks focused attention on racial and economic inequality in early 1960s documentaries.

Nonetheless, the new documentary series operated under a tighter rein than CBS had exercised over *See It Now*. In the words of the distinguished broadcast historian Erik Barnouw: "In United States television, the independence

enjoyed by Edward R. Murrow was a thing of the past...Closely watched by top executives, documentaries became institutional, depersonalized."

Despite this constraint, documentary filmmakers often created work with great bite. In 1960, *CBS Reports* produced a searing report on the economic plight of migrant workers, titled "Harvest of Shame." The cameras filmed hundreds of migrants as they traveled north in search of work, capturing penetrating images of hungry, downtrodden people much as still photographers Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine had exposed slum conditions in the early 20th century and as

Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange had focused their still cameras on rural poverty in the 1930s. "Harvest of Shame" did more than *show* the human misery of migrant existence; through producer David Lowe's interviews and

correspondent Murrow's commentary, the documentary revealed the shameful economics that "wronged the dignity of man" and made their current plight no better than that of the nomadic Okies desperately seeking work in John Steinbeck's Depression-era novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. In its reportage, the documentary harked back to earlier *See It Now* reports. All it lacked was the personal authority that Murrow brought to the prior documentaries as he spoke, almost ex cathedra, at the close of each show.

Technology became a major ally for documentary producers, especially through the development of mobile cameras and sound equipment.

All three networks focused attention on racial and economic inequality in early 1960s documentaries. One noteworthy example was NBC's "Battle of Newburgh," in which producer Al Wasserman and director Arthur Zegart investigated a crisis in a New York community in which a local official had vowed to rid the town of "welfare chiselers." By focusing on a family that had wrongly been denied welfare, the filmmakers brought a strong human dimension to the problem of welfare. Wasserman and Zegart weren't alone in their socially conscious documentaries; others include Nicholas Webster and John Secondari's "Walk in My Shoes" for ABC *Close-Up*; Jay McMullen's "The Tenement" for *CBS Reports*; Fred Freed's "Summer 1967: What We Learned" for NBC *White Paper*; and Martin Carr's "Hunger in America" for *CBS Reports*.

In the pursuit of journalistic truth, technology became a major ally for

documentary producers, especially through the development of mobile cameras and sound equipment. As a result, verite filmmakers such as Robert Drew and Richard Leacock were able to produce work in which images and action virtually replaced commentary. In their 1963 documentary, "Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment," the filmmakers eavesdropped on history as they explored the tensions surrounding the admission of the first black students to the University of Alabama. With only sparse commentary, the documentary

let the pictures tell the story as the camera moved fluidly from the Kennedy White House to the office of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy

and on to Governor George Wallace at the Alabama State House. Even watching the program today, we sit riveted as we see President John F. Kennedy weigh the consequences of a direct confrontation with Wallace, listen in while his brother and Assistant Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach discuss their strategy, and see the two students crossing the university campus and entering their dormitory. Drew gained access to the White House by convincing the President that, in his words, "if the look and feel and smell and passion in the White House could be recorded at certain times, it could be very valuable to history."

The "look and feel and smell" of a different kind of institution were captured by *CBS Reports* producer Jay McMullen in his 1961 documentary, "Biography of a Bookie Joint." In a work that deplored the magnitude of illegal gambling, McMullen focused on

a single operation: Swartz's key shop on Massachusetts Avenue in Boston. Using hidden cameras and microphones, McMullen went inside the shop to determine that an overwhelming number of its clientele patronized the shop not to purchase keys but to place bets. Most telling was his footage of Boston policemen entering and leaving the shop – and looking indifferently at a small curbside stove in which many bettors destroyed the evidence of their betting. CBS not only traced the various complaints against the shop that had been squelched by the Boston police but presented its information to the U.S. Department of Justice, which established that the police had been taking payoffs from the bookies. A crackdown followed. The episode served as an impressive reminder of the press' power to act as advocates for the law.

During the 1960s, documentary filmmakers' efforts to achieve social change were accorded a sympathetic ear by large segments of the public. Documentary filmmaker Morton Silverstein recalls, "All during the tremendous crucible of the Sixties, with all the movements – civil rights, the women's movement, Native Americans, antipoverty, social awareness – everything that stood for social justice was all happening at once."

As a producer for National Educational Television (NET), Silverstein continued, "I was twice blessed. I was able to do one-hour documentaries on subjects that I wanted to do. And there wasn't a question of a sponsor coming over, as once occurred in a commercial network screening, and saying, 'Why are so many dark people in that show?'"

Silverstein was part of an impressive cadre of documentary producers assembled by NET Vice President for Programming Bill Kobin and Director of Public Affairs Don Dixon. Others included Executive Producer Alvin Perlmutter, Jack Willis, Arthur Zegart, Dick McCutcheon, and Harry McCarthy; among the frequent freelance contributors were Fred Wiseman, Al Levin, Murray Lerner, and Harold Mayer. Supported by a 10-year grant from the Ford Foundation beginning in 1963, the New York-based programmers set out on an ambitious course to produce weekly documentaries on a wide range of social issues for distribution throughout public television. "We had an advantage over the commercial networks during that period because the Ford Foundation adhered to a hands-off policy," said Silverstein.

The NET producers often faced their greatest challenge from the proposed subjects of their work. When Silverstein undertook a documentary on migrant workers in Cutchogue, Long Island, a member of the local farmers' cooperative belligerently challenged him, asking, "Who are you people? What are you doing? Why are you here?" When Silverstein explained that he was working on a documentary about agriculture in Long Island, the farmer responded: "You're not going to do another of those Murrow things, are you?" Silverstein continues, "I said, 'No, I'm very interested in hearing your side.' I said this very quickly because he was reaching in his glove compartment for a weapon to brandish."

After winning the reluctant agreement of the farmers to gain access, Silverstein's film tracks a single group of

migrants through an entire season from recruitment in Arkansas in the spring to strawberry picking in June through the end of the cycle when they board busses and move on, still impoverished and in debt to the crew chief for their housing, to now work the orange groves of Florida. Aired in 1968, eight years after “Harvest

of Shame,” NET’s “What Harvest for the Reaper?” paints a poignant picture of migrant life. The workers must endure sub-standard housing, inadequate health care, long hours of stoop labor, and relentless economic exploitation. The most immediate exploiter is the crew chief, Andrew Anderson, who handles all the migrants’ transactions and, as one worker states bitterly, exchanges “dust for blood.” The film concludes with a list of recommendations that could improve migrant working conditions. However, the narrator points out that eight years earlier, Murrow had made similar, unheeded recommendations in “Harvest of Shame.” But in New York, at least, following the “sequel” some legislative changes were made, particularly in migrant housing.

We witness another virulent case of economic exploitation in Jack Willis’ “Appalachia: Rich Land, Poor People,” which aired on *NET Journal* in 1969. As we hear the music to “Our Homesick Appalachian Home,” the camera pans over the scenic hills of East Kentucky



CBS News' Edward R. Murrow in one of television's first combat reports, "Christmas in Korea," December 1952 for *See It Now*.

before zeroing in on one family's impoverished life. The Collins family's struggle to eke out an existence mirrors the lives of myriad local people who have lost their birthrights to this rich mining area. “The wealth underground is rarely reflected overground,” says the film's narrator. “By and large, coal benefits only a few.” Willis and his crew examine efforts being made by social institutions such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Vista workers to improve the local people's lot. The film also hears from members of the mining companies and their advocates. In one particularly heated exchange, a wealthy supporter of the mining interests assails Willis and his team, saying “We don't like your fuzzy faces and your boots.” He warns that anyone who advocates change in the region is “treading on dangerous ground.” By the end of the film, it is clear that change will come slowly, if at all. As a banjo plays in the background, we see the Collins family — as impoverished and lacking in options as it was when

the film began.

In a landmark 1971 film, Silverstein investigated another of the forces that perpetuate poverty in the United States: the banking industry. Titled "Banks and the Poor," the documentary tweaks our interest in the first frames with footage of Ginger Rogers singing "We're in the Money." It quickly moves on to show who *isn't* in the money, despite the lavish claims of bankers such as Chase Manhattan President David Rockefeller. The film dissects the discrepancy between Chase Manhattan's avowed policies and the bank's actual record. Rather than providing hundreds of millions of dollars in mortgages for low-income families in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section, the bank offers a mere fraction of that sum in loans while putting its money into other areas such as gambling casinos in the Bahamas.

"Banks and the Poor" used hidden cameras to demonstrate the unfair allocation of credit involving low-income families, as they are turned down for bank loans and forced to go to higher-interest loan companies.

"Banks and the Poor" forcefully underscores the point by intercutting interviews with Rockefeller and Congressman Wright Patman, Chairman of the House Banking and Currency Committee, who argues for "a fair allocation of credit."

The film employs hidden cameras to demonstrate the unfair allocation of credit involving low-income families, as they are turned down for bank loans and forced to go to higher-interest loan companies. The cycle

of indebtedness continues, as the film examines such practices as the "holder in due course" principle, which permits a bank to buy installment sales agreements from merchants without assuming responsibility for the quality of merchandise sold. As the narrator describes, "A store sells shoddy merchandise to the consumer, then turns the contract over to the bank," which pursues the buyer even if the contractor committed fraud.

"Banks and the Poor" closes with a crawl listing all the members of the Senate and House of Representatives who are either directors of banks or belong to law firms that have banks as clients. As we hear "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in the background, we realize just how stacked the deck is for low-income families when our elected officials are tied to an industry that capitalizes on the poor.

The film aired at an inauspicious time, since NET's 10-year grant from the Ford Foundation was nearing its end, and the recently created Corporation for Public

Broadcasting and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were now overseeing the future of public television. Despite highly favorable reviews, "Banks and the Poor" caused consternation in public-broadcasting circles and several local stations chose not to run the show. PBS even commissioned political scientist Steven Farber to critique the show. While conceding that the program was "forthright and courageous in conception, imaginative and artistic in execution, Farber found

that “its presentation is overdrawn and in some cases simply erroneous.”

The 1970-71 Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Survey of Broadcast Journalism dismissed Farber’s comments, saying they “tended to be general rather than specific, and he offered little research to support them. He discovered no significant errors in fact.” The report went on to praise “Banks and the Poor” for its reporting and criticizes the timidity of public broadcasting, stating: “Public television, virtually free from the threat of license revocation, was still more dependent upon governmental good will than commercial television.”

The same DuPont-Columbia survey examined the welter of controversy surrounding CBS Reports’ “inflammatory” 1971 documentary, “The Selling of the Pentagon.” The program, produced and written by Peter Davis, investigated how the Department of Defense was using a multi-million dollar budget to influence public opinion on issues of war and peace. The program ranged from dramatic displays of military might to lectures by Pentagon colonels seeking to influence listeners to support the Vietnam War. In one memorable scene, Green Berets demonstrated the most effective ways to kill opponents in hand-to-hand combat, before inviting young spectators to practice the same lethal moves. Correspondent Roger Mudd then explained how Pentagon press briefings often involved staged events, as part of the military’s systematic

“propaganda war.”

Under pressure from the Nixon Administration, CBS ran a follow-up show in which a scrupulously balanced panel debated the issues raised by “The Selling of the Pentagon.”

Despite increased governmental and commercial pressures, the networks continued to air socially conscious documentaries on subjects ranking from civil rights to the energy crisis. But as the pressures grew, the list of such programs shrank. The climate was no longer conducive to do “shows that get us into the right kind of trouble,” as Silverstein described his own mission. In his view, “the documentary is truly an instrument for social change.”

Examination and self-criticism are hallmarks of a free society. Without it, we become morally flabby, overlooking, denying, or rationalizing social bigotry, and failing to gauge whether our institutions ever use, let alone own, a moral compass.

How much of this self-criticism of our society endures today? Not a great deal, if my recent sampling is any indication. I found that the most consistent, and most penetrating work, is being done on PBS’s weekly series, *Frontline*, ranging from a strong investigative report on “The Meth Epidemic” to a probing look at the Al Qaeda-led insurgency in Iraq. In the next issue of *Television Quarterly*, we’ll examine the subject of today’s rare breed of socially conscious documentarians.

A frequent contributor to *Television Quarterly*, Greg Vitiello is a New York-based writer and editor whose books include *Eisenstaedt: Germany, Spoleto Viva, Twenty Seasons of Masterpiece Theatre* and *Joyce Images*. From 1966 to 1972 he wrote for National Educational Television and the Children’s Television Workshop.

Eyes off the *Prize*

Copyright clearance and the disappearance of one of television's cultural treasures. | **By Michael M. Epstein**

In 1987, public broadcasting stations aired *Eyes on the Prize*, a 14-part documentary that looked back at 30 years of the civil-rights movement. The brainchild of independent filmmaker Henry Hampton, *Eyes on the Prize* masterfully brought the civil rights struggle to life through interviews, archival footage, and more than 120 songs evocative of the era. Described by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., chair of Harvard's African-American Studies Department, as "the most sophisticated and most poignant documentary of African-American history ever made," *Eyes on the Prize* was one of the most-watched documentaries on PBS, and became widely available to homes, schools and libraries as a best-selling PBS video title.

Yet, despite its historical significance and wide acclaim, *Eyes on the Prize* can no longer be seen on television, and video copies have vanished from store shelves. Unless you can find an aging

copy in a public library and watch it at home, it is virtually impossible to screen the series today. Indeed, even if you were fortunate enough to have purchased the video when it was available, you cannot make your copy available for public exhibition or stream it over the Internet so that others can see it. At least, not legally.

The reason for this has nothing to do with the program's viewpoint, or any controversy relating to its message. No one has claimed defamation, plagiarism or threats to national security. To the contrary, *Eyes on the Prize* has become a nearly forgotten cultural artifact not because it broke the law, but because its producers and distributors have decided to abide by the law—specifically, copyright law. Under U.S. copyright law documentary producers are required to license creative expressions such as sound recordings and song compositions from record companies and composers. In nearly all cases, the



Anti-lynching Protest



NAACP Storefront Window



Jim Crow Sign

decision to grant a license, the duration of that license and its cost is at the discretion of the copyright owner, which is usually a business like a record company or film studio that

***Eyes on the Prize* has become a nearly forgotten cultural artifact not because it broke the law but because its producers and distributors have decided to abide by the law.**

exploits its owned content for profit. Without clearance from the copyright owner, producers and distributors are liable for monetary damages and the documentary is subject to a court-ordered injunction that would prevent it from being screened.

Eyes on the Prize was done in by the same sound track of rock, gospel and traditional music from the civil-rights movement that defined it as a masterpiece in filmmaking. The reason came down to money, pure and simple. Money that Henry Hampton's independent production company, Blackside Productions, simply did not have. Blackside spent more than ten years to scrape up the \$500,000 it needed to fund the making of *Eyes*. And while \$500,000 seems like a princely sum for some independent documentary makers, Hampton's budget did not buy him much in the way of copyright licenses to the 120 highly popular sound

recordings and music compositions he needed to fulfill his creative vision.

The result was that Blackside was only able to afford to license its soundtrack elements for a limited

duration. Therein lay the problem.

In many respects, Blackside Productions gamed the copyright law as best it could. Under Section 118 of the Copyright Act of 1976, producers who make documentaries for distribution on noncommercial education broadcast stations can take advantage of a "compulsory license," which would take away a copyright owner's discretion to both grant a license and determine its price. Because the question of price is placed in the hands of a third-party arbitrator, Blackside was able to keep licensing costs for its PBS broadcasts within its budget. Had the documentary been distributed on a commercial service like HBO or the History Channel, Blackside would have been required to negotiate licenses with content owners that may have run into millions of dollars.

While the clearance costs were kept relatively low for the documentary's



Rosa Parks (right)



Jim Crow Dining Facility



Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph

PBS airings, Section 118 does not apply to commercial broadcasts, public screenings and video distribution of a creative work. Thus, in order to make the documentary available as a home video, Blackside was compelled under the Copyright Act to negotiate for synch licenses—the right to use a song composition on video—and for the “master use” of the sound recordings themselves, on a case-by-case basis. Since both the compulsory licenses and the negotiated licenses were up-front costs to Blackside, the production company saved money by entering into licenses of short duration. As soon as the first of these short-term licenses expired, in 1993, Blackside had no choice but to withdraw *Eyes on the Prize* from public distribution and exhibition.

Public broadcasters have been more alert to the promise of new technologies than many of their commercial counterparts.

While Blackside could have entered into new licensing arrangements, the modest revenues generated by a documentary that was essentially noncommercial in nature, combined with the financial limitations of Hampton’s independent production entity, made the cost of license renewal prohibitive. Though supporters of *Eyes* talked of finding funding to revive the documentary in the mid-1990s, after Henry Hampton died in 1998, the prospects of new licenses became even more remote. With Blackside now in the hands of Hampton’s heirs, and Hampton himself gone, his production business has become little more than

a caretaker organization. Indeed, without significant revenues from new documentaries, Blackside will likely never be able to come up with money on its own to rescue *Eyes* from copyright oblivion.

As frustrating as the saga of *Eyes on the Prize* is to those who want to make it available to the public once again, it is not the only documentary to encounter problems with copyright clearances. Within the last few years, a number of organizations representing documentary filmmakers have become increasingly vocal in opposition to what they call “Rights Clearance Culture.” Groups such as American University’s Center for Social Media, the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers and the International Documentary Associations have

issued statements of concern over the impact copyright clearances can have on public discourse. Publications

such as “Untold Stories: The Creative Consequences of the Rights Clearance Culture” and

numerous grassroots “blog” sites on the Internet chronicle what they believe to be the chilling effect of copyright law on independent filmmakers, and offer recommendations for ways to lower costs and reduce frustration in clearance negotiations. A number of newspapers have published articles detailing the travails of the documentary producers who were unable to complete their films because copyright owners refused clearance. In a Toronto *Star* article, one producer refers to licensing negotiations as “economic censorship” after he was refused clearance for drug-themed tunes such as Wings’ “Hi, Hi, Hi,” and The Steve Miller Band’s “The

Joker” for a documentary on the history of marijuana.

To record companies, music publishers, film studios and other authors, copyright is a proprietary right which can be controlled much like a landlord can control who gets to use its private property.

Of course, what is “economic censorship” for a documentary producer is the enforcement of an intellectual property right on the part of a copyright owner. Under the copyright statute, the owners of creative works ordinarily have the right to set the price of a license as high as they want, and they can even refuse to grant the license for any reason, including creative differences. To record companies, music publishers, film studios and other authors, copyright is a proprietary right which can be controlled much like a landlord can control who gets to use its private property. Still, there is a difference between intellectual property rights and private property rights that gives documentary producers and their advocates hope in their struggle to use copyrighted content. Under certain circumstances, producers may be entitled to use a portion of a copyrighted work in their own creations without obtaining a license from an owner. Known as “fair use,” this statutory defense to copyright infringement allows individuals to use insubstantial portions of copyrighted content under certain circumstances and for certain purposes.

Because courts will weigh a

number of factors on a case-by-case basis to determine if an unlicensed use is “fair,” the extent to which fair use may apply to a particular documentary’s use of copyrighted content is the subject of ongoing debate. The fair-use defense was employed successfully, for example, by the producer of the documentary *Outfoxed*, after Fox News Channel refused to license news clips. The use of copyrighted

advertising images in a documentary on female body image was also deemed a fair use, as was the use of CBS news footage in a *Frontline* profile of presidential adviser Karl Rove.

Although many copyright attorneys would argue that the use of copyrighted material in *Eyes on the Prize* is too substantial to qualify as a fair use, that has not stopped a number of groups from making that claim. DownhillBattle.org, a group dedicated to promoting *Eyes* to the general public, argues that its initiative to organize public screenings of library videos is protected by fair use. Another group, based in Canada, has gone as far as to stream a copy of *Eyes* on its website. Whether these organizations really believe that what they are doing constitutes fair use, or whether it is a form of civil disobedience, the fact that *Eyes on the Prize* occupies a special position in America’s public discourse on civil rights allows them to justify their conduct in their own minds. Ironically, these efforts have been met with disdain from Blackside, who see unauthorized copying of the documentary as a violation of its copyright. Efforts at DownhillBattle.org to encourage illegal downloading of *Eyes on the Prize* abruptly ended in

early 2005, after Henry Hampton's heirs threatened to sue for infringement.

Despite these organized efforts to exhibit the documentary without copyright clearance, the real hope for *Eyes on the Prize* lies not in insurgent claims of fair use, but in negotiations for licenses with copyright owners. Streaming video and organizing community screenings may allow a few people to see the documentary, but it is no substitute for wide distribution via television and on video. To make that type of deal, the owners of *Eyes on the Prize* will need to pay for licenses. Without clearances from copyright owners, no company will screen the work or distribute it on video or DVD. Even PBS will not air the series until it can be assured that it will not be held liable for monetary damages under the Copyright Act.

To that end, there is an effort currently under way to raise the money necessary to get *Eyes on the Prize* back on television. At the urging of Henry Louis Gates, the conservative philanthropist Richard Gilder has contributed \$250,000, and the Ford Foundation has pledged \$600,000, to a fund that will help Blackside pay for the more "affordable" public broadcasting clearance under Section 118's compulsory license provision. Still,

even with this cash infusion, Blackside will need to raise additional funds from other donors before it can rebroadcast *Eyes on the Prize* on PBS, which it hopes to do by next year. And unless you are fortunate enough to own a video of *Eyes* that was sold fifteen years ago, there is virtually no chance of obtaining a video or DVD of the series for home use. Blackside simply does not have the millions it would likely be required to pay for clearance at market prices.

Moreover, even if Blackside succeeds in its effort to get *Eyes* on the air, it is just a matter of time before these renewed licenses will expire and *Eyes on the Prize* again fades into obscurity. But there is some good news. If you want a home copy for personal use, you will be able to tape the series when it is broadcast. Under copyright law, making a home recording is generally deemed a fair use. So keep an eye out for a programming announcement, and your finger on the record button. Not only will you preserve a copy of one of television's most acclaimed documentaries for your own future use, but you can make your copy available to a friend. Only then can we be sure that *Eyes on the Prize* will continue to be seen and appreciated as a cultural treasure.

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Disguised as News

The growing use of video news releases — including those promoting the Federal Government’s agenda — in real TV news. | **By John V. Pavlik**

Fake news has a long and inglorious history in the U.S. and around the world. Since at least the mid-1800s, showmen such as P.T. Barnum have staged for publicity purposes what historian Daniel Boorstin a century later dubbed “pseudo-events.” Perhaps the most potentially deceptive form of fake news, the video news release (VNRs), emerged in the 1980s as a video version of the traditional news or press release. Having started as oftentimes amateurish promotional video on three-quarter-inch tape, mailed or sent by overnight delivery to selected television stations for possible inclusion in the evening newscast, the VNR has since evolved into a slick public-relations tool and a somewhat disturbing mainstay of much television news, particularly at the local level.

Largely because of their limited production quality, early VNRs were infrequently used in television newscasts. But over the next two decades, VNRs grew in sophistication with producers often linking their VNRs to topical events and formatting them to the needs of local newsrooms. They made the sponsor logos less visible and obtrusive. They utilized the latest in digital technologies to produce high-quality video content.

Consequently, VNRs have become a major tool for profit and not-for-profit organizations alike to get their messages on television news. A 1990 study by Dan Berkowitz and Douglas B. Adams found that 22 percent of VNRs sent to local television stations were used, at least in part. This usage rate is comparable to the use of traditional news or press releases by local newspapers. A 1994 study by J. H. Minnis and Cornelius B. Pratt found that 34 percent of print news releases were used at least in part by a weekly newspaper.

Under the Bush Administration VNRs have been taken to entirely new heights. The Bush Administration has promoted its agenda via VNRs on everything from the Defense Department and the war in Iraq to policies at the Census Bureau and the Department of Health and Human Services. In March of 2005 David Barstow and Robin Stein reported in *The New York Times* that 20 federal agencies have made and distributed hundreds of television news segments since 2002, adding that this barrage of fake news has resulted in the kind of publicity any president would covet.

As illustration, consider the script of one Bush Administration VNR segment that aired during this period: “Thank you, Bush. Thank you, U.S.A.,” a joyous

Iraqi-American said to a reporter in Kansas City for a piece about the fall of Baghdad. Another report spoke of a “successful” Bush administration “drive to strengthen aviation security”; the “journalist” called it “one of the most remarkable campaigns in aviation history.”

To viewers, these segments looked no different than any other 90-second reports on the local news. In truth, the federal government produced and distributed them both (and many others). The State Department produced the fall of Baghdad report. The Agriculture Department’s office of communications made the farm report.

Unlike paid sponsorship or advertising, the video news release exploits the heightened credibility of news.

VNRs are an especially appealing tool for public-relations or governmental uses because, unlike paid sponsorship or advertising, the VNR exploits the heightened credibility of news. Research by Owen and Karrh in 1996 demonstrated that viewers see VNRs within newscasts as more credible, or believable, than commercials for the same firms within the same newscast.

The heightened credibility of VNRs in newscasts is coupled with the popularity of television news for greater impact. More Americans get their news from TV than from any other medium. In fall 2006, already high TV viewership further increased an average of four minutes a day from four hours 35 minutes to four hours 39 minutes driven by the appetite for

news among 35-year-olds and older Americans, who were tuning in to coverage of major news stories such as the effects of Hurricane Katrina. VNRs selected for use by the roughly 850 TV newsrooms in the U.S. (630 ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates; 220 Fox and independent stations, according to Vernon Stone 2001 update, <http://web.missouri.edu/~jourvs/gtvops.html>) can easily reach many millions of viewers. One study by Mark D. Harmon and Candace White published in 2001 examined 14 VNRs distributed in 1998 and 1999 and found portions of those VNRs were aired 4,245 times by stations across the U.S. Further, new technologies have made it increasingly

effective to distribute VNRs in digital format via satellite or other broadband technologies. Typically, journalists can view or download VNRs online before deciding whether to use them.

Together, this confluence of factors has helped the VNR to emerge as a major part of the television news landscape.

Just why do stations air VNRs? There are a number of reasons. Sometimes VNRs are timely and provide rare or unusual video that might otherwise be hard to get, especially for a local television station on a limited budget. Sometimes VNRs help fill in gaps in stories otherwise lacking good visual material, or they might provide interesting video on a slow news day. And VNRs are attractive to TV newscasts because they’re cheap or free or even can make a station some money (some VNR providers will pay a station to air a VNR) and—this is where things get especially sticky—they’re safe. VNRs typically provide non-controversial

video that feels good to viewers and sponsors. There is usually no risk of criticism from the subject of the story. This is in contrast to investigative journalism, which is expensive, risky and often controversial and can cost the station advertisers.

Measuring VNR Usage

Exactly how widely VNRs are used is somewhat hard to determine. VNR production and distribution firms contend fairly extensive use. In contrast, surveys of news directors generally suggest VNRs are only occasionally or even rarely used, even on local television newscasts. Scott Atkinson, News Director at WWNY-TV, the Fox affiliate in Watertown, NY, told me that “we never ever use them, except our weekly farm report, which gets them regularly from the U.S. Department Agriculture. But, I’m an absolutist about not using VNRs and even this use is going away.”

At the network news level, surveys indicate VNR use is even more sparse or non-existent. One situation when a network news division might use a VNR in whole or part would be when the VNR itself becomes the subject of a developing news story, and a clip might be incorporated as an illustration (e.g., if a group such as Swift Boat Veterans and POWs for Truth had issued a VNR as part of its communications efforts against the presidential campaign of Sen. John Kerry, a network news story might have featured a segment to illustrate the group’s tactics).

Jeff Wurtz, Senior Vice President of sales and marketing at VNR producer, News Broadcast Network (NBN), told me recently that “NBC, especially the

Nightly News, does not use VNRs. Instead they do use third-party material such as logos and footage they don’t have access to getting. They would never use a third-party VNR with voice over but may use footage that is unique or exclusive to the vendor for a good story. Every video package we send has the supplier of the video clearly identified with contact information for the station/network to call on if they have questions.”

The Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) in 2005 conducted a survey of 100 members on their use of VNRs. Based on this survey, the RTNDA issued a statement indicating few TV stations air VNRs, and those that do usually identify the source. But as RTNDA President Barbara Cochran acknowledges, getting good data on VNR use is a challenge. “It’s kind of like the Loch Ness Monster. Everyone talks about it, but not many people have actually seen it.”

The Project for Excellence in Journalism, a nonpartisan media-research group, surveyed 103 TV news directors about VNRs use. Sixty-six percent reported never using them. Of the 34 percent who admitted using them, 10 percent said they always label VNRs. Yet the remaining 24 percent said they labeled only “occasionally,” “rarely” or “never.”

On CBS Newspath, VNRs are transmitted in a separate segregated area and are clearly identified as a VNR feed, John Frazee, senior vice president, CBS News Services, told me recently. Moreover, CBS will not accept a VNR unless the company providing the VNR discloses who paid for it. On occasion, CBS will not accept a VNR even when the source is known. Frazee explained

that this is done on a case-by-case basis, and typically occurs when the VNR is actually issue advocacy in the guise of news story. Typical of the VNRs was one that was transmitted last January with the story slug, VNR. The title: Wrinkle

Reducing Breakthrough.

The length: 4:04. The source: VIDICOM. And the "reporter": Christy Ferrer. CBS has clearly labeled the VNR as such, using these terms: "This

is a Video News Release. This VNR is not produced by CBS News. The facts and/or claims made in this VNR have not been verified by CBS News. The producers of this VNR have paid CBS Newspath a fee to transmit this VNR and accompanying information to stations, affiliates and clients." Frazee indicates the fee is in the amount of hundreds of dollars per VNR. As part of the research for this article, a search of the CBS Newspath archive <http://www.newspath.cbs.com/> produced a list of more than 100 VNRs that had been distributed via the newswire for possible use by network affiliates.

CNN Newsource has a similar process of formally vetting VNRs before they are accepted for transmission. VNRs must adhere to a variety of formatting requirements including ensuring the script approved corresponds with the video. The fee structure for carrying a VNR on CNN Newsource is \$2,500 if the VNR is less than five minutes; \$5,000 for five to ten minutes, and \$7,500 if ten minutes or greater (not to exceed 20 minutes).

Though not the news division, CBS also operates a unit that produces and distributes VNRs for hire. A CBS Media Group advertisement in a 2002 issue of

PR Week encouraged potential clients to hire CBS and "put one of the world's leading media companies to work for you producing video news releases." CBS even guarantees placement on the CBS Newspath VNR feed.

Using VNRs is generally frowned upon by journalists and educators and seen as at best lazy reporting and at worst unethical.

Why news directors tend to deny using VNRs may be the result of several factors. One may be that news directors are not necessarily making the choice as to whether to use a VNR. A producer, assignment editor, or a specialized reporter may make the actual decision. Another reason may be professional embarrassment, as using VNRs is generally frowned upon by journalists and educators and seen as at best lazy reporting and at worst unethical. In addition, just what constitutes a VNR is not universally agreed upon. Some may define a VNR exclusively as that which arrives in a package from a PR or VNR production/distribution firm or labeled as such on a network video feed. A satellite or Internet feed from NASA with footage from the Mars Rover may not be considered a VNR. Local TV news editors may receive VNR material redistributed from a regional or network/national satellite feed or an international video feed from the AP or Reuters, not realizing the source for a particular clip may be a VNR. What constitutes using a VNR is another possible point of confusion. Some in the newsroom may not consider incorporating a five second clip from a VNR as "using" the VNR. Research

shows that the use of short segments of VNRs is not uncommon.

Few VNRs are used in their entirety. Research shows that just four percent of uses are greater than 60 seconds, the likely length of an entire VNR. Instead, reporters or producers tend to select segments to incorporate into a story, with original video shot by a local news crew. A 1996 study by Glen Cameron and D. Blount examined how newscasts used the VNR "America Responds to AIDS" created on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control. They found that this packaged VNR was heavily edited with most newscasts using B-roll footage. Most stations did not use the complete VNR. Rather, they incorporated video segments from the VNR into stories featuring video they produced originally about the AIDS issue. In fact, many VNR providers are actually producing and distributing far more b-roll footage than VNRs. Ed Lamoureaux, senior vice president of WestGlen Communications, a leading producer of VNRs, said his firm actually produces and distributes b-roll packages at a rate of 5:1 over VNRs. "Stations have indicated they don't air VNRs in full, so distributing a b-roll package is cheaper and more useful to stations."

VNRs are typically about 90 seconds long, but may be accompanied by additional video, sound bits and even a proposed script. VNR researchers Harmon and White explain how VNRs are typically used. "A reporter can create a voice-over story in which the video and natural sound are played," Harmon and White note, "while the television audience hears the anchor reading copy, or sound bites and/or visuals from the VNR can be included

in a story written by the reporter." A common method of using VNRs is the "voice-over" story, where video is shown as an anchor reads copy on-air.

The Harmon and White findings show that stations in any markets use VNRs, but stations in smaller markets are apt to use longer video segments. Stations in smaller markets also tend to air VNR segments later in the day or days subsequent to the initial satellite feed. VNRs dealing with the topics of health, safety and children were the most likely to be used. Thinly veiled promotional VNRs received only infrequent usage, although they still sometimes found a home on local newscasts. The Harmon and White study showed that a Priceline.com VNR about "Y2K" travel was used 30 times, for instance. The source of a VNR may influence a local journalist's decision to use a VNR, as well. In the Harmon and White study, VNRs from the nonprofit American Academy of Pediatrics had 499 station uses, and eight VNRs from the federal government VNRs, eight from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and a Census Department piece on census techniques, were used 3,585 times. In contrast, three VNRs from private companies (one from priceline.com and two from a light manufacturing company) were used only 107 times.

The Harmon and White study also showed that about two-thirds of the time a VNR is used on the same day it is received by the station. About one in five VNRs were used the next day after the initial feed. One in ten of the airings occurred within about two weeks, with VNRs rarely used beyond that period. The most common time slot for VNR use is the 5-6 p.m. hour,

with more than a quarter of the airings occurring then. About one in five airings occurred during early morning newscasts between five and nine am. Slightly fewer uses occurred during the ten pm to midnight late newscast. The remainder were distributed throughout the day.

The advent of electronic tracking of VNRs has greatly improved the accuracy of determining how widespread the use of VNRs has become. One leading electronic system is SIGMA by Nielsen Media Research. It covers VNR use in all 210 U.S. television markets. "Because SIGMA places an active code in the Vertical Blanking Interval (VBI)," Nielsen Media Research reports the "technology electronically recognizes and records each airing throughout the entire U.S. with over 95% accuracy."

Another system is a subsidiary of MediaLink and is called TeleTrax. It utilizes an electronically embedded "watermark" securely measuring VNR use even when digitally altered. The watermark is almost impossible to strip off in editing, so monitoring is highly reliable.

A third VNR monitoring option is provided by VMS (www.vmsinfo.com). VMS uses human monitoring in the top 50 designated marketing areas (DMAs). This is an important supplement to automated monitoring because of the slight possibility that even a watermark or VBI code might get stripped away in editing. VMS in 2005 introduced its own automated VNR monitoring system as well.

A March 2004 press release from MediaLink provided insight into the use and monitoring of its most-widely used VNRs. "The European Mars Express space mission and vehicle crash testing

of automobiles reached the greatest audiences in the Top 10 VNR List of 2003 issued by Medialink Worldwide Incorporated, a global leader in providing news and media services for professional communicators. This year's list, the latest in a 15-year annual tradition, also included news about ancient history, popular culture, sports and health.

Topping the list at more than one billion viewers worldwide is the European Space Agency's (ESA) mission to Mars. Shown on newscasts in more than 30 countries including China, France, Russia and Brazil, Medialink's United Kingdom-based production team created a television news story on behalf of ESA about the launch and mission. The video was then distributed by Medialink via satellite to more than 500 television station newsrooms worldwide, many of which incorporated all or part of the video into their news broadcasts.

Using its SIGMA electronic tracking system, Nielsen has found VNR use to be ubiquitous. In 1996, a SIGMA showed 100% of newsrooms using at least a portion of a VNR at least on occasion. Another electronic tracking survey showed a similar level of use in 1999, with more than 90% of U. S. television stations reporting to use VNRs.

Obtaining the data on the use of particular VNRs tends to be proprietary so despite the existence of the data, they are hard to obtain for independent analysis.

One study indicates that the average newsroom has ten to 15 VNRs available daily. Making it on air requires high production value and newsworthiness. VNRs typically cost about \$10,000

to \$25,000 to produce, with higher production values generally requiring greater production costs. Moreover, newsroom editors will edit the VNR content to fit their news needs and adapt it to fit their station's unique format or style.

The largest VNR production firm is Medialink. Medialink produces and distributes approximately 1,000 VNRs a year, twice the number of its nearest competitor. Medialink sales in 2005 were more than \$30 million. Companies such as Medialink are hired by client firms who have a particular story or point of view to tell and hope to do so most effectively or persuasively by having their perspective integrated into an independent newscast.

The number of VNRs produced and distributed to TV stations annually in the U.S. is in the thousands. Taken together with other data on the rate of usage of VNRs in the U.S. (22 percent of stations use VNRs), it is likely that viewers are exposed to VNR material on a frequent basis, perhaps even almost daily, and in all media markets, large and small. Consider this observation from a leader in the VNR industry: "One billion viewers for a single news video (i.e., VNR aired on TV newscasts) is an outstanding benchmark, but not surprising as more and more of the world obtains most of their news from television," said Lucy Hadfield, Managing Director, Medialink International. If VNRs were a disease, they would rapidly reach epidemic proportions.

It is also important to recognize that VNRs are rapidly being transformed in the age of digital convergence. Lamoureaux of WestGlen Communications said, "VNRs will

morph into a form of marketing communication that will be available for viewing on portable devices, such as mobile phones, and other technologies." Perhaps more importantly, there will be no need to deliver these videos through news channels. They are already available online and are becoming increasingly so. Viewership is easier to measure online and consumers are able to easily find them through search engines such as Google and Yahoo. The \$64,000 question may be what happens to television news when consumers, or citizens, depending on one's point of view, can get all their "video news" directly from the source via the Internet, rather than from a news media gatekeeper.

Ethics of VNR Usage

The question for television news producers is: what are the ethical implications of using VNRs and is the truth in any way compromised? Scholarly research on VNR use generally concludes that VNRs constitute audience deception. Viewers of VNRs within newscasts tend to believe they are seeing the product of a station's news gathering and independent judgment. They do not generally realize they are actually seeing and hearing the news as told from the perspective of the VNR production company's client.

"FakeNews," a landmark article about VNRs, was published as a cover story in *TV Guide* on Feb. 22, 1992. Author David Lieberman argued that newscasters should not "pretend out of pride that what they broadcast is real news, instead of labeling it for what it is." He added that "There's a good chance that some of the news they [the public]

see will be fake. Not that it's necessarily inaccurate. Just that it was made to plug something else. And it's something the PR community has grown skillful at providing.”

Lieberman recommended that newscasts that air even a portion of a VNR should provide a continuous on-air graphic labeling the VNR. Research to date suggests few stations have implemented this recommendation. With out such labeling, newscasters risked destroying the trust the public has in their broadcasts.

In response, the Public Relations Service Council in June of 1992 formed a committee to create standards governing the level of disclosure in VNR's. Debate over VNR's slowed until 2004 after the Government Accountability Office launched an investigation into the appropriateness of government-funded VNR's.

In June 2005 the U.S. House of Representatives passed an amendment prohibiting for one year the White House and federal agencies from hiring public-relations firms and “journalists” to use fake news to promote government policies. Such legal actions raise serious First Amendment concerns, and may represent unconstitutional barriers to freedom of speech and press. Yet, the movement to take legislative action against broadcasters reflects the growing sentiment against non-disclosed VNR usage. Current FCC regulations require that broadcasters tell viewers the source of a VNR only when the VNR deals with a political

matter or controversial issue, or when the station is paid to air the VNR.

Whether or not the federal government resumes using fake news and VNRs to promote its policies, other groups and organizations will no doubt continue to do so. In this context, are there any appropriate uses of VNRs in the news? Ethicists might contend a VNR should never be used in television news. They would argue that the use of VNRs is an unethical deception of the audience.

In no circumstances should newsrooms compromise their integrity and independence by airing VNR material produced by a government agency promoting its own agenda.

Establishing Guidelines for Using VNRs Appropriately

Realistically, with budget cuts and resource limitations, there is little likelihood that PR firms are going to stop using and distributing VNRs. Under what circumstances or conditions would VNR use be acceptable by a local TV station? Arguably, there are at least five conditions for using or distributing VNRs in an acceptable manner via the news media.

First, journalists should look closely at the content of the VNR and decide whether it might result in the deception of the audience. In no circumstances should newsrooms compromise their integrity and independence by airing VNR material produced by a governmental agency promoting its own agenda. The newsroom staff should trace the motivation of the VNR

provider and examine whether that motivation is acceptable or is designed to manipulate or persuade the news viewing public.

Second, as with traditional press releases, VNRs can contain useful background information. They can suggest a story idea. They can indicate possible sources for a story.

Third, in some rare cases like the NASA Mars video, VNRs may contain footage that might otherwise be extremely difficult if not impossible to obtain independently. If this is the case, then at least portions of the VNR might be appropriately used. Moreover, a government agency such as NASA that might be seen as relatively benign would likely generate more usage. Yet, when the Defense Department is the only source of war-zone video, newsrooms might still use the footage, despite recognizing the biases associated with the source. Lamoureaux of WestGlen Communications provides this perspective. "TV news people know what they're doing, and they view what we provide in VNRs (or b-roll footage) as source material." They still have to vet it.

Fourth, when a network carries a VNR on its video-news feed to affiliates and clients, it should seriously question the appropriateness of accepting payment for carrying that VNR. Accepting payment for transmitting VNRs presents a potential conflict of interest and may erode the credibility

of that news organization.

Finally, when a VNR is used, it should be clearly labeled as such and the source of the video should be indicated. Labeling should not be limited to only those circumstances required by the FCC. Moreover, the station should include on its web site information about the video news release, its provider and how, when and why it was used. Networks that do feed VNR or b-roll material should consider taking things a step further. They should require those who provide a VNR to incorporate a visible watermark on each frame of video that identifies it as a VNR and identifies the source. This would automatically insure that any newscast subsequently airing the video would have no choice but to make clear to the viewer that what is shown is a VNR and not independently produced or obtained by the TV station or network.

By adhering to these VNR usage protocols, news organizations will insure that they keep their audiences informed at the highest levels of journalistic integrity. They will not compromise their commitment to honesty and truth. Ultimately, television news providers will supply the broadest and deepest possible coverage without jeopardizing the public good in which they have been entrusted.

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Laughter Helps Interpret the News

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart is an ombudsman that calls attention to the successes and failings of our democracy. | **By Kristen Heflin**

Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations. There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth. — Victor Borge

Humor and parody have long been used to make comments about society that would seem crass without a punch line. From Borge to Belushi, comics have poked fun at our world and called attention to our problems. Much as Richard Pryor shined a light on race relations in the 70's, Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show* expose the failings of our democracy today.

Since 1999 Stewart and the cast of *The Daily Show* have served up nightly laughs and, more recently, intensely critical commentary on our press and politicians — commentary that is often lacking in traditional news outlets. Although Jon Stewart and the cast say things few journalists would ever dream of, the show does more than make

viewers laugh: it exposes the workings of political and social institutions, giving viewers valuable insight into the way our democracy functions.

After spending a year researching, watching and analyzing *The Daily Show*, I have found that it consistently issues some surprisingly harsh indictments of our political and media institutions. In a sense, the show is an ombudsman that calls attention to the successes and failings of our democracy. It produces its own brand of investigative journalism, one that tears off the façade of talking points and exposes the inner workings of the press and politics.

Not just a funny monkey

Using humor and parody, the show criticizes the traditional news media for not fulfilling its civic duty. In a sophisticated democratic society like ours, the media have an important role to play. The media should strive to provide innovative, substantive and diverse discourse on the state

of our government and other social institutions that affect us all.

The Daily Show frequently criticizes the press for not fulfilling this important role. Using clips of media coverage and commentary, Stewart often blasts the traditional television media for not giving viewers the tools to process important information about our society. The show's criticisms usually portray news programs as either left-right yelling contests that pretend to offer analysis or as avenues for politicians to air pre-scripted talking points.

One clear example of Stewart's opinion of the press comes from an episode following his now infamous appearance on CNN's *Crossfire*. During his appearance on the show, Stewart tells the hosts the program is "hurting" America by featuring partisan shout-fests instead of substantive analysis. Stewart's commentary surprised the hosts and the clip of his intensely critical assessment of the program was one of the most popular Internet downloads of 2005.

During the first *Daily Show* episode following the *Crossfire* eruption, Stewart tackles the press again. This time he criticizes the news media for their continual focus on Mary Cheney's lesbianism instead of focusing on the important issues of the presidential election.

He sarcastically says, "Now that the debates are over, both candidates have staked out their positions on domestic policy, the war in Iraq, the war on terror and the media can finally help the American people focus in on the important issues that will help them make an informed decision on their choice for president."

A montage of clips then follows, showing various television news personalities talking about Mary Cheney's sexual orientation. When the clips are over, Stewart says, "Media good, no criticism, media good. Funny monkey. Funny monkey."

This comment is a slight jab again at the *Crossfire* hosts whom Stewart told he was not going to be a "funny monkey" as well as the news media in general whom Stewart is condemning for not being critical.

Another demonstration of the show's assessment of traditional news programming is a segment called "Great Moments in Punditry as Read by Children." This segment features young children reading transcripts from partisan debate shows like *Hannity & Colmes* and *Scarborough Country*.

Often the kids are reading the actual words of arguments between the pundits and their guests, making the conversation sound childish. This practice points to the absurdity of the pundits' words. This absurdity is reinforced when the children laugh at the ridiculousness of the script they have to read.

These examples highlight the show's criticism that political news talk shows and traditional news programming lack substance. Though the commentary is often humorous, the show continually calls attention to the failure of the news media to provide insightful analysis to prepare citizens for active involvement in public life.

Talk the line

Politicians have a love-hate relationship with the show. Many have appeared on the program to discuss their policies in a fresh way that appeals

to a tough young target demographic. Some have been victims of a clip montage that exposes a personal or political hypocrisy. Others have been portrayed as partisan shells who spout rhetoric without regard for the truth.

The Daily Show points to the failings of a system that rewards conflict instead of compromise, excess instead of moderation.

The show criticizes this rhetoric and the talking points widely used by politicians, often equating such language with deception. It comments on the dangerous outcomes of the groupthink that stems from highly-charged partisan politics. The show also points to the failings of a system that rewards conflict instead of compromise, excess instead of moderation.

The Daily Show's coverage of the 2006 State of the Union speech touched on these criticisms. In an opening segment, Jon Stewart sarcastically remarks, "It's no secret the administration is reeling from a difficult year and this was Bush's chance to reassert his leadership by leaving behind familiar rhetoric and boldly outlining a new direction for the nation."

Following this comment, is a segment titled "Talk the Line," which features a series of clips from the speech where the President is using what Stewart believes to be standard administration talking points: "We're on the offensive in Iraq...on September the 11th, 2001 ...the offensive against terror networks . . . make the tax cuts permanent...

the Patriot Act...Social Security... September the 11th...May God bless America."

After the montage of clips, Stewart looks disappointed and quips, "Or I guess you could stick with the old hits.

No one really goes to see The Stones to hear the new s-t, I know that." This quip shows Stewart's frustration with the president relying on rhetoric instead of presenting new and actionable ideas.

The show doesn't limit its criticisms to one political party. In fact, in the same program he calls attention to the talking points of the Democratic Party with a clip montage from the Democrats' rebuttal speech. This segment calls attention to the number of times the Democratic governor of Virginia, Tim Kaine says, "There's a better way."

Stewart doesn't let this rhetoric pass for substantive analysis either, saying, "So if you know that 'better way' please send it to Democratic Headquarters, Box 18, Washington, D.C. and hurry, the elections are nine months away." Stewart later remarks that Kaine's comments lacked "passion, insight or any sight of carbon based life."

The Daily Show is a new form of subversive journalism that coats serious inquiry with a thick layer of sarcasm.

Another example of *The Daily Show's* critical stance on the current political atmosphere was a piece following a 2004 presidential debate called "Principle Spinner." In this segment, correspondent Ed Helms asks representatives from both political parties who they think won the debate.

Sarcastically he says, "Thankfully

there just happened to be a cluster of political professionals on hand whom I could count on for reasoned analysis and insight.” However, when Helms asks about the outcome, both Democrat and Republican campaign representatives insist their candidate won the debate.

Helms then becomes visibly upset saying, “It was almost as if everyone I spoke to had an agenda.” After receiving conflicting information from both Joe Lockhart, a Kerry campaign advisor, and Ed Gillespie, Republican National Committee Chairman, Helms breaks down yelling, “My head is spinning!” at political advisors. Helms then melts into a confused tantrum shouting, “This isn’t a real discussion!” and “Nobody’s being honest with you!” The segment ends with Helms passing out on the floor in front of a crowd of reporters.

These clips demonstrate *The Daily Show’s* opinion of the political spin and rhetoric that take the place of frank discussion about issues. Also, since the show portrays both Democrats and Republicans behaving the same way, its criticism is not limited to one political party.

By exposing the way political messages are constructed and showing them as manipulated versions of factual information, *The Daily Show* criticizes the politicians and political institutions that perpetuate this behavior. Again this criticism points to campaigns and political parties as providers of false and distorted information that does not benefit democratic discourse.

These nuggets of idealism, expressed

through humor, have made the show a powerful new force in politics and journalism. The show provides scathing analyses about our democracy that would sound preachy without humor. It could be argued that *The Daily Show* is a new form of subversive journalism, one that coats serious inquiry with a thick layer of sarcasm.

The Daily Show does not pretend to give the most accurate facts about current events, although facts sometimes sneak into the joke. Still, the show does something for its viewers that few news programs can claim. It provides insight into how our social institutions work and teaches viewers to think, question and discover for themselves.

While the American news media constitute the only business protected by law, the First Amendment cannot protect the press from the pressure to please advertisers and investors.

This approach is a step beyond traditional journalism. In a time when factual information is available on-demand, in a variety of forms, traditional news media outlets are no longer the primary source of factual information. To stay relevant these outlets need to evolve. They need to rethink the role of news.

In a democracy where people no longer feel like their vote will change failing political institutions, the news media should inspire citizens to create their own solutions. The news should facilitate discussion, giving citizens the tools they need to address problems at the grassroots level. The news should also hold politicians accountable for

their behavior.

So, if the traditional news media are failing, how did it happen and how can it be fixed? The answer may not be simple, but it may be hilarious.

Business vs. democracy

There is increasing friction between the business and civic interests of the traditional news media today. The proliferation of news options and consolidation of media companies have created a competitive business environment for news organizations, which must retain advertisers to maintain a healthy bottom line.

While the American news media constitute the only business protected by law, the First Amendment cannot protect the press from the pressure to please advertisers and investors. In the fight between commercial and community interests, it can be argued that the traditional news media are behaving more like a business and less like the watchdog of public affairs.

In a government run by the people and for the people, having citizens know enough about their world to make decisions about their society is imperative to a well-functioning democracy. Today several trends point to the news as failing to serve the public interest. These trends are troubling for many reasons.

When the news media behave as commercial enterprises, treating citizens as customers, news tends to turn to entertainment instead of debate, animated pundits instead of in-

depth analysis. Shows that emphasize conflict, scandal and personality, like *The O'Reilly Factor* and the now extinct *Crossfire*, are packaged as news, but provide little substantive examination of current issues.

Another troubling tendency is that politically relevant material often appears as stories about personal conflicts, integrity and moral values. This trend is demonstrated by pundits who sling insults at each other and talk about candidates' personal values instead of issues.

The Pew Research Center found that 21 percent of young adult viewers ages 18-49 get their political information from television comedy programs like *The Daily Show*.

Still, the civic responsibility of journalists has not been completely ignored. The proud tradition of the Fourth Estate is still alive, bubbling under the surface of flashy graphics and personality contests. It is not too late to revive the watchdog role of the press — it is still the ideal to which most journalists strive. The challenge is how to negotiate these seemingly opposed business and civic obligations to produce informative programming that will still lure an audience and improve the bottom line.

This challenge requires creativity and critical thought. It requires a new concept of journalism, one that embraces the value of entertainment while still searching for truths. Entertainment doesn't have to be devoid of analysis and critical thought can be amusing.

The Daily Show is one example of

this new concept of journalism that can bring in advertising dollars while still providing the critical and substantive analysis necessary for a healthy democracy.

What me, a journalist?

With parody and wit *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart has made an indelible mark on politics and journalism. From interviews with presidents to commentary on news clips, the show uses humor to provide a more critical look at our democracy than most traditional television news programs.

While Stewart and *The Daily Show* cast repeatedly shake off the notion that the program is news, a recent study by the Pew Research Center found that 21 percent of young adult viewers ages 18 to 29 get their political information from television comedy programs like *The Daily Show*.

Whether Stewart and traditional journalists like it or not, a growing number of viewers are getting their news from non-traditional sources. *The Daily Show* may claim to be “fake news,” but behind the skits and jokes is substantive analysis of how government and society functions.

This entertainment combined with scrutiny of our public institutions cannot be dismissed as just light programming. It is a new type of journalism that provides valuable information about our democratic society to a group of people who are increasingly disinterested in watching traditional television news.

The Daily Show uses humor to get to the heart of what news should aspire to do — expose the way society works. The show inspires reflection instead of telling people what to think. It generates questions instead of forcing answers.

In a recent interview with *Daily Show* cast member, Lewis Black, he called people who compared the show to traditional broadcast news programs “insane.” However, he insists the show gives viewers the tools to question what they see.

“I think the show teaches people how to watch the news with a jaded eye,” he said.

In other words, *The Daily Show* teaches viewers to think for themselves, to question our society’s failing institutions and to seek the solutions. Who knew laughter could be so dangerous to the status quo?

Kristen Heflin recently received a master of arts in journalism from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia where she conducted her thesis research on *The Daily Show*. She will join the PhD program at Georgia in the fall as the doctoral assistant to the George Foster Peabody Awards.

Hard Work Always Pays Off:

Jobs, Families, and the Evolution of a TV Myth

By Mary Ann Watson

The generation of Americans who grew up during the Great Depression and sacrificed during the Second World War was motivated by the belief that the lives of their children would be happier than their own. They also wanted to believe a lesson learned well in the Allied cause: “Hard work always pays off.” Optimism for the future was the most meaningful tribute that could be paid to those whose lives were given for democratic principles.

As the returning GIs adjusted to peacetime, television began its rapid rise as the great certifying agent in American life. In the postwar decades, until the end of the 20th century, TV defined what mattered most—setting our country’s agenda for debate and action, giving us our myths and stories.

Americans took it on faith as the postwar era began that success would come to those willing to work for it. A returning veteran, despite a background of meager means before the war, had the opportunity to move into the middle class and provide his family with a

standard of living his parents could never achieve.

The GI Bill made it possible for veterans to go to college or pursue technical training. Those who wanted to establish their own businesses could get loans from the Veterans Administration. In the burgeoning postwar economy there was no shortage of work. Home construction soared and growing families were eager to consume.

Modern assembly-line techniques brought down prices, and for the first time, ordinary workers could expect to own a home, a car, and enjoy leisure time as well. By the 1950s, an American family could sustain itself quite decently on the income of a single breadwinner, even one who lacked higher education.

On television, Chester A. Riley was an example of what was possible in this land of plenty. The lead character in *The Life of Riley* was not the brightest of the lunch-bucket brigade, but he made \$110 a week as a riveter at Stevenson Aircraft in Los Angeles. Wife Peg stayed home to take care of two kids and a dog

named Rex. Before the series ended in 1958, daughter Babs got married and son Junior went off to college.

Unlike Chester Riley, though, his blue-collar prime-time contemporary, Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*, was unwilling to invest honest sweat and patience in the American Dream. He was a driver for the Gotham Bus Company on the Madison Avenue line and resented every minute behind the wheel. During his long shifts he dreamt up get-rich-quick schemes. Instead of cultivating safe, long-term investments, Ralph bought into a uranium mine in Asbury Park, marketed glow-in-the-dark shoe polish, and bought the formula for a phony hair-restorer.

In the 1950s most Americans believed that if you got up in the morning and went to work, life improved.

All, of course, are hilarious failures. Ralph never learns that big ideas alone won't amount to anything. Imaginative enterprise, for some lucky risk-takers, can be a shortcut to financial independence—but it requires homework that Ralph can't be bothered with. The underlying pathos of the series about a quintessential loser was that the Kramdens remain childless during the baby boom era.

In the decade of the 1950s most Americans believed that if you got up in the morning and went to work, life improved. They believed it because they were experiencing upward mobility. They

also believed that a rising tide lifted all ships. The familiar sentiment "What's good for General Motors is good for the country" had its genesis in a 1953 Senate committee hearing.

The nature of American work was changing in the postwar years. Labor-saving automation was increasing productivity in factories. More inventory was being made by fewer blue-collar workers while white-collar jobs were increasing. Although fewer people were needed to build each car, more people were needed to sell them in showrooms, advertise them, insure them, finance them, and issue licenses to drive them.

The emergence of a class of salaried managerial workers was the result of America's shifting from an industrial to a service-oriented, information-based economy. In 1956, the crossover was official—white-collar workers, for the first time, outnumbered blue-collar laborers. That same year the book *The Organization*



The Life of Riley - A happy blue-collar postwar family.

Man by William H. Whyte, Jr. offered advice to the swelling ranks of large corporations: “Be loyal to the company and the company will be loyal to you.” Implicit in the deal was lifetime employment, steady promotions and generous benefits.

The life of the Organization Man as presented on television wasn’t humdrum, but rewarding. Jim Anderson on *Father Knows Best* was

the manager of the General Insurance Company in Springfield. He left for work in the morning with enthusiasm. He knew the hours spent at the office allowed his family to be comfortable and

secure. On weekends there would be time for yard work and picnics. It was a fair trade.

Before World War II, the vast majority of Americans—men and women alike—believed that a woman with a spouse capable of supporting her had no business working. But America’s entry in the war changed conventional wisdom overnight. Many Rosie the Riveters were transformed by their new roles, feeling power and independence for the first time in their lives.

The assumption of the government, which had vigorously encouraged them through the War Manpower Commission to go to work, was that women would go back home once the war was won. Masses of women were summarily dismissed from well-paying jobs they had proven they could do well. Some went down fighting. But popular sentiment was not on their side.

Traditional definitions of a woman’s place quickly resurfaced popular

culture. In radio soap operas, short stories in women’s magazines, and especially in the new medium of television, the modern wife who devoted herself to raising children and doing all she could to support her husband’s career was glorified. The concept of a working wife being a source of shame to the male head of the household was a common thread in 1950s situation comedies.

The concept of a working wife being a source of shame to the male head of household was a common thread in 1950s situation comedies...The assumption was that women gave up their jobs at the altar.

A 1952 episode of *I Married Joan*, for instance, opens with Joan’s husband, Judge Bradley Stevens, counseling a couple on the brink of divorce. The agitated husband complains, “Being a housewife ain’t enough for her. She’s gotta have a career... How can I hold my head up in the business circles in which I move?”

By the 1960s, despite the fact that increasing numbers of married women with children were entering the labor force—30 percent of American wives were wage earners—television continued to depict mothers as people whose lives were lived vis-à-vis their husbands and children. The assumption was that women gave up their jobs at the altar. The 1961 episode of *Leave It to Beaver* entitled “Mother’s Day Composition” opens with Beaver’s class being given the assignment to write a 50-word essay on “what your mothers did before they were married.” After school Beaver asks June, “When you

were a girl, what did you do besides waiting for Dad to come and marry you?"

Anthropologist Margaret Mead concluded that "TV more than any other medium gives models to the American people—models of life as it is or should be or can be lived." In the early 1960s, the models offered on prime-time television regularly belittled the notion of women actively engaged in a sphere of influence outside the household.

An episode of *The Donna Reed Show* that aired in November 1962 provides an explicit example: Donna is asked to run for town council by a civic group. Her husband is not thrilled with the idea, but her children are delighted when they see her picture in the paper. She's identified as "Mrs. Donna Stone, wife of a prominent pediatrician of Hilldale, Dr. Alex Stone." The happy ending comes when Donna drops out

of the campaign. Hugging his wife close, Alex says, "At least that's settled, now all you have to do is concentrate on being a wife."

Another common plot device of the era—a lonely career woman longing for a home and family—caps the episode. Donna explains to the head of the women's political committee, "I just can't hold down a public office and take care of my family at the same time." "If I had a family like yours," the go-getting professional woman confides, "I'd give up all this dashing around. I hope you know how lucky you are." Giving Donna a souvenir pennant from her candidacy, she says, "Keep it as a reminder of how lucky you are to be the center of a loving family, to have an adoring husband and two capable children. You have everything."

In 1964, the year after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan



Father Knows Best - Jim Anderson exemplifies the 1950s Organization Man.



Leave It To Beaver - Ward is the breadwinner in the Cleaver household.

wrote an article for *TV Guide* entitled “Monsters in the Kitchen.” “Why is there no image at all on television of the millions and millions of self-respecting American women who are not only capable of cleaning the sink, without help, but of *acting* to solve more complex problems of their own lives and their society?” she asked. “Television badly needs some heroines,” Friedan concluded. “And television decision-makers need to take women more seriously.”

Friedan was among the founding members of NOW—the National Organization of Women—in 1966. Fair pay and equitable employment were foremost on the agenda—but their grievances also included an attack on “the false images of women” in the mass media. By the late 1960s, a social and cultural earthquake was taking place in the United States and assumptions about conventional family patterns and breadwinning responsibilities were being challenged. In real life—and on the TV screens—Americans were undergoing a consciousness raising. But not everyone was happy about it...

Richard Nixon correctly perceived that that white, middle-aged, hard-working blue-collar Americans who paid their taxes and kept their houses tidy were feeling neglected as the 1960s came to a close. He dubbed them the “silent majority” and validated their resentments. Women, blacks, Hispanics, gays and college-students seemed to be getting all the attention. Even on television, working stiff's virtually vanished.

Norman Lear had his own instincts about social divisions that were beginning to take hold. When *All in the Family* was introduced in January 1971, Archie Bunker, a loading-dock laborer who occasionally drove a cab, articulated—however ungrammatically—the frustrations of many working-class Americans as inflation began to erode the good economy of the 1950s and 1960s.

Archie's fears about losing ground were a welcome TV subject for organized labor—itself losing ground quickly—but his racism and pigheadedness became a troubling prototype. In the 1972 presidential

election, the term “the Archie Bunker” vote began finding its way into the press. The reference was understood to mean “the stupid worker vote.” A Teamster Union newsletter took issue with that stereotype: “Some Teamsters are thin, intelligent, compassionate,



All In The Family - Archie Bunker gives voice to the “silent majority.”

and truly believe everyone deserves an equal opportunity.”

The OPEC oil embargo in 1973 and 1974 harshly ended the assumption of unlimited prosperity. As unemployment swelled and productivity declined, American workers were no longer filled with the faith and optimism of the previous two decades. The gap between the incomes of the well-to-do and those of the poor and working class began to widen into what would become the Grand Canyon.

On television, “the great American class struggle” became a popular theme. A TV critic of the era wrote: “Working people are popping up on prime-time television like mushrooms on the forest floor.” And when working-class characters met wealthy characters, the rich were typically shown to be morally bankrupt. Class antagonisms became a stock plot device on shows like *Laverne & Shirley*, whose lead characters were assembly-line workers in the bottle-cap division of Schotz Brewery; and *Taxi*, in which middle-aged cabbie Alex Rieger has made peace with his dead-end job.

Workplace comedies of the mid- and late 1970s often featured low-status workers who had more brains and dignity than their bosses. *Alice* was a series about a young widow and mother who takes a job as a waitress at Mel’s Diner as a pit stop on her way to a singing career. She’s too smart for the room and everyone knows it, but she’s stuck serving chili because she just can’t get a break. Ambition and hard work

no longer a guaranteed a comfortable station in American life.

The workaday existence of the Organization Man, presented in such attractive terms on TV in the 1950s and early 1960s, took on a different complexion as the 1970s advanced. When sitcom episodes had working-class folks dealing with white-collar middle-management folks, such as insurance claims adjusters or department store managers, the white-collar workers were revealed to be powerless cogs in a boring and slow-moving bureaucracy. Since they produced nothing, their value was nebulous. Success for the pen pushers depended on how well they pleased and flattered those on higher rung.

As the 1980s began, “having it all” was new media buzz phrase for



Family Ties - Elyse Keaton is a “have it all” woman of the 1980s.

contemporary women. Women like Elyse Keaton of *Family Ties*—she excelled at the demanding career of architecture, had a loving marriage that was a true partnership, had mischievous but good kids, had a clean house without employing a maid, and looked better than anyone else at her high-school reunion. It was a delightful show, but Elyse was an impossible role model.

In reality, millions of American women were experiencing the “divided-life phenomenon”—the conflict between family and job. *Cagney and Lacey*, a series that debuted in 1982, acknowledged that working women with families needed to be skillful jugglers. Mary Beth Lacey was a police detective and mother of two boys when the show began and eventually went through a third pregnancy and gave birth to a daughter. Her husband Harvey worked in the construction trade and experienced the irregular employment pattern of the business. Even though he willingly took on the primary homemaking duties, her life still seemed like a perpetual double shift.

In 1984, another pair of female buddies on TV was a reflection of the profound changes the family structure was undergoing. On *Kate & Allie* longtime girlfriends and their kids move into an apartment together after divorces force them in to the growing ranks of single mothers. Sharing rent, groceries, and household expenses help them make it through the difficulties caused by their diminished resources.

Throughout the decade there were plenty of “have it all” career Moms like lawyer Clair Huxtable on *The Cosby Show* and newscaster Maggie Seaver on

Growing Pains. But the lead character on *Roseanne* wasn’t one of them. She’s the mother of three whose real dream is to be a writer, but she works in a plastics factory. And when that job evaporates she is variously employed as a fast-food operative, a bartender, a telemarketer and a waitress in a coffee shop. Husband Dan, a construction worker, is often idle. So, the income from Roseanne’s “McJobs” is the linchpin in the Conners’ fragile economic situation.

As corporate downsizing began affecting more Americans, more began to doubt the Number One precept of the national faith: Children will have a higher standard of living than their parents. Roseanne tells her kids, “Every parent tries to improve things at least fifty percent for their children—and if they can do that they’re a real success.” But hope was slim for the Conners as the 1990s approached.

In real life, the cost of higher education was breaking middle-class and working-class families. On *Roseanne*, high-school senior Becky Conner decides to elope with her mechanic boyfriend when she learns the money saved in her college fund had been lost because her father invested it in a motorcycle shop that went bust. When Becky accuses her parents of blowing her chance to have a better life than theirs, Roseanne and Dan are heartbroken because they know she’s right. They gambled her future away.

By the 1990s, large segments of America’s middle class were slipping out of the comfort zone. Working harder and earning less were givens—a fact of life as sure as the entitlements of the Eisenhower era. Job insecurity and elusive promotions dogged many TV characters. The protagonist of *The Drew*

Carey Show, for instance, has worked faithfully for years as the assistant director of personnel in a Cleveland department store. Middle age is just around the corner and he's stuck in a partitioned cubicle with little chance of moving up.

The role of fathers in the pathology of American families was rarely explored on prime-time television. But the sitcom *Grace Under Fire*, which debuted and became a quick hit in 1993, illustrated that most common damage to the family structure stemmed from irresponsible male dominance. The twin issues of domestic violence and the feminization of poverty were at the heart of the series about the mother of three young children who refuses to be a victim and finds the wherewithal to leave an abusive husband.

Like Roseanne, money is a constant

problem for Grace since she lost her tough but well-paying job as a crew chief at an oil refinery and is bumped down to being a regular crewmember in a wave of job cuts. But unlike Roseanne, Grace does not make cutting

and sarcastic remark to her kids. She protects their emotional well being at all costs.

By the close of the 20th century, television's social scripts regarding jobs and families had been thoroughly transformed. The Organization Man was extinct and young adults now expected to change jobs at least five times before retirement. Children enjoying greater success in life than their parents was no longer an assumption, but a prayer. The belief that "Hard work always pays off" evolved into "Life is unfair—deal with it."

The belief that "Hard work always pays off" evolved into "Life is unfair — deal with it."

Mary Ann Watson is on the faculty of the Electronic Media and Film Studies program at Eastern Michigan University. A version of this article was presented to the "Myths and the American Family" conference at Emory University in March 2006.

Why Do Advertisers Still Covet the 18-49s?

A TV veteran recommends revising the conventional wisdom about demographics. | **By Earl Pomerantz**

This is not a new story, but it is a continuing one.

For decades, whenever I read an article about television ratings that references the 18-49 demographic, that reference is inevitably followed by the phrase, “the group most coveted by advertisers.” Google all the articles discussing the 18-49 demographic in television and I promise you, all of them, with rare exceptions, will include the now wearisome clarification “the group most coveted by advertisers” or “the demographic advertisers drool over,” “the Holy Grail of advertising obsession,” or something of that nature. It’s always mentioned. Every time.

Message to media writers: We got it. Advertisers like the 18-49 demographic. More than “like.” More than “love” even. They “covet” it. To me, “covet” triggers images of some wild-eyed zealot targeting an age group with a single-minded fanaticism – “I want those people!!!” It sounds unhealthy. Check the Ten Commandments on “coveting.” They’re not in favor.

Commandments aside, advertisers

do want those people. And the reason I know that, besides the fact that media writers keep hammering it into my head, is that the airwaves are saturated with the consequences of that desire. Shows, commercials, programming decisions from casting to costuming to who writes the scripts, everything on the air is focused on attracting that Coveted Demographic.

Why do they want them? Lyle Schwartz, head of marketplace analysis at Media Edge, an ad-placement company, explains very simply: “The younger audience is worth more.” By “worth more” he’s referring to that group’s value to his clients, the people with something to sell. And why is the younger audience worth more? “The older population is seen as brand loyal; it’s harder to get them to change their purchasing habits.”

Garry Hart, who served 11 years as president of network television at Paramount Studios, admits that programmers develop shows for this targeted demographic because “It’s the

advertisers who are writing the check.”

A television insider specializing in research, who insisted on anonymity, described the situation more graphically: “The networks are the bitches of the advertisers.” You can understand his insistence on anonymity.

Okay. Three sources concur. Advertising’s not the tail that wags the dog, it’s pretty much the entire dog. The shows are the candy calculated to pull in the Coveted Demographic; they come for the candy, they watch the commercials – ka-ching, ka-ching – everybody’s happy.

The Television Insider tells us: “On the whole, the advertisers want to reach people who will change their minds.”

How much available cash does the coveted 18-49 demographic actually have for the products they’re being enticed to snap up?

Rules, rules, rules. The young aren’t brand loyal. The young more easily change their minds. The young will be loyal longer because they’ve got more years to live. Though nothing’s written in stone (except the Ten Commandments), the rules of advertising come very close, unchanging and unquestioned. And the rules rule the process. The advertisers cry out:

“Make shows for the young!”

And the networks reply:

“You got it!”

In a world in constant transition, hard and fast rules can be seriously counterproductive. So what’s going on? The Television Insider confides: “The business models are still based on a 20-year-old mentality, because there’s

a fear of change.”

To me, these models ignore certain questions. First, there’s the question of buying power. How much available cash does the coveted 18-49 demographic actually have for the products they’re being enticed to snap up? Second, given the upgraded technology, TiVo and the like, not to mention the good old-fashioned remote, how many young consumers actually sit through the commercials they’ve been rounded up to enjoy? And thirdly, with the proliferation of other options to attract this demo’s attention – video games, the Internet, phones with every possible function, not to mention partying – what percentage of the Highly Coveted have any interest in watching

television, particularly network television, at all? This includes, at the higher reaches of the demographic, overworked singles and exhausted parents, who

at the end of the day have barely the energy to crawl into bed. The current passion for placing products within the bodies of the shows will have little effect if the coveted viewership is otherwise engaged, or asleep.

Nor is the demo’s enthusiasm for the networks likely to be rekindled. Leaving aside the quality of the shows, never scintillating at the best of times, networks are constrained by the rules under which they operate. Legislation, passed decades before “demographics” was ever mentioned, places networks at the mercy of pressure groups of every stripe, Left, Right and wacky. Pressure groups pressure the government, who pressures the networks on matters of content and its expression, strangling

creativity and perpetuating the bland. There's a reason *The Sopranos* is on HBO and not on ABC. There's a reason *South Park* is on unregulated cable's Comedy Central and not on NBC. With these limitations, the networks have little hope of delivering shows a younger generation, raised on more risky entertainment, are likely to enjoy.

Ad agencies are not dumb. Slow to change, maybe, but not dumb. Many of them, hungry for the demo they most covet, are moving where the demos moved – away from the networks. As far back as 2004, *Business Week*, doing a cover story on “the vanishing mass market,” revealed that major advertisers such as Coca Cola, American Express and Pfizer had started introducing their latest products not on the networks, as they always had, but on the Internet, on radio, on billboards and in narrowly targeted magazines. At the same time, advertisers continue to urge the networks to make shows for the audience their research tells them has drifted away. And the networks comply. That might be dumb.

Yet understandable. Television's not completely “Gone fishin.” As ad maven Lyle Schwartz reminds us: “Television's still the largest audience out there.” But who exactly are they? Are the majority of network TV watchers members of the most highly coveted demographic? Or are they – just a thought here – their parents?

The over-50 demographic is not the one most coveted by advertisers. They're at worst despised or at best taken for granted. Why taken for granted? Ad maven Schwartz reports: “From a programming standpoint, programmers think an older person will accept a younger person, but not

vice versa.” Another rule.

As a result, few if any programs offer as their stars any character over 50. In half-hour comedies, an area where I have the greatest familiarity, the older generation is virtually invisible. And if they're present, playing parents of the contemporaries of Coveted Demographic, over-50 characters are depicted in the most unflattering light you can imagine.

Monsters and maniacs. Lunatics on parade. The ego-crushing mother in *Two and a Half Men*. The *Crumbs* matriarch recently sprung from the booby hatch. Then there's the father on *Out of Practice*, a wimpy philanderer – yay, Dad. Monsters, maniacs and morons – and nothing else. If parents were a minority group, there'd be rioting in the streets.

Why are parents portrayed so horrifically? First of all, since advertisers discount them as consumers, there is no downside to presenting them in a negative light. Secondly, and more importantly, this is the way the demo they're trying to appeal to wants parents to be portrayed. Sitcoms, written by younger writers, possibly in the payback mode, offer hideous parental examples as a shorthand explanation for their current state of affairs: “No wonder I'm screwed up; look at who raised me.” In early television, when parents were the targeted demographic, it was the other way around – the fathers knew best and the kids were all flawed. Whatever the generation, advertisers, through their network proxies, provide the coveted consumer what they're always happy to receive: flattering images.

The trouble is, the kids aren't watching. The parents are watching. And all they see are reflections of their

twisted and demented selves. Why do they keep watching? Many don't anymore. Over-50's can only take so much abuse before escaping to the House and Garden Network. But a

surprising number are still tuning in. Why? Because the older generation, criticized earlier for being "brand loyal,"

remains loyal to the network brand. It's what they grew up with. They're used to inoffensive programming. Over-50's also have the time to watch and, with the kids out of the way, discretionary income to spend.

Yes, but if the over-50's are "brand loyal" to networks, aren't they equally loyal to everything else? Yes and no. For example, I have a strong allegiance to Spoon-Sized Shredded Wheat (this isn't "product placement" in an article, it's my cereal of choice.) So you can't sell me breakfast food. On the other hand, which cell-phone company are the over-50's branded to? – they just invented them last Tuesday. My wife drives a hybrid – a new kind of car. Printers, fax machines, places where you can buy stocks without a broker, how can you be resistant to products and services they never had before? The persuasion bank is open. Advertisers, start your engines.

Still, Conventional Wisdom says older people aren't interested in new things, because they're old. Here I make a proposal, which I can't prove statistically, but which I sense from observation is true. When you're talking about the over-50 demographic today, you're including a recently arrived group called Baby Boomers. Not only

Over-50's have time to watch and, with the kids out of the way, discretionary income to spend.

the largest demographic of all time, but also the one that's been advertised to since birth. Baby Boomers never met a trend they didn't like. They were the first targeted teenagers. They're the first group who refuses to get old. And how do they stay young? By climbing on bandwagons and consuming new

things. What I'm saying is this is not your father's old people; it's your father, but he's a different kind of old.

With this in mind, is there any chance of a change in programming strategy? Time buyer Schwartz opines: "I don't see network television in prime time saying, 'We're going to skew old.'" Even though the younger audience is diminishing? "When network advertising ceases to work, the money moves on to other media where it's more effective." This is advertising's promise to television – "We're with you 'til we're not."

Garry Hart, the former studio boss now hoping to sell shows of his own, wonders if perhaps the demographic model for deciding what to make might itself be the problem. "The Conventional Wisdom is that young adults only want to watch shows about young adults. Conventional Wisdom sometimes is wrong."

Hart cites the example of *The Golden Girls*, where the characters were old and older, but the show was a hit with everyone, including the young. How did it get on? "I wonder if it will appeal to young adults?" That question wasn't asked back then." Hart mentions his kids' apathy toward current sitcoms, where characters are closer to their age,

but are fans of the older sitcoms on *Nick at Night* where they're not. His insight paraphrases the wisdom of the '92 Democratic campaign: "It's the quality, stupid!"

Concerning the fleeing Coveted Demographic, his proposal is a simple one: "If we make really, really, good television, maybe we can get them back."

The final word comes from the *Television Insider*: "The adult 18-49 demographic in the next 20 to 30 years is going to increase by 2 per cent. In the same time period, the 'fifty-plus' generation will increase by 40 per cent." So television will adjust to these changes, right? Don't hold your breath. "I don't think it's going to happen for a long time," the *Insider* predicts. "We

should appeal to over-50 people, but as long as the advertisers dictate the demographic they want, nobody will change," their reluctance due to the aforementioned fear and "the illogical nature of this business."

It's almost impossible to get people to revisit conventional wisdom, especially when there's still money being made by leaving things alone. But maybe it's time advertisers took a deep, relaxing breath and a careful second look. There's a chance, bordering on a likelihood, that advertisers are coveting a demographic lacking substantial buying power who have permanently "left the building" and ignoring another demographic, with money to spend, that continues to watch.

A frequent contributor to *Television Quarterly*, Earl Pomerantz was executive producer of *The Cosby Show*. He is a veteran television comedy writer whose credits include *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Cheers*. He has won two Emmy awards, a Writers' Guild award, a Humanitas Prize and a Cable Ace award. He has written commentaries on television for *The Los Angeles Times* and will be lecturing at major college campuses on the subject of this article.

Ted Koppel is Still Relevant

He reveals his convictions about TV journalism and its future on the Internet. | **By Morton Silverstein**

Last year at this time *Television Quarterly* ran the first part of an interview I conducted with Ted Koppel, then the host of ABC News *Nightline* (as he would be for 25 years). Our lead line then was “There is one thing unmistakably clear about Ted Koppel. He does not suffer fools gladly.”

The aphorism still obtains.

Our interview began with a dust-up – ABC seeking to replace *Nightline* with an entertainment show headed by David Letterman, if he could be lured from CBS. Exacerbating this was an unnamed ABC executive who proclaimed: “The relevancy of *Nightline* just is not there anymore.”

With remarkable civility, Koppel responded with the *New York Times* Op-Ed page as his proscenium, and further articulated in our interview: “I said that I had no illusions, that I knew that I was not working for a charitable organization. It’s a business. They believed they could make a great deal more by bringing David Letterman over. But I said it was gratuitous for that still unnamed executive to say what he or she did. And that got my Irish up. So I felt it was important that if the Letterman thing did not go

through, and if *Nightline* was to stay on ABC, very senior representatives of this organization should publicly express what I hoped would be their real view about *Nightline*. Which they did.”

We asked: Where do you stand right now? Is there a new contract, which would satisfy you temporarily?

Koppel: Yes. It satisfied me... our life span could have been as brief as a few more weeks. Now we have a guarantee of significantly longer than that.

Us: How much longer?

Koppel: (laughing) None of your business.

But soon enough, it would be everyone’s business.

“Preeminent newsman Ted Koppel startled industry executives last week by jumping to a network not known for news,” announced *Broadcasting & Cable* magazine last January. “The venerated ABC *Nightline* ex-anchor, his producer/sidekick Tom Bettag and eight former ABC producers will develop at least six specials a year for Discovery on important issues but not

necessarily topics that broadcast or even cable news operations care much about." *B&C* quoted Koppel as saying that "cable news is in a desperate race to be first with the obvious."

When asked what he might get out of Discovery that he wouldn't get elsewhere, he answered: "An environment that is conducive to doing the kind of programming that we want to do...The great joy of Discovery is that we can expand beyond even what we have done in the past."

And what of the past? The legacy that Ted Koppel's *Nightline* left?

Following are some of the most memorable moments of a series—and philosophies about broadcast journalism—that made late-night network television eminently watchable.

Mort Silverstein: I'd like your take on some interview excerpts which we plan to roll from *Nightline*. This is post the crisis. The Hostage Crisis was always the lead story, but you had other stories, is that correct?

Ted Koppel: It was not always the lead story. I mean, we did, for a number of months thereafter, always give some kind of an Iran update.

But after a number of months, we just started doing programs on other subjects. There simply wasn't anything to report. We had no sense of what was happening inside the Embassy. It was still the Carter Administration. It was the last thing in the world they wanted to talk about anymore. They had been very eager to talk about it during the first few days, but after that, no. So there were many times when we did

programs that had nothing whatsoever to do with Iran.

MS: But I recall viewers were really dependent upon you and *Nightline* to tell them what was going on with the Crisis.

TK: Well, that was just before CNN began. I think CNN went on the air in 1980. So back then, there was no 24-hour cable news. And if people wanted to know what was happening between the hours that the evening news broadcasts went off the air and the time that we came on at 11:30, we were it.

MS: For the benefit of a much younger generation that hasn't caught up with this aspect of history yet, the Crisis ended when?

TK: January 20th, 1980. At noon, precisely, because the Iranians were quite literally waiting. They did not want to release the hostages to Jimmy Carter. And they waited until the very moment that Ronald Reagan took the oath of office. And there had to have been someone, in Washington or in the United States, on a cell phone or on a regular phone, to Tehran, saying ok; he's not the president anymore. Reagan's in; Carter's out. And at that moment, they allowed the plane with the hostages to take off.

MS: Some post-hostage-crisis interviews. Gary Hart; December 15th, '87. You asked him about his reputed affairs while married or separated, and he finished by in effect saying that such a question, about his faithfulness, might bring down the Republic.



Ted Koppel, anchor of the ABC News program *Nightline*.

TK: He just says that he hopes that a question like that will never have to be asked again.

MS: He was pretty ticked off. Or he pretended to be.

TK: I don't think he was pretending. I think he probably was ticked off. But he certainly wasn't surprised, because we had engaged in lengthy telephone negotiations about this.

What is forgotten now is that Gary Hart had previously had a reputation of being a ladies man. And when he decided to run for the presidency in that year, his staff, who were people who were going to be on his campaign staff, had said to him, look, if you're gonna run for president, you've gotta promise us that there isn't gonna be any of that. And he had made that promise. The subject had come up at a press

conference: was he, in fact, still engaging in that kind of behavior? He issued a challenge to the press. He said, no, I'm not. But, you know, you can follow me if you want to. I guess assuming that nobody ever would. But one reporter, I think for the *Miami Herald*, took him up on it. Did follow him. Followed him to the apartment of someone who was not his wife. Saw him go in there late in the evening and not emerge until very early in the morning. And so the subject was suddenly out there. It was out there, in large measure, because he had issued the challenge.

But these were also different times. The question is frequently raised, why didn't you guys in the press do the same thing with Jack Kennedy there, who was probably just as randy in his way as either Gary Hart or Bill Clinton? I wouldn't describe FDR as having being randy; I mean, he had had an affair.

But these guys, you know, they had multiple relationships. And in the wake of Vietnam and in the wake of Watergate, and in the wake of many of the things that had happened in the late '60s, there simply was no longer the willingness to give people the kind of leeway that had been given to them in the '40s or '50s or even the early '60s. And Gary Hart was the first victim of that. But he was a victim of his own design. And of his own challenge. It certainly finished his political career.

MS: On *Nightline* also were Jim and Tammy Bakker, accused, among other things, of misappropriating their televangelism empire funds for personal use. I think "scoundrels."

TK: Oh, sure. They were scoundrels. They were people who are just ordinary thieves. And then there are thieves who take advantage of religion and people's charitable inclinations. And the Bakkers did both. It's one thing to steal money that isn't yours. It's something else to take it from people, many of whom didn't have a whole lot of money themselves, but were sending money in to the PTL, as it was then known.

MS: Praise The Lord.

TK: Praise The Lord. But in any event, the money was supposed to go to help poor people; people who were in desperate need. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker were many things, but they were not in desperate need. And they used people's faith, and they used people's sense of charity, to line their own pockets. So I think "scoundrel" is probably a rather gentle term to use.



A Serb in Croatia.

MS: Talk about Kosovo.

TK: What had happened was, this was in a square behind police headquarters in [Prishtina]. And we had just spent the morning going through police headquarters, which by then had been abandoned, and the police had set fire to many of the documents that were in there. And there was a small, open-air café in the square behind the, behind the police headquarters. And there were a couple of customers sitting there. And so I asked them if they would mind if I sat down and talked to them. And they were both Serbs. And I asked them about what had happened to the Kosovar Albanians. And one man in particular [see photo above] kept insisting to me that the Albanians, the Kosovar Albanians, the ethnic Albanians, who were the victims of a number of atrocities, and indeed I had just come the day before from seeing a mass grave opened up, in which there had been the bodies of women and children. And they were still insisting that if anything, the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo got better treatment than the Serbs did. And the argument that this man was making was that if indeed a Serb as much as slapped an Albanian in

the face, that he, the Serb, would end up in prison.

And so I said, bullshit. And what had been going through my mind at that point was, if I'd been sitting in Berlin in 1945, behind Gestapo headquarters, and if a German then had told me the same thing about some of the, the victims of Nazis and who had ended up in the concentration camps and had told me that no, in point of fact, German Jews were treated better, that just to say, gee, I'm not sure that's accurate, didn't seem quite strong enough. Bullshit seemed like the appropriate expression, and I used it, and my producer and I talked about whether we should put it on the air that night, and both felt it was just the right word.

THE AL CAMPANIS INTERVIEW

MS: On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's debut in Major League Baseball, you interviewed Al Campanis, Los Angeles Dodger vice-president and director of player personnel. Following Roger Kahn, author of *The Boys of Summer*, you asked Campanis why there were no black managers, no black general managers, no black owners, in Major League Baseball. Campanis responded, "I don't believe it's prejudice. I truly believe that they [African Americans] may not have some of the necessities to be, let's say, a field manager or perhaps a general manager." What was your reaction when you heard that key word "necessities"?

TK: There's something else that you need to understand: we had invited Al Campanis on the program because

in the late '40s, early '50s, he had been Jackie Robinson's roommate. We brought him on because that took, in those days, for a white ballplayer to room with a black ballplayer, an act of courage. It was an act of great decency. So my first reaction was just one of absolute shock. And Al Campanis and I met years later. He heard that I was in Los Angeles and he called me at the hotel and asked if I'd meet him for a cup of coffee, and I said sure. I mean, I came down fairly hard on him after that statement, and, and tried to give him actually two or three chances to redeem himself but he kept digging himself in deeper and deeper...

Part of the problem was that he was sitting at home plate; it was just after a night game. He had one of these earpieces and he couldn't see me at the time; he was a man already in his seventies then. But it was also a function, I think, of his generation. That to talk that way would have been perfectly acceptable. In the locker room. In the local pub. In the 1950s. Or even into the '60s and '70s. It wasn't appropriate anymore in 1987. And we could very easily have had some other official of the Los Angeles club on, who would have been smarter, smoother, or would have known enough not to say that. I mean, I felt kind of sorry for Al Campanis, because as I say, fundamentally, I think, he was a very decent man. And at the time when it meant the most, he was there. And he, quite literally and figuratively, stood up at the plate. And was there to be a friend as well as a teammate to Jackie Robinson. But I just couldn't let him say those things and not challenge him. And the end result was that a day or two later he was fired.

MS: Wasn't there a happier ending after that?

TK: Harry Edwards, an African-American sociologist, called Al Campanis and asked him if he would come to work with him, and they actually did some very useful work together, and Campanis was very proud of that.

MS: Campanis apparently was seeking...to put the question back on your desk when he asked "how many black anchormen do you have?" And you answered, "fortunately, there are a few black anchormen. But if you want me to tell you why there aren't any black executives, I'm not gonna tell you it's 'cause the blacks aren't intelligent enough. I'm going to tell you it's because whites have been running the establishment of broadcasting just as long as they've been running the establishment of baseball, for too long. And seem to be reluctant to give up power."

THE STATE OF BROADCAST JOURNALISM TODAY

MS: At Harvard's Kennedy School of Government a couple of years ago, you answered questions from students and the public about the integrity of the news product. And you said, "I frequently argue that television journalism today," – this is two years back – "and print journalism today is better than it's ever been. Simultaneously, unfortunately, it's also worse than it has ever been. We have more good journalism and more bad journalism coexisting and

frequently the bad drives out the good." How do you define bad and how do you define good?

TK: Well, I think, I think television journalism has a propensity to get into a competition to be first with the obvious. I think also in the wake of *60 Minutes* demonstrating that a television news program can be profitable, there has, over the past 25 years, been an enormous amount of pressure for television news programs to make money. You don't make money, for the most part, by covering subjects like the economy; race relations; politics; foreign policy. You're more inclined to make money by covering stories like the stain on Monica Lewinsky's dress, or stories like the young skating star who smashed her opponent's knee. Or the O. J. Simpson story, or that little girl who was the tiny-tot beauty queen who was murdered. Those kinds of stories get a ton of coverage. And some of it is quite good. But a lot of it is just dreadful. And a lot of what is on the air today is just an effort to report what has happened most recently. And what has happened most recently is not necessarily what is most important. The essence of journalism is not covering an event live; the essence of journalism is in the editing process. The essence of journalism has to do with sorting out that which is important from that which is not. For getting rid of the trivial. We tend to focus on the trivial and ignore the important.

MS: A student asked if the advent of news coverage on the Internet would lead to broadcast journalism's demise. Do you recall your response concerning an information anarchy in the coming

years? This is about the Internet giving us the news.

TK: The First Amendment to the Constitution does something quite extraordinary. And that is, it relieves everyone in the country from any kind of obligation to have any particular qualifications in order to become a journalist. Anyone in America can become a journalist simply by stating “I am a journalist.” That used to be an academic or at least an abstract proposition. Until the arrival of the Internet. Now, not only legally, not only in the abstract or academic sense, but quite literally, anyone can be a journalist. Without any training, without any qualifications, without having to meet

any standards; simply by writing whatever nonsense they want to, and pressing a key or two, on the Internet, they can put it out there. I think that fits the definition of informational anarchy. That doesn’t mean that there isn’t a lot of excellent stuff on the Internet. It simply means that there is no control over the Internet. There cannot be; there will not be; it was designed to be a piece of equipment that cannot be controlled. I mean, it was designed by the Pentagon, in the event of nuclear war, so that there could be communication within the command structure, and so that even a nuclear war could not disrupt the Internet. That to me suggests that we are well on our way into the world of information anarchy.

Television in America, which appears on many public television stations (please check listings) is hosted by Steven Scheuer; Senior Writer/Producer Morton Silverstein; Executive Producers: for the Independent Production Fund: Alvin H. Perlmutter; for CUNY TV: Executive Director Robert Isaacson.

Jack Paar at the Berlin Wall

Veteran director's account of landmark program spotlighting historic event. | **By Hal Gurnee**

In the summer of 1961, the Soviet Union stepped up pressure on the West to recognize the communist puppet state of East Germany. Rebuffed, the Soviets announced that they would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany which would shut off access to West Berlin. East Berliners escaped by the thousands into West Berlin and the communist regime countered with barbed-wire fences. Then in August the East German regime constructed a ten-foot-high concrete wall stretching more than 20 miles. Buildings along the divide were toppled to prevent their use by refugees to tunnel under, or, far more risky, to jump over the wall. On the Eastern side extra forces, East German police, were moved in for additional security. In the West more U.S. troops were assigned to the border crossings.

Jack Paar, who hosted his own highly popular late-night show on NBC, decided that he wanted to film one program at the Berlin Wall. I was the NBC staff Associate Director on the show. The following account was gathered from my written observations, kept mostly on show rundowns and rehearsal schedules.

- H.G.

28 August

10 A.M. After show meeting, Producer Paul Orr tells me Jack wants to meet with us when he gets in. Now what?

1 P.M. Jack's office, windowless, low ceiling, dim lights, and always the smell of Jack's after-shave lotion and cigar smoke. A cartload of flats and props for that night's commercials (with boxes of RealLemon, Arpège Perfume bottles, and Alpo dog food display) rumble by the open door to the adjacent scene shop and storeroom. Jack: "We're going to Berlin next week. I talked to [NBC President Robert] Kintner this morning and he says OK." (Just like Jack to go directly to the top.) The plan is to do the twelve-to-one portion of the show there and fly the tapes back to New York for the next night's airing. Director Kirk Alexander will do New York and I will do Berlin. Jack: "I really want to see that wall."

29 August

11 A.M. Sit down with Paul and Unit Manager Bert Fainberg. NBC programming coordinator has

joined us. We have a studio in Berlin available next week only and, great news, an independent TV contractor with a mobile unit and crew. Bert arranges a phone conference with Berlin so I can talk to their studio and technical heads. I describe show to them, what we will need: cameras, sound, lighting, crew, and production staff (Assistant Director, Production Assistants, English speaking, of course). Immediate misunderstandings give inkling of the good times to come.

4:30 P.M. Rehearse singers Phil Ford and Mimi Hines on song to be sung at home base, a very sentimental version of "Till There Was You." Jack once asked Oscar Levant what he thought of Ford and Hines - Oscar: "I can't watch them, I'm a diabetic, you know." Talk to Kirk about Berlin...says he is happy not to be going...visited Berlin in the 30s while still at Princeton and hated it. Of course a lot of people hated being in Berlin in the 30's.

30 August

Talk to NBC Press Representative Gary Stindt in Berlin. They are trying hard to provide an English-speaking crew, at least department heads, and most important of all, the Technical Director and audio operators. Bert tells me that NBC will not send any of the New York crew to Berlin...not in the budget. Why am I worried? Console myself with a double order of cheese toast at Schraffts, across from 30 Rock on Sixth Avenue.



Jack Paar (upper right), Peggy Cass (to his right) and the NBC crew at Tempelhof Airport, Berlin. The author, Hal Gurnee, is at bottom left.

1 September

Alitalia to Berlin (don't ask). Most of tiny staff aboard, Paul Orr, Jack's secretary Mitzi Matravers, writers Bob Howard, Paul Keyes, Associate Producer Tommy Cochran and, of course, our cast members, Jack Paar and Peggy Cass. Bert went out day before to set up our production office. Stindt greets us at Tempelhof Airport. All pose on plane's steps for group picture. We look more like tourists on a pleasure jaunt than a TV team ready to work in a truly hot spot in the Cold War. West Berlin very appealing, busy streets, attractive shop windows, and many new buildings. Looks more

like American Midwest than Europe. Kurfürstendamm reminds me of Fifth Avenue. We are staying at the Berlin Hilton. This may be fun after all.

2 September

Studio brings me back to reality...small, awkward floor plan...best they have available. Long side of studio has steep, uncomfortable bleacher seating. Not good...Start by setting marks on floor for home-base platform. Look through scene dock and storage for desk and seating for interview area. There is a fly loft that holds a few nondescript curtains and flats to choose from. Studio dark today, will meet crew tomorrow. (What's the German word for "nervous"?)

3 September

Jack's wife Miriam and daughter Randy arrive. Meet them in lobby on way out to studio. Jack has talked to Paul and Tommy and is concerned about guest list...just found out that Arlene Francis will not be available. Billy Wilder, shooting "One, Two, Three" with Cagney in Germany will not let her off. We knew that Jack was counting on her, especially with such a thin guest list, to appear more than once during the week.

Meet crew: friendly but guarded reception...lots of handshaking. German custom insists on a daily firm handshake, and often another on leaving. Many smiles, but not much English spoken. Will meet camera switcher tomorrow on first tape day. She, I am assured, speaks English. Get busy in the studio positioning home base furniture for lighting director, and sit in for Jack so that lighting crew, on

ladders, can focus lamps. In production area, place tape marks on floor for still undetermined performers. In the control room play back videotape of a recent show, to give the crew an idea of what it looks like. Jack's monologue and chat with Hugh Downs at home base gets no response, but in the "New Products" bit that follows, a big laugh from the crew, when the wind-up savings bank opens slowly and a tiny hand emerges, snatches the coin, and quickly closes. I point out on the monitor where we usually use follow spots and mike placements for stand-ups and musical acts. I have no idea if they understand me, but they smile and nod their heads. So far, so good.

Dinner with Jack, Tommy and Paul at the hotel. Jack is glum. Only solid booking is German actor Kurt Jurgens, and of course Peggy Cass, who will be Jack's sidekick for all the shows. Tommy thinks that with the newspapers full of stories about the Berlin Wall crisis, potential guests from the U.S. or Britain may not be thrilled to be in Germany at this time. Jack asks about music guests and Paul assures him that we do have Crazy Otto (Fritz Schulz-Reichel), the hottest music and comedy act in Germany at the moment. Fitful night's sleep.

4 September

First show day. Handshakes all around, including all the crew and stagehands. Cameramen frisky and proudly show me their new camera pedestals and perform very smooth trucks and dollies for me. Control room at farthest end of studio from home base, approached from a steep set of stairs at the end of the bleachers. Inside, view of studio

floor obstructed by a forest of hanging lamps and video monitors. More handshakes, video operators, projectionists, audiomen, and then Marianne Aiken, a pretty girl in her mid-twenties. She explains that she, not the technical director, works

the switching console. She doesn't have headset communications with the crew, but I do, and when I say "Take Camera One," she punches the Camera One button...and that's it. Like dictating to a typist. Marianne speaks some English, but not any of the floor crew except the floor manager, who will relay my cues to Jack.

6 P.M. Showtime. Enthusiastic audience, mostly G.I.s and U.S. Government workers. Jack's monologue goes well, but Bob Howard's joke, which he tried out on me on the plane coming over, — "We have nothing to fear, but fumph itself" — puzzles the audience. I love that joke. At home base, Peggy and Jack's quips about touring Berlin get a good reception from an audience of mostly temporary Berliners. Notice that slowly but surely the three cameras drift off the marks I had set for them in camera rehearsal. Camera Three glides first left, then right to a position in back of home base, with a downward shot over the back of Jack's head to the notes on his desk. Camera Two is making a very slow but discernible sweep to his left and Camera One has pushed in and pedestaled down,



Jack Paar with Col. John Deane

providing a close-up of Peggy right out of the German expressionist film, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari". I see on the monitor Jack's puzzled look as his eyes follow the brand-new camera moves, and after cueing the stage manager for a commercial break, quick dash down the steps and across the studio's floor, and with the help of the stage manager and interpreter, get the cameramen to return to their marks... "No more 'Immelman'" I call over my shoulder, as I hurry back to the control room. (WWI air ace Mark Immelman, famous for his original aerial maneuvers). After commercial break, the show continues with Jack introducing film clips shot the day before: Ka De We department store and U.S. Army Drill Team. Last two segments devoted to interview with Kurt Jurgens. Mild.

5 September

Noon Back at studio for notes to crew on last night's show. Camera guys not as frisky as yesterday. Feel a bit guilty about "nailing" them to marks on studio floor. I congratulate them on last night's work and promise them that their wonderful camera moves will be very welcome with our music and



Jack Paar and Peggy Cass at Checkpoint Charlie.

variety acts. Marianne tells me that the follow spot operators waited, but did not get a chance for a handshake when I came in. Up to the follow spot platforms high up in back of the audience section. Pretending to check out lines of sight for audience monitors, sidle over, greet and shake hands with the lamp men. Now on with the day.

Earlier that day took advantage of NBC's offer to provide a personal tour of East Berlin for anyone on the staff...Randy and I only ones to show up and we had the van all to ourselves. Randy at 12 is good company and smart enough to help me load film into my new Leica. East Berlin, what a sad place, street after street of rubble filled lots. Long lines waiting at a bakery shop, old women sweeping roadway with straw brooms right out of the Middle Ages. Recently constructed buildings along Stalinallee, East Berlin's major throughfare, with wooden canopies at the first floor level to protect pedestrians from falling masonry. Brecht's Berlin Ensemble Theater dark and gloomy, waiting for

a new production, past the grass mound that covers Hitler's bunker and an astounding war memorial, where thousands of Russian soldiers, who died taking Berlin, are buried. Back to West Berlin and the glitter of the Kurfürstendamm.

6 P.M. Showtime. Run NBC news footage of refugees escaping through tunnels under the wall.

Jack narrates over remarkable story of a whole family being rescued by relatives in the West...as film ends, Jack introduces the escapees...very moving. Jack is obviously very touched by their bravery. After a commercial break, Jack continues with more refugees, this time a husband and wife joining their children in West Berlin. Interviews run long, keep feeding Jack windup cues. Paul anxious to get music act into the show...the only variety act available so far. (We must finish on time, no time to edit after show, must make the night flight to New York). After break, Jack quickly introduces the closing act, one he has never seen before, and reputed to be the hottest thing in Germany...Crazy Otto. Crazy Otto's act is loud and fast, a man in a garish plaid suit and an even louder voice. He sings and plays at an old-fashioned upright piano with great energy...I think I recognized "Paddlin' Madelin' Home" in the middle of his medley of old-time hits. The audience loves him and we fade to black over very enthusiastic applause. We're on time.

Jack in his dressing room after the show: "We didn't come all the way to Berlin to see Crazy Otto...we came to see the Wall. What are we going to do?"

Quick meeting with our hired TV contractor Abe Askanowsie, and Herr Healzauber who owns the remote truck. Tommy, Bert, and I will meet with the Army P.R. Officer in the morning. Phone call to Herr Healzauber; he assures me that his mobile unit is ready to go. Ask for a crane to get high shots over the wall. He doesn't have one but will ask around and try to rent one.

6 September

9 A.M. Tommy and Bert introduce me to Col. John Deane, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battle Group, 6th Infantry in Germany, and Lt. Col. Dallas Hoadley, Information officer of the Berlin Command. Col. Deane will be on hand for the remote and arrange for some soldiers for Jack to talk to. Nice guys to work with. We agree on Checkpoint Charlie at the Friedrichstrasse crossing for our remote. I ask for a Jeep for background for Jack and the G.I.s. No problem. Settle on 1 P.M. for taping. Herr Healzauber arrives and assures me that his crew is first rate and almost all English speakers. I ask again about a crane, hoping he has located a Chapman. He doesn't have one but can rent an industrial crane ("cherry picker") to get high shots over the wall, used by the power company. It has a bucket to hold a camera and operator...and will go higher than a television crane... Checkpoint Charlie and the Wall. Great.

6 P.M. Studio show goes well. We run scenes we filmed earlier in the week

of Berlin landmarks, some shot from a helicopter, and looking gloomy, because of the weather. I can sense that Jack is thinking of tomorrow's remote from the Friedrichstrasse crossing.

7 September

8:30 A.M. Rain. Gloomy breakfast at hotel. Weather forecast not good... a very slight chance of clearing in the afternoon.

Checkpoint Charlie like a set for a World War II movie. Handful of G.I.s hunkered down out of the rain in bombed-out five-story buildings that line the Friedrichstrasse. Show our passes and check out positions for Jack and Peggy. Mark spot on white striped borderline for jeep to sit on while Jack interviews G.I.s. Sure enough remote truck is already in place across the street from the checkpoint. Herr Healzauber greets us and looks up at the sky. I assure him it will clear up for the taping but to be on the safe side have storm covers for the cameras...we may have to shoot in the rain. He looks up again. Inside the truck I meet the crew, pleasant young fellows but only one speaks English. I arrange to replace the camera switcher. I will work the board and use the engineering headset to talk to Wilhelm, the English speaker, who will man Camera Two on the crane and will relay my directions to the rest of the crew. Ask him to explain that we do this show as if it were "Live." No tape stops; one take. Good Luck.

Crane a problem, or should I say cherry picker or industrial crane (a literal translation of cherry picker leaves them bewildered and we agree on crane). The vertical lift is very jerky and makes

the bucket holding Camera Two lurch and tremble to a stop. There goes my effortless crane-up shot to reveal East Berlin over the world-famous wall. We will have to wait until bucket finishes it's move and is steady to use camera. Leni Riefenstahl, where are you? Remote crew runs cables to cameras that will cover Jack, Peggy, and G.I.s to be interviewed. NBC's "Here and Now" crew working nearby check our schedule, tell them we should be out of here by 3 p.m.

Jack and Peggy arrive. Show them their marks alongside large sign that reads "YOU ARE LEAVING THE AMERICAN SECTOR" in English, Russian, and French. Jack is free to roam around with his handheld mike. I tell him to be sure and start at the border sign and get to the Jeep for the soldiers' interviews. Quick talk with Col. Deane tells me he added machine gun to jeep at last minute. Ten minutes to tape time and the sky opens up. Storm covers protect the cameras but the lenses are beaded with raindrops....decide to hold off taping. Jack, Peggy, and the staff take cover. Herr Healzauber hurries over, "We must move, we must move...water cannons!!" Sure enough through the mist and rain I can make out trucks with large nozzle - like snouts moving in the East. It is hard to make out where they are heading. Herr Healzauber orders the remote truck to be moved. It backs up several yards and turns into a space between two ruined buildings...safe from the VoPo (East German armed militia). Quickly the camera and audio cables are extended and redressed. Heavy rain again. Wait out downpour and at approximately 2 P.M., in light drizzle we decide to start.

On street for last-minute conference with staff and Bert, who volunteers to stage-manage on the street. As I hurry back to the truck, look up the street and see 40 or 50 G.I.s in full battle dress moving towards us and taking up positions along the checkpoint. I yell to Bert to move them back and he shouts back that they are part of the afternoon personnel change and got here early to watch the show.

2:10 P.M. Tapes roll. Jack masterfully ad-libs introduction...Peggy tags along and points out landmarks. Jack points out water cannon across the border: Peggy; "I hope they don't use it, I just had my hair done." Cameras and soundmen do their best as I struggle with an unfamiliar switching console. Added problem...no one to time out commercial breaks and keep an overall running time, luckily we were able to set the truck clock to New York show time. Jack for once takes his time cues. Wilhelm on Two is very sharp and passes on my instructions to the other three cameras. During commercial break a busload of American G.I.s cross over to East Berlin on a sightseeing tour. Jack talks to the G.I.s and Peggy joins in with her trademark quips... she points out young girls leaning out of a high window on the Eastern side watching the show. She is a great help. Rain has stopped but the sky remains dark. Gloomy pictures of a gloomy place. Wilhelm has wonderful views over the wall into East Berlin. By panning from West to East the contrast of the divided city is unavoidable. Most telling of all is the view down the length of wall looking endless as it disappears into the mist.

3:05 P.M. Final segment. Rain starts again as we fade up after commercial break. Jack and Peggy wrap it up sitting close together on the narrow traffic island that divides Friedrichstrasse as it crosses over the border, a scene right out of Chaplin's "City Lights."

8 September

9 A.M. Hotel breakfast: ham, cheese, fruit, and dark bread as usual. Tommy and Bert join me. "Jack has New York papers and we're in them!" In Jack's suite a storm is raging as Jack reacts to the newspaper reports of yesterday's taping. Stindt from NBC Press sits meekly on the couch surrounded by newspapers and teletype copy. Jack: "They are attacking me again...look at this!"

Here are the quotes from the American Press: United Press Berlin Bureau: JACK PAAR IN BERLIN. "It was the biggest turnout the Americans had yet made along the wall that divides Communists from Free Berlin---and it was all for Jack Paar."

New York Times (front page): 50 US SOLDIERS IN ACTION FOR TV. "Fifty armed U.S. soldiers moved rapidly down a rain-splattered street, then smartly took possession of buildings overlooking the East-West border. A Jeep with a machine gun had a front wheel planted on the white stripe that indicates the border between East and West. And it was all for Jack Paar the television star."

Journal-American (front page): PENTAGON TO PROBE TROOP DEPLOYMENT FOR PAAR IN BERLIN. "The Pentagon with the

approval of the White House launched an investigation...If the newspaper reports are accurate it was a disgraceful episode said Assistant Secretary of Defense Arthur Sylvester...Pierre Salinger, White House Press Secretary, agreed."

N.Y. Herald Tribune (front page): ARMY AND PAAR PUT CAPITAL IN A DITHER. "A miniature Berlin Crises mushroomed here following report of the United States extraordinary turnout on the explosive Berlin border for the filming (sic) of Jack Paar television show. The White House was disturbed. The State Department was troubled. The Defense Department immediately began to investigate."

New York Times: Senator Hubert Humphrey: "This is the very thing that Khrushchev seizes upon"...Senator Leverett Saltonstall: "Disgraceful"... Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield "I hope Berlin will not become the new Mecca for the jaded of the Entertainment World."

Mid-afternoon at hotel, run into Jack, Miriam and free-lance journalist Eleanor Harris, who is doing a story about Jack for *Look* magazine and now will do an exclusive interview with Jack about Jack's very own "Berlin Crisis" for Sunday's *Herald Tribune*. What a great scoop for Eleanor and a chance for Jack to tell his side of the story. Jack, Miriam, and Randy off to Moscow tomorrow. Jack tells me that he has heard from New York that the Army is going to discipline Cols. Deane and Hoadley for helping us. "They are not going to get away with that...see you in New York, kid."

9 September

Front page *N.Y. Herald Tribune*: “That ‘Little Berlin Crisis,’ over a Jack Paar TV show, came to a boil yesterday. The Army removed one officer – Lt. Col. Dallas Hoadley of Baltimore from his post for ‘Improper performance of duty’ and admonished another – Col. Deane Jr. of San Francisco – for ‘exercising poor judgment’ in providing troops filmed by the TV star on the border between East and West Berlin.”

10 September

Jack gets to tell his side of the story in Eleanor Harris’ feature story for the Sunday *Herald Tribune*. Jack starts by saying “The fact is, if there’s no news, reporters will make up news. And we happen to be the only show going on here that interested them... I’m not surprised that they make up news, but I am surprised to hear that the U.S. Senate spent a whole morning discussing this matter.” Jack goes on to point out that “the U.S. Army has been working in co-operation with many other TV shows in the past month and even this week has spent many hours with the CBS show *Eyewitness to History*. Not one thing we or the Army did was improper. No pull was used, political or any other kind to get Army cooperation. All that my traveling staff of seven people (not 100 as has been reported) did was ask, in my name, if we could tape at the Friedrichstrasse border crossing. We asked for one Jeep, something to sit on. Incidentally, Col. Deane who has a chest full of ribbons that 20 Congressmen could well envy, thanked me after taping, for mentioning those kids names on my show...my television show was to begin at 1 p.m. but was postponed for an hour in hopes

that the steady rain would stop. By that time the army guard that changes every afternoon arrived, and out of curiosity they were early... also, the West German press, contrary to my own country’s press, has been very complimentary of our reporting of the Berlin situation. Highly respected journalists like Peter Herz of the *Berliner Zeitung* said that no one else has studied it with the humanity of our Berlin programs.”

* * *

After the one-hour show from the Berlin Wall played back on Tuesday’s Jack Paar Tonight Show, people wondered what all the fuss was about. David Lawrence in the Washington Post put it succinctly...”Anyone who saw the program must have wondered why members of Congress who hadn’t seen it went off the deep end in their criticism. In presenting worthwhile information The Jack Paar Show was an effective piece of work. He deserves not brickbats but applause for his revelation of the human story behind the Berlin Crisis.”

Two weeks later General Bruce C. Clark, Commander U.S. Army, European Theater, announced that after a careful investigation the Army had found that Colonels Hoadley and Deane had done nothing wrong, and that their reinstatement was being made to “right an injustice.”

The Army announcement appeared, in a single, short column in the back pages of the September 28 edition of the New York Times.

Hal Gurnee is a New York-based television director whose credits include *The Tonight Show*, *The Jack Paar Show*, *That Was the Week that Was*, *The Jimmy Dean Show*, *The Garry Moore Show*, *The Joey Bishop Show*, Jack Paar comedy specials, *The David Frost Show*, *The David Letterman Show*, *Late Night with David Letterman*, *Late Show with David Letterman*, *The Chris Rock Show*, and *The Jimmy Kimmel Show*.

The Life and Death of Live Television

Many “live” programs are delayed or pre-recorded, according to two expert analysts.

By Gary Gumpert and Susan J. Drucker

Live from Lincoln Center!...It's Saturday Night Live!...Live from the Met! Live from Times Square! Live from Iraq! The West Wing debates—Live! There is something compelling and attractive about live broadcasts. There is also something precarious, perhaps something to be feared about radio and television broadcasts that are beyond control once transmitted. We are attracted to the live broadcast because it is magical, unpredictable, once the only possibility. We are concerned about uncertainty and the possibility of something going wrong and have developed insurance options that prevent the transmission of uncertainty.

But let's get to the conclusion first. The punch line is that, in all probability, today's television broadcasts are not live, but are delayed.

The November 6th broadcast of *The West Wing* was widely publicized for its daring and unique approach – it was to be a “live” television debate between its

two fictional candidates running for the office of President. According to David Swerdlick writing for PopMatters:

Partly a creative experiment, and partly an effort to boost falling ratings, the broadcast absolutely had the look and feel of a real debate. There were only two commercial interruptions, allowing for a continuity of dialogue. The episode resisted the typical trappings of TV drama — there were no jump cuts following zinging one-liners, no cheesy music leading to breaks. The characters' lines were scripted and rehearsed, just like real-life candidates, but the actors also improvised, with the pauses and hiccups in their delivery adding to the impression that the debate was “real.” The debate was performed twice, aired live for both the East and West Coasts.

Yet while “liveness” of the broadcast



It looked live but it really wasn't: the candidates' debate on NBC's *The West Wing* featured (l. to r.) moderator Forrest Sawyer and the candidates portrayed by Jimmy Smits and Alan Alda.

was its primary claim to fame, let it be known that the broadcast was not live! It was delayed by 5 seconds. According to Alan Wurtzel, President of Research and Media Development for NBC, "with respect to entertainment programming which broadcast standards cover we make a determination if a live show poses a content risk which would subject the network and its affiliates to FCC fines should indecent content be broadcast and, if we decide that's the case, we use a five-second delay but the program is still labeled live. *The West Wing* debate episode was carried on five-second delay."

Let there be no misunderstanding: the specific broadcast of *The West Wing*, advertised as "live," was not "live," but it felt "live" - a feature emphasized in the production itself with its glitches, mistakes, obtrusive cameras, and the candidate actors searching for the

right words and expressions. The real-time impossibilities that generally characterize the film-like editing of most television series were absent - no jumps in action, no frozen frames, no instant switching of costumes and scenes with the magical transition of the actors. The broadcast represented a variation on a theme of "liveness," a facsimile of real liveness.

So there is a delay. To some extent there is always a delay - in a technical sense. Between transmission and reception there is an inherent momentary delay. That is the nature of mediated communication. A phenomenon that becomes even more apparent in Internet-transmitted radio and television broadcasts. The decision to extend that delay introduces a qualitative variable. Awareness of any such delay involves some degree of psychological adaptation. One pretends

there is no delay, or one does not care whether there is a delay, some prefer the delay, and some are concerned and disturbed. The “so what?” response needs to be answered. “So what if the broadcast is delayed by a couple of seconds?” One answer is that “truth in advertising” demands an honest response. A philosophical response is that the appeal of a “live” program is its unpredictability and that the likelihood of an imposed delay suggests manipulation, the expectation of the perfect performance, the awareness of a possible editorial hand in the background. Perhaps it is an issue of notice given by the producer to the consumer that can effect audience expectations and choices. The audience member could then make informed selections: know there is a delay and allow children to watch; know there is no delay and select the program for the fun of potential flaws; know what you are watching and make more informed viewing choices.

Those who seek delays are those in power—from governments who want to avert the transmission of sensitive information to broadcasters who need to protect themselves against government regulators...

There are arguments for and against the authenticity of the live program. Those who seek delays are those in power – from governments who want to avert the transmission of sensitive or secret information to broadcasters who need to protect themselves against government regulators to moralists who seek to protect themselves against

regulators and the outcries of public rage and sensitivity.

The British Broadcasting Corporation took the position last year that they would delay the broadcast of some “sensitive live news.”

The policy is set out in the BBC’s Editorial Guidelines, effective last July.

Caution over showing sensitive footage is not new at the Corporation but it is the first time a delay has explicitly been written into guidelines.

There is also a written commitment that “accuracy is more important than speed” in breaking news.

The Editorial Guidelines will replace the BBC Producers’ Guidelines which have been revised to reflect the new broadcasting code and the “changing media environment”.

“The guidelines are part of our contract with our audiences,” said Stephen Whittle, BBC Controller of Editorial Policy.

The length of such delays is not clear or precisely articulated. The

delay—the length of which will be left to the discretion of the editor in charge—would allow time to exclude any potential material.

What is lost in this policy is the public’s right not to be subjected to it, nor is there a means by which the public would be aware of the practice. Implicit

is the tacit acceptance that some things are best not broadcast in the name of the public's or government's interest. It is virtually impossible to ascertain the scope of government surveillance of public telephony and computer use; it is also very difficult to determine delay, although it is sometimes possible to detect editing as a result of delayed transmission.

When did the assumption that the image on the television screen was live shift to the assumption that it was pre-recorded? The "kine" (kinescope) was the first method of television recording. Created by placing a motion-picture camera in front of a television monitor and recording the image off the monitor's screen, the quality was relatively poor, discouraging recording and rebroadcast. The kine was used on a limited basis in an effort to save money, but the shift to film, which produced a higher-quality product, ushered in an era of more widespread recording.

The demise of the kinescope for entertainment programming has been attributed to the *I Love Lucy* show and its producers Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball. Arnaz and cinematographer Karl Freund devised a method of recording performances on film using three cameras to record live action and later editing. The result was a better-quality recording that could be replayed throughout the country and encouraged reruns. By 1955 *Broadcasting* magazine reported that DuMont had transformed itself into a film-based network, using Electronicam, which combines a TV camera with a film camera, and reserving live transmission for special events and sports.

The first videotape recorder (VTR) was successfully developed by AMPEX

in 1951, allowing live images from television cameras to be captured by converting the information into electrical impulses and saving the information onto magnetic tape; but it was not until the spring of 1956 that AMPEX introduced the first practical videotape system of broadcast quality. The three networks placed orders for Ampex VTRs, and by October of that year CBS became the first network to install the system at Television City in Los Angeles to record the evening news and rebroadcast the tape to West Coast stations three hours later. Videotape then moved into the production of network television entertainment programming when Jonathan Winters, on NBC-TV, used videotape to play two characters in the same skit in an otherwise live broadcast.

By 1975 most entertainment programming was scripted and taped. *Saturday Night Live* rose to success, in part, on the novelty of its unplanned and immediate character which was said to give the show its edge. "By returning to TV's live roots, *SNL* gave its audiences an element of adventure with each program," said Geoffrey Hammill in a publication issued by the Museum of Broadcast Communication. "It acquainted the generations who never experienced live television programming in the 1950s with the sense of theatre missing from pre-recorded programming."

Potentially all broadcasts may be delayed or rebroadcast but currently some programs are more "live" than others, particularly sports broadcasting—although verification of non-delay in sports programming is difficult. Today, live entertainment programming remains atypical, used

as a device to garner ratings by such programs as the hospital drama *ER*, *Real Time with Bill Maher*, *The West Wing* and *Will and Grace*. The latter went live on September 29, 2005 and again on January 12, 2006 with two performances, one for the East Coast and then for the West. Today the broadcast of a live entertainment program is an *event* replete with simultaneous blogging for comments as it progresses.

The perils of live broadcasting came to the foreground on February 2, 2004 during the halftime activities of Superbowl XXXVIII which would far outshine the athletic heroics occurring on the field. During a duet between Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake, Timberlake tore or pulled off part of Jackson's bustier exposing most of her right breast covered by a nipple shield. The repercussions were cries of dismay and shock. CNN reported NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue's response:

"The show was offensive, inappropriate and embarrassing to us and our fans. We will change our policy, our people and our processes for managing the halftime entertainment in the future in order to deal far more effectively with the quality of this aspect of the Super Bowl."

Former FCC Chair Michael Powell promised an investigation into whether CBS violated decency laws, with possible fines of up to \$32,500 applied to each television station. Powell stated:

"Like millions of Americans, my family and I gathered around the television for a celebration. Instead, that celebration was tainted by a classless, crass and deplorable stunt."

According to the FCC, in 2004

there were \$7,928,080 in fines proposed against 314 programs. By 2005 there were 189,362 complaints filed against 720 broadcast and cable programs, according to the FCC more than double the number over the previous year. These fines, perhaps more clearly than articulated regulatory policy, serve as guideposts on programming decisions.

The moral response was to threaten the installation of a virtually fail-safe system in which the American public would be protected against any future similar "catastrophe." High-profile incidents on award shows and the Super Bowl forced stations to be more aware of potential FCC sanctions in a new era of regulatory sensitivity. In *Broadcasting & Cable*, Allison Romano reported:

Around the country, local stations are installing expensive new tape-delay equipment, scouting locations in advance and warning camera crews about the potential for indecent shots...While no stations have delayed news broadcasts yet, much of what small markets consider news—parades, sporting events, town hall meetings—is being "altered" and some broadcast groups including LIN TV, NBC and CBS owned stations have installed tape delaying equipment for event and entertainment programming.

Since the type of programming affected plays a role, we suggest the following categories:

- 1) Live transmissions.
- 2) Programs where the quality of

“liveness” is not an issue – i.e., films and highly edited (filmic) features.

3) Programs in which the illusion of “liveness” is implicit, i.e., quiz shows.

For example, those of us who are *Jeopardy!* addicts are able to demonstrate our extraordinary competitive spirit outshining the contestants because *Jeopardy!* is broadcast at an earlier hour on one of the cable stations. And most of us know that the *Jeopardy!* episodes are taped many weeks before they are broadcast. Thus the outcome of Ken Jennings’s multi-million-dollar record was wrapped in a cloak of secrecy and the audience accepts the convention of “recorded immediacy”.

4) News and sports programs characterized by “mixed liveness.”

The contemporary newscast features its “live” nature conspicuously and constantly in one of the corners of the television screen. Old news is not news and “live” from the heart of the disaster or occurrence is a primary selling feature of any news program. However, the analysis of the television screen reveals a fusion of audio and video with the screen split into multiple frames and inserts. The broadcast may or may not be live. The repeatable scroll may be live but will return until replaced with a more current item. The on-site report from a global hot spot may have been recorded and will be repeated several minutes later. The next story may include a live audio report, but includes a pre-recorded filmed loop. In total what has been produced is a collage of temporally differential items.

5) Internet transmission of radio and television broadcasts presents

an additional problem in terms of “liveness” because delay is built into the computer. According to Bill Birney of Microsoft Corporation:

A broadcast delay is the difference in time between the point when live audio and video is encoded and when it is played back, and it is created primarily by the buffers that store digital media data. For example, if the buffers store a total of ten seconds of data, Windows Media Player will show an event occurring ten seconds late. Often a delay of less than twenty seconds is not a problem. However, when timing is important, Windows Media components provide a number of ways that you can minimize broadcast delay without causing a significant loss of image and sound quality.

An internet reception delay is thus built into the computer system and depending upon the amount of Random Access Memory (RAM) the computer has there is a variable delay inherent in the system.

There once was a time when delay of radio and television transmission was not an issue, because no means of capturing or recording was available. State-of-the-art technology—including satellite telephones, videophones and mobile satellite uplinks—can transmit images often in real-time from remote locations around the globe. The paradox is that with today’s broadcasting technology and its convergent support system the possibility of immediate, direct, global transmission is becoming relatively easy; at the same time, the

ability and impetus to control that transmission has increased. The relationship between producer and viewer is different when dealing with pre-recorded vs. live vs. a facsimile of a live broadcast.

The development of tape recording, DVD, streaming movie rentals, pay-

per-view and TIVO indicates a shift in scheduling to a stress on convenience and delivery. Add to this trend the blurring and ambiguity of immediacy and we see a radical shift in the character of broadcasting. It may not be the life and death of live television, but rather the re-birth of television.

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Pet Peeves on Parade

How does television annoy me? Let me count the 14 ways. | **By Richard G. Carter**

Have you ever stopped to think how annoying watching television has become? Perhaps, if like me, you've been around long enough to have seen everything from grainy black-and-white reception on a small screen in a boxy wooden housing, to a crystal clear, high-definition picture in living color on a huge screen housed in sleek metal alloys.

Most noteworthy of all, we've witnessed the advent of multi-channel cable television which has turned over-the-air broadcast TV into a dinosaur — especially the latter's limited news programming, which is a day late and a dollar short.

Yes, the world of the TV watcher has changed considerably over the last half-century. Happily, most of the new things are far better than what came before, such as those revolutionary flat screens and spiffy remote control devices that have turned so many of us into willing couch potatoes.

Unhappily, however, some new wrinkles make me hanker for the not always good old days, when a TV set in the home was considered a luxury and made you the envy of your neighbors.

As a matter of fact, a lot of the newer innovations foisted off on viewers—with apologies to Alfred Hitchcock—are strictly for the birds.

So, for better or for worse, here's a look at my "Fearless 14" of the most bothersome aspects of today's TV-viewing—including complaints reported to me in reader letters, as well as by many friends and neighbors. Look out below:

On-screen clutter: Why do networks and local stations place their logos in the picture—insulting our intelligence and spoiling the image? We know what channel we're watching. Even more intrusive is the ugly message bar at the bottom of the screen on many cable news and sports channels. This greatly reduces the picture and blocks the action — especially in sports telecasts. Golfers know what I mean. While it's nice to be kept abreast of breaking news, give us a break! The repetitive sports scores and irrelevant filler material is ridiculous and the crawling words distract the eye.

Shrinking credits: Discerning movie fans want to know who played what

part and participated in making a film. We love reading credits at the end. So why do many broadcast stations shrink closing credits to half-screen to preview upcoming programs or show anchor people touting the news? And speed-up closing credits for a TV show so they are virtually unreadable? Premium cable movie channels such as Encore and Starz also downsize closings credits to tout upcoming films. Dumb!

Ill-informed news anchors: Have you heard the one about the news anchor who called combat soldiers “fire fighters” while discussing an Iraq War “fire fight”? Earth to anchor lady: Fire fighters extinguish fires. Combat soldiers do “fire fights.” Many also mispronounce names or words or screw-up dates. MSNBC newsreader Chris Jansing referred to famed St. Louis Cardinals’ play-by-play announcer Jack Buck as Jack Burk. And NBC reporter Norah O’Donnell told viewers Pancho Villa was driven out of Texas in 1960. Uh, Ms. O’Donnell, that historic event took place in 1916.

Ill-advised pro basketball announcers: In a game where a player’s height means everything, viewers these days rarely are given this information. An exception is Walt (Clyde) Frazier on Madison Square Garden Network’s telecasts of the New York Knicks. A 6-4 Hall of Fame guard, he knows how vital this is. Good for you, Clyde.

Politically correct commercials: Everyone knows American society has become more and more racially diverse, which is fine. But is it necessary to beat us over the head? Why are so many commercials so unrealistically

politically correct? For example, why are black males and/or females in situations with white males and/or females that are not true-to-life? Speaking as a black man, I resent this. Let’s face it, most social situations are not racially mixed—so, why not tell it like it is?

Showboating athletes: Many people in this media-oriented age—especially children and teen-agers—emulate what they see on TV. Thus, when athletes in televised games behave in an outrageous “look-at-me” fashion—often highlighted on ESPN SportsCenter—there’s no reason for concern. In addition to muscle flexing, chest beating and duck walking, here are two revolting examples: After New Orleans Saints’ Joe Horn caught a scoring pass, teammate Michael Lewis extracted a hidden cell phone from goal-post padding and handed it to Horn, who punched in numbers and pranced around making conversation. After celebrating a touchdown, Chad Johnson of the Cincinnati Bengals displayed a printed sign hidden in nearby snow that proclaimed “Dear NFL : Please don’t fine me again. Merry Christmas.” Instead of ignoring such exhibitionist, often vulgar, behavior, SportsCenter shows this stuff incessantly.

“We’ve got to take a break to pay some bills.” Speaking of news anchors, are you, like me, tired of someone telling us they’re going to a commercial with these foolish words? Perhaps they think it’s cute. But it’s not—just silly and annoying. And I have heard it from some of the best-known network talking heads and news readers. Are you listening, Brit Hume, et al?

Letterboxed movies: Otherwise wonderful Turner Classic Movies is the leading offender. Named for its slim, rectangular image, letterboxing drastically squishes the vertical picture with repulsive thick, black horizontal borders at the top and bottom. It is pure visual pollution. Viewing a film this way is akin to looking through a basement window from the inside. Designed to show actors at far left and right of a wide-screen film, it's distracting and often cuts off tops of heads. I've heard more gripes about this than any other aspect of movies on TV. C'mon, TCM. It's OK to deep-six the LB.

Anchorpersons who smile when reporting bad news: As a veteran print and broadcast journalist, I am well aware that bad news sells. Most people gravitate to a story about a natural disaster, murder, fire or tragic death, which is why the media so often lead with the worst news of the day. Thus, why do we often see TV news anchors — especially on the local level — smiling while delivering bad news? Is it nervousness, inexperience or plain stupidity? This is the ultimate in bad taste.

Ignoring PA announcers in pro sports: Sadly, the networks have gotten away from letting us see and hear pro football and basketball players and boxers introduced over the loudspeaker at the scene of weekly events. As participants are introduced to the in-person crowd, TV viewers are denied this excitement and subjected to the jibber-jabber of TV analysts. The only time it's done properly these days is for championship fights or championship football and basketball games.

Cutting movies for language or to fit a time slot: Yes, I know those who want R-rated movies and shows such as *Sex in the City* can subscribe to premium cable such as HBO, Cinemax and Showtime. Yet, why do non-cable networks and local channels schedule adult programming if they bleep every other word? In the case of award-winning films such as "The Godfather," "The French Connection" and "Dog Day Afternoon," for example, this is a sacrilege. And wholesale cuts to squeeze a two-hour movie into a 90-minute, commercial-addled slot, is madness.

Joining games in progress: This most often occurs when the first game of a pro football or basketball doubleheader runs long—which is the nature of such contests. However, prior to switching to the second game, networks often air several minutes of commercials, depriving viewers of parts of the games they tuned-in to watch. Hey ya'll, how about holding these commercials until half-time?

Overkill of so-called "news": Coverage of salacious criminal cases involving Jon Benet Ramsey, Scott Peterson, O.J. Simpson, Michael Jackson and the "runaway bride" — to name a few — are among cheesy stories foisted off ad nauseam on TV viewers the last dozen years. Cable's 24-hour news channels are most at fault here.

Annoying sideline sports reporters: How often, when viewing pro basketball, have you endured the likes of Michelle Tafoya, Craig Sager, Jim Gray or Cheryl Miller talking over the action or depriving viewers of game images while asking a spectator innocuous questions?

Why not save these silly interludes for pre-game, halftime and post-game? This also happens at football games and big fights.

Bottom line: TV has come a long way, baby, but sometimes, it seems it lost

its way getting from there-to-here. My advice to those who are running the show is to take a long look at how your product is perceived by the only people who count—your viewers. Then go back to the drawing board and figure out a better way.

Richard G. Carter, a New York freelance writer, was a columnist and editorial writer with the *New York Daily News*. He co-hosted *Showdown* on CNBC with the late Morton Downey Jr. He was Vice President-Public Affairs with Group W Cable and in 1986 received the Marquette University By-Line Award for distinguished achievement in journalism.

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Between You and Me: A Memoir

By Mike Wallace with Gary Paul Gates

Hyperion Books, New York
(292 pages, \$26.95 pages, including DVD)

By Norman Felsenthal

Mike Wallace, the 88-year-old (as of May 9) correspondent emeritus of *60 Minutes*, has written an entertaining and informative memoir of his 60-plus years as a broadcast journalist. The book, co-written with Gary Paul Gates, is his second autobiographical effort.

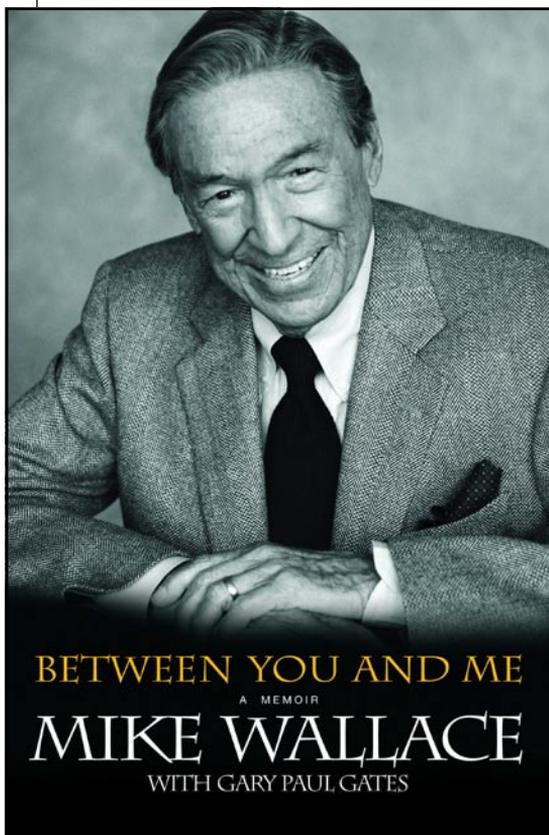
Wallace's first book, also co-written with Gates, was published in 1984 and dealt with his early career in broadcasting. This 2005 memoir focuses almost entirely on various luminaries Wallace has interviewed, primarily during his years at CBS.

The book's title, *Between You and Me*, comes from a phrase Wallace used to make some of his subjects more comfortable and less cautious during the interview process. While the book is not an autobiography in the usual sense of the word, we do learn that Wallace was a violinist and concertmaster of the orchestra at Brookline (MA) High School as well as a boyhood neighbor of John F. Kennedy. We also learn that Wallace suffered from periodic bouts of depression, the most serious of which required hospitalization in 1984.

Wallace avoids a chronological

order but instead divides the accounts of his interviews into nine topical channels from "Presidents" to "Other Celebrated Characters." He places Arthur Miller, Johnny Carson and Mel Brooks in this latter category. The seven middle chapters include stories about the famous and infamous — from Vladimir Horowitz and Itzak Perlman to Mickey Cohen and Joe Bonanno. Artists, con artists, movie stars, civil-rights leaders, foreign statesmen, and presidential wives are all here.

A few of Wallace's interviews go back to a 1956 program on DuMont's local New York station. It was during these *Night Beat* days, that Wallace created a confrontational style of



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questioning that earned him the “Mike Malice” nickname. Based on that program’s success, Wallace moved to ABC and *The Mike Wallace Interview* before becoming a general assignment reporter for CBS and, in 1968, the co-anchor with Harry Reasoner of the newly created *60 Minutes*.

Wallace’s style may have softened over the years but it never really disappeared, much to the annoyance of the Shah of Iran, Anwar Sadat, Lyndon Johnson, Barbra Streisand and even Nancy Reagan, a close personal friend, with whom he crossed verbal swords when she felt he had asked her husband some embarrassing questions.

Not all of Wallace’s remembrances come from his interviews. While he and *60 Minutes* Executive Producer Don Hewitt were touring the LBJ ranch with the former president, Johnson noticed a stray candy wrapper by the side of the road, brought the car to a screeching halt, and ordered Hewitt to pick it up. As Wallace noted, the candy wrapper incident demonstrated LBJ’s “well-earned reputation for being almost compulsive in his need to exert authority and dominate all who came into his presence...At the LBJ ranch, he was still commander in chief.”

Wallace admits that he was impressed with the “new” Richard Nixon who emerged from political defeats in 1960 and 1962 to launch a successful campaign in 1968. He reveals that he was invited to join the Nixon team as press secretary or

communications director and gave it some thought. He declined because he thought he would find it difficult to “put a good face on bad facts,” a portion of every press secretary’s job description. Further, said Wallace, he shuddered at the thought of having to serve as a Presidential spokesman when the Watergate dam broke in 1973.

The very title of the Westmoreland documentary, “The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception,” was guaranteed to provoke intense controversy.

On a more jovial note, Wallace described his efforts to quell Thomas Hart Benton’s stage fright when the 85-year-old artist was about to deliver a lecture at a local church to raise money for the Martha’s Vineyard Arts Association. “Fully aware of [Benton’s] lifelong fondness for the sauce, I had come equipped with a flask that contained his favorite libation — cold and very dry martinis — and for the next half hour or so, we stood outside the church and gulped them down with the fervor of parched Bedouins quaffing at an oasis. Thus fortified, we entered the church fully prepared to be as loquacious and provocative as the occasion required.”

The most poignant chapter of *Between You and Me* deals with two of Wallace’s most controversial interviews, a 1982 *CBS Reports* documentary with General William Westmoreland and a *60 Minutes* 1995 interview with Jeffrey Wigand, a former researcher for the Brown and Williamson who turned whistle-blower against the tobacco

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industry.

The very title of the Westmoreland documentary, "The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception," was guaranteed to provoke intense controversy. It revealed that the General had undercounted the number of enemy troops by excluding an entire category of the Vietcong army, the self-defense militia, for what Wallace insisted were political reasons. Three days after the program aired, Westmoreland held a news conference during which he denounced the documentary as "a preposterous hoax." *TV Guide* then published an article claiming the documentary had smeared the General, CBS answered with a weak and equivocating response, and Westmoreland filed a \$120 million libel suit against CBS. Wallace describes two years of pretrial legal maneuvers, a four-month trial and his own slide into a clinical depression that brought him to the verge of suicide. Two days before Wallace was due to testify, the general withdrew his lawsuit and the trial ended.

The second half of the chapter involving the Wigand interview is even more compelling. Wigand told Wallace the tobacco companies were in the "nicotine-delivery business" and that big tobacco used chemical additives in a process known as "impact boosting" to enhance the effect of nicotine. Wallace describes in stunning detail the lengthy and unsuccessful battle he and *60 Minutes* producer Lowell Bergman fought to air this interview. In Wallace's view, Don Hewitt and CBS News President Eric Ober knuckled under when confronted by CBS senior

management. Wallace reminds the reader that Laurence Tisch was then Chairman of CBS and that his son Andrew Tisch, the CEO of Lorillard, was one of seven senior tobacco executives who testified under oath before a congressional hearing that they believed nicotine was not addictive.

Eventually, a reedited version of the Wigand interview was aired on November 12, 1995, and Wallace believes that "even in its emasculated form, it was a powerful indictment of the tobacco industry." A lengthy article in *Vanity Fair* titled "The Man Who Knew Too Much" and a Hollywood movie, *The Insider*, with Russell Crowe in the Wigand role, followed. While Wallace was not entirely happy with either the article or the film, he notes with some amusement that it was not the worst thing in the world to be portrayed by the handsome and urbane actor Christopher Plummer.

A "bonus" DVD is included with the book. This DVD contains portions of 38 interviews Wallace has conducted over his lengthy career. As in the book, the interviews are arranged by category rather than chronology. The earliest, a 1956 *Night Beat* interview with surrealist Salvador Dali, is amusing on two counts. First, the artist insists that he will not die. Second, the stark lighting and heavy plume of smoke from Wallace's cigarette remind us of the black-and-white images that typified this early age of television.

In a more serious 1985 interview and one that still has relevance today, former president Jimmy Carter expresses criticism of a foreign policy that minimizes negotiation and

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diplomacy, and he notes with regret that “our country’s first reaction to a troubled area on earth is to try to inject American military forces or threats as our nation’s policy.”

In another DVD segment, Richard Nixon insists shortly before the 1968 presidential election that “the most important thing about a public man is not whether he’s loved or disliked, but whether he’s respected.” On a lighter note Shirley MacLaine describes her previous incarnations, Vladimir Horowitz plays a rousing piano rendition of “The Stars and Strips Forever” and diploma-mill operator Ernest Sinclair, the president of a nonexistent college, squirms as he attempts to explain the existence of some of the make-believe faculty listed in his glossy brochure.

Wallace’s book, a capsule history of the last 50 years, adds a personal touch to the period. And the book seems just a little more relevant with the author’s recently announced retirement. It’s doubtful that we’ll encounter another journalist who has been in the limelight for so many years or interviewed such a broad swath of politicians and public figures. *Between You and Me* is a good read and a tribute to Wallace’s unique journalistic career.

Norman Felsenthal, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus at Temple University in Philadelphia, having recently retired after 33 years as a faculty member in the Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunications. He has represented the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences as a National Trustee and currently serves as Chair of the Scholarship Committee.

CITIZEN SPY: Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture

By Michael Kackman

University of Minnesota Press
(280 pages, \$18.95)

By Paul Noble

“Is there such a thing as an ethical spy?” the *New York Times* asked in a recent front-page story headlined “Outfitting Spies with New Tool: Moral Compass.” At a weekend retreat for the intelligence community in Virginia, the topics covered included: interrogation techniques using torture, the “alleged skewing of prewar intelligence on Iraq,” eavesdropping on American citizens by wiretapping, and “rendition,” in which individuals suspected of terrorism are kidnapped abroad and transported to the United States or elsewhere for interrogation and frequently lengthy imprisonment. The article quoted a retired C.I.A. operations officer, who pointed out that “intelligence ethics” is an oxymoron. “If you don’t want to do that,” he said, “just have a State Department.”

Of course, those of us — most television viewers — aren’t surprised by any of the illegal or controversial methods spies use: false names, disguises, fantastical devices of all kinds, “cover” careers, bribes, blackmail, and betrayal. We’ve seen them all, thanks to the “documentary melodrama” form

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known as the spy story, available from TV's earliest days until the present, with hits such as *The X-Files*, *La Femme Nikita*, *Alias*, *24* and *The Agency*.

In fact, it is sometimes difficult for us to be outraged by today's high-tech spying and brutal espionage; we've been conditioned by more than five decades of acceptance, thanks to network television's enormous output of spy dramas and syndication's long shelf-life for the more successful programs in the genre.

Michael Kackman, assistant professor in Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas in Austin, is an academic who is clearly in touch with the popular form he illustrates in his book *Citizen Spy: Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture*. With the help of the personal files of many participants, including producers and writers, he's brilliantly set the spy programs in historical perspective.

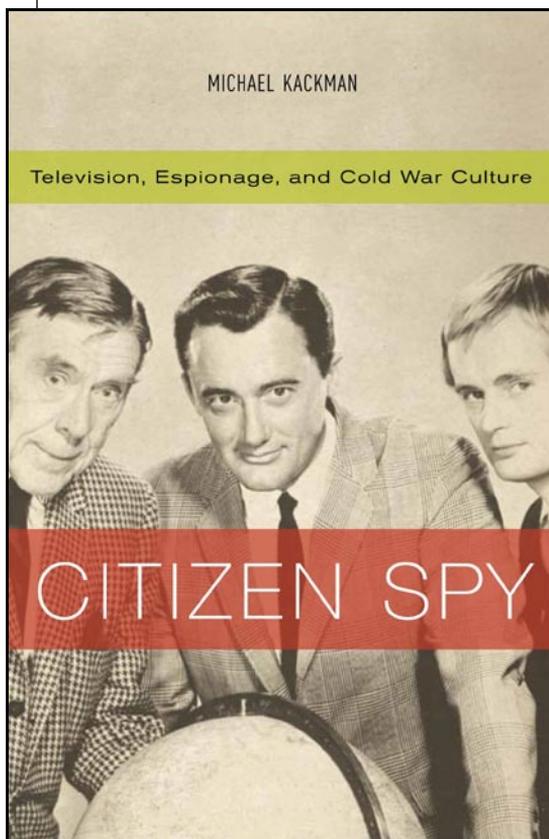
What a story it is. For the material he describes is extraordinarily relatable to the history, the society, the culture which spawned the spy programs.

Infant television, in the late 1940s, following the conclusion of World War II, was mainly a "live," in-studio medium. But cheaply-made, location-driven half-hours were syndicated in those days, station-by-station.

One must recall, too, that post-war America's worst fears were that of a "vast Communist conspiracy [which] threatened to undo American democracy." Based-in-fact series like *I Led Three Lives*,

Treasury Men In Action, and *The Man Called X* addressed that issue and others. Domestic surveillance, masculine heroes who represented national interests, the rooting-out of "internal deviance," "the profound mistrust of any activity that takes place outside the glare of full daylight" were recurring themes of these early, cheaply-produced syndicated series, some from the pioneering vendor in genre weekly strips, Ziv.

Throughout his book, a doctoral dissertation, Kackman places the most popular or representative shows to the chronology of the second half of the twentieth century—from what Winston Churchill dubbed "the Iron Curtain,"



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the Cold War, the Red Scare (there was a “Red under every bed”), the revelation of the theft of atomic secrets by Americans who sold them to the Soviet Union, McCarthyism and the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings rooting out Communists in the media, cultural strictures of conformity to middle-class values, rigid courtship rituals and assignment of gender roles, the “Domino Theory” which led to our costly adventures in Korea and Vietnam, the crushing of the Hungarian rebellion, the establishment of the Warsaw Pact among Communist nations which opposed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the launch of the Soviet space satellite Sputnik which showed Soviet scientific superiority to the United States, the building of the Berlin Wall and the establishment of the Berlin airlift, the Cuban missile crisis, the so-called “baby boom,” the creation of a “youth culture,” and, finally, the globalization of mass media.

In the fifties, spies were everywhere in America, affirming our worst fears. Of course, most of those spies were on television shows created by producers who enlisted government institutions to lend plot lines and authenticity. Documentary and fiction, then as now, were blurred in the name of making television viewing a “responsible civic activity.” The Federal Communications Commission licensed stations to act in the “public interest, convenience, and necessity,” and this was taken literally by network and local honchos to sound and look “legitimate.” On the other hand, governmental agencies such as the Treasury Department and its FBI

and the State Department with its CIA had an extraordinary opportunity to “help shape a powerful new medium that bridged public and private spheres.” In other words, watching TV was a civic duty and the viewer was made to feel that he or she was personally involved in anti-Communism.

What were the shows and what did they present that changed perspectives during this period? *Treasury Men In Action* showed that any activity that takes place “outside the glare of full daylight” was subversive. *The Man Called X* showed how the outside world (outside of the United States) was terrifying, and that democracy was constantly at war with Communism. The American spy was therefore an important aide to our allies, working in the “spirit of the Truman Doctrine,” the late 40s containment directive.

I Led Three Lives, supposedly based on the true exploits of an FBI agent who was an undercover Communist for nine years, made Herbert Philbrick the “representation of the masculine male in the traditional American family.” To reinforce that, the enemies were generally “monstrous Communist women” and feminized Communist men. American women, definitely not agents in these stories, were “docile and virtuous.” The unspoken message in the early 50s, according to Kackman, “Communism has the potential to turn otherwise charming little girls into stern disciplinarians immune to the ‘cult of domesticity.’”

Behind Closed Doors and *World of Giants*, two short-lived series in the 50s, were restrained by business fears that spy shows might embarrass friendly

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countries with whom we trade and by State Department fears that American agents operating illegally abroad would be “fodder for the Red propaganda mill.” These were entertainment television shows, but there was great concern that they would be considered as factual.

By the early 1960s, hour and half-hour shows were produced in 35mm film, with production values similar to theatrical motion pictures. With the addition of color, their costs were very high, and those costs could only be justified by international sales. So, in those days of the Bay of Pigs, the fight for civil rights, Vietnam, political assassinations, the feminist movement and the emerging purchasing power of young people, spy show turned away from reality to parody, from documentary melodrama to incongruity and absurdity, authority and authenticity replaced by “political nihilism.” Kackman, of course, refers to *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *Get Smart*, the spy shows that co-existed with the new pop phenomenon launched by the James Bond movies and possibly best represented on network television by the appearance of *Batman*. “Stern patriotism” was replaced by commercialism and camp.

New types of heroes like dashing and sexy Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and the inept Maxwell Smart in *Get Smart* appealed to audiences “becoming increasingly critical of the interventionism of the federal government.” The catch-phrases of *Get Smart* spoke to the young people of the domestic antiwar movement who mistrusted the bureaucracy that ran our institutions. “The Cone of

Silence,” “Sorry About That, Chief!” and “Would You Believe?” ridiculed the establishment through parody. As the Chief told agent 86, “that’s because the CIA isn’t a secret organization. It’s supposed to be, but it’s not.”

I Spy brought the genre back towards reality. With one of the very first black heroes in network history — Bill Cosby as Robert Culp’s tennis trainer, both of them fronts for agents — this series demonstrated that the civil rights movement is “not a critique of mainstream American culture, but is rather its fullest, most patriotic expression.” The villains in the series had hard-to-place national allegiances and were often Americans working for unnamed foreign governments.

Mission: Impossible, probably the longest-lasting and most-syndicated of the series, presented a team of specialists made up of agents without personal histories, or, indeed, individual personalities. Each episode was a self-contained realistic drama with high-tech equipment almost taking it into the realm of sci-fi. The series was presented from 1966 to 1973, overlapping most of the Vietnam years. It represented, according to Kackman, “the most aggressive and imperialist tendencies of 1960s foreign policy.” In fact, the last three years of the series were made a domestic crime series in which the enemy was the Syndicate rather than Communists or other anti-American groups. Critics of the time, including Robert Louis Shayon, quoted by Kackman, disliked the heroes interfering “directly in the affairs of foreign nationals with whom we are at peace and from whom no direct threat

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to our safety emanates.”

Spy shows evaporated in the mid-70s and resurfaced in the 90s with *The X-Files*, *La Femme Nikita*, *Alias*, *24* and *The Agency*. Political content in those series is less important than personal. But the Cold War continues. “The Permanent War” appears to exist now. After 9/11, the failed mission in Afghanistan to capture Osama Bin Laden, and the continuing conflict in Iraq, with fears of nuclear capability from North Korea and Iran, the need for improved intelligence is apparent. But the more we learn about the incompetence of our spy networks and information analysis, the more we believe that “our nation’s future (is) in the hands of Maxwell Smart, Agent 86.”

For the casual reader, Kackman’s academic writing is unnecessarily challenging. It relies on 20 long words when 10 shorter ones would suffice. For example, when describing “World of Agents,” he says, “The queerly unstable relationship of this tenuous pair of agents did more than complicate normative heterosexuality; it also invoked the specter of political subversion. Within containment culture, heteronormativity was deeply intertwined with patriotism.” Or, referring to *Mission: Impossible*, “[it] represents a shift in constructions of American Cold War identity, one in which the very coherence of ‘America’ is revealed to be relational, situational, and characterized by political, cultural, and economic self-interest.”

Kackman is fond of “conflation,” “sublimation,” “historiographic priorities,” “representational decisions,” “discursive authority,” “cultural resonance,” and “univocal narratives,” among other

words and phrases. Despite this tendency to wordiness and jargon, *Citizen Spy* captures the period and the shows very well. It relates quite clearly how networks, studios and their television divisions, independent production companies, sponsors, advertising agencies, federal agencies and freelance experts all interacted to make the programming possible, despite their divergent goals and methods. We may never know how J. Edgar Hoover or Allen Dulles or another high-level bureaucrat was responsible for the use of these programs, especially the early ones, for their own purposes, but this book gets about as close as possible to that tantalizing question.

Paul Noble most recently was vice-president of film acquisitions and scheduling for Lifetime Entertainment. He began his television career as a producer/director at WGBH Boston and for 30 years produced, executive produced or hosted programming at Channel 5 New York under Metromedia and Fox. He is currently on the advisory committee of the Palm Beach Theater Guild.

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Two Aspirins and a Comedy: How Television Can Enhance Health and Society

By Metta Spencer

Paradigm Publishers
(312 pages, \$24.95)

By Earl Pomerantz

A while back here, I reviewed Steven Johnson's *Everything Bad Is Good For You*, which claimed that television made you smarter. Metta Spencer's *Two Aspirins and a Comedy* claims television can lead to world peace. And I thought it was just a big waste of time.

Here's the story. A sociology professor, laid up with osteoarthritis, gets hooked on reruns of *Northern Exposure*. Watching twice a day brings her "...analgesia and joy. My pain was generally reduced for hours." Welcome to Norman Cousins country. Decades ago, Cousins' recovery from serious illness was substantially attributed to the viewing of comedies, laughter, as comedian Sam Levinson once wrote, being the best medicine.

The healing power of laughter cannot be overlooked. Along with improvements in the serotonin department, we are told that enjoying comedies steps up the blood flow in

your arteries, while watching the first fifteen minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*, showing intense depictions of graphic violence, slows the blood down. You can watch what you want, but one type of entertainment enhances your health, while the other can give you a heart attack. It's up to you.

The problem is that *Two Aspirins and a Comedy* is barely about comedy at all. *Northern Exposure* isn't a comedy — certainly not of the Norman Cousins variety; he healed on the manic hysteria of the Marx Brothers and *Candid Camera* — *Northern Exposure*'s more modulated whimsy. The other show analyzed in *Two Aspirins and a Comedy*, *Street Time*, concerns drug dealers and

TWO ASPIRINS AND A COMEDY



HOW TELEVISION CAN
ENHANCE HEALTH AND SOCIETY

METTA SPENCER

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slippery cops. No belly laughs there either. So what's going on? Why the glaring disconnect between the book's title and the majority of its content? Is it possible that a well-meaning academic treatise has adopted an appealing "hook" to enhance its marketability, positioning it as one thing when it's clearly something considerably less sexy? I'd have to say yes.

Beware of a book about comedy that's dedicated to the Dalai Lama. The question's offered: "In a world where only two of every five persons practices a religion, how are we learning compassion?" A convalescing professor, nurtured by an enchanting television series, proposes a solution: "Why not through television series?"

A reasonable proposal. If a TV series can enhance your physical wellbeing, why not construct series to enhance your moral and ethical wellbeing? From which comes Ms. Spencer's generating principle: "Of all conceivable ways of fostering a global florescence of civilization, I think the most promising approach is to improve entertainment."

And why specifically the TV series as a vehicle for upgrading our "moral/spiritual sensibilities"? The answer's in the form. Television series offer continuing characters that viewers, over time, come to "really, really care about." They identify, they mimic, and they change. If a beloved character starts with a similar perspective to that of the audience, then evolves to a more enlightened perspective – they stop smoking, they walk away from fights, they use a condom – an empathizing audience will follow their example. TV

series aren't one date and see ya later. Series loyalty means a commitment to characters over years. There's a bond. They become family. There's an influence. Leading to the possibility of...

...a better world.

Even violent shows can serve the cause. Some viewers, we are told, crave smash-mouth entertainment owing to a highly active thrill-seeking gene called *DRD4*, a condition left unsatisfied by their humdrum existence. So you offer them an outlet to work it off. Not that violent shows per se are necessarily bad. Stories involving "gray area" Bad Guys, blameworthy but understandably human, provide valuable lessons in pity and compassion. These stories can also stimulate debates on the roots of wrongdoing, illuminating the system that makes men go bad.

But what about "copycats"? This question echoes an age-old debate going back to Plato and Aristotle. Plato's concern is for the dangerous habits an audience can pick up as it empathizes with and later mimics the abhorrent behavior it observes on the stage. Aristotle, in contrast, believes the theater can be "psychologically and morally therapeutic." The conflict articulates two roads to enlightenment, one favoring reasoned philosophy, the other, the storyteller's punch in the gut.

Which returns us to *Northern Exposure*, where the issue is played out on a weekly basis. The protagonist, Fleischman, arrives earth-bound and all in his head. In contrast, his assigned outpost, the Glocca Morra-like town of Cicely, Alaska, is judgment-free and sprinkled with fairy dust. And

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there you have it—opposing cultures, head to head—let the Games begin. In the end, Ms. Spencer, rooting for a balanced Taoist resolution of balance, feels powerfully disappointed when the once-rational Fleishman completely surrenders to the other side. That's bad news to a social reformer. You can't fix the world when you're living in the clouds.

In the end, the show that nourished the author's healing has let her down. Why? Because Ms. Spencer is above all a passionate cheerleader for what she calls "edutainment." It's as scary as it sounds. Aware of its influence, Ms. Spencer wants to co-opt TV series to promote her messages. That's right, messages. In a single paragraph Spencer ticks off twelve issues she believes need urgent attention, ranging from fending off nuclear Armageddon to the belief that "our criminal justice system can be replaced, largely with restorative justice." Twelve causes. And series TV is just the place to spread the word.

Ms. Spencer's prescription for social betterment resonates with the chilling specter of "We-know-what's-best" Big Brotherism. She's clear where she stands on the issues, but what if others disagree? Do they get their own "We-know-what's-best" series to rebut hers? And what if some people believe dangerous, hateful things? Do they get series too?

Who decides which issues are "series appropriate"? Who decides whether a show deserves to stay on even when its ratings are tanking? How do you turn agenda-pushing propaganda into must-see programming? And where the heck are the laughs?

And here's the scariest part. Acknowledging government should never censor, Ms. Spencer offers an unmistakable threat: "[I]t is government regulatory agencies that allocate airwaves to particular broadcasters, holding them to standards that supposedly reflect community values. Strengthening the democratic responses of these agencies, and giving them stronger teeth, would be entirely appropriate." Yikes! If you gave more teeth to regulatory agencies to enforce "community values", how many communities would have blacked out some of the greatest series in the history of the medium, including *Northern Exposure*?

The writing is riddled with "we should...", "we ought to..." and "we need to..." phrases that are anathema to the non-judgmental lexicon, not to mention the canon of sociology. These are the tools of the firebrand, tools to which the author is unquestionably entitled, though by using them so liberally, she risks turning a heartfelt proposal into a major turn-off.

And now, a sincerely-offered suggestion: Since this title could easily be prosecuted under the Truth in Advertising statutes (if there are any), I'd like to propose a different title: *Television Can Save the Planet!!!* Hyperbole? Perhaps. But it's closer to the book's intention. And there's always the chance that Ms. Spencer may be right.

An award-winning veteran television comedy writer, Earl Pomerantz is the author of "Why Do Advertisers Still Covet the 18-49s?", on page 40 of this issue of *Television Quarterly*.

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Gandhi Meets Primetime: Globalization and Nationalism in Indian Television

By Shanti Kumar

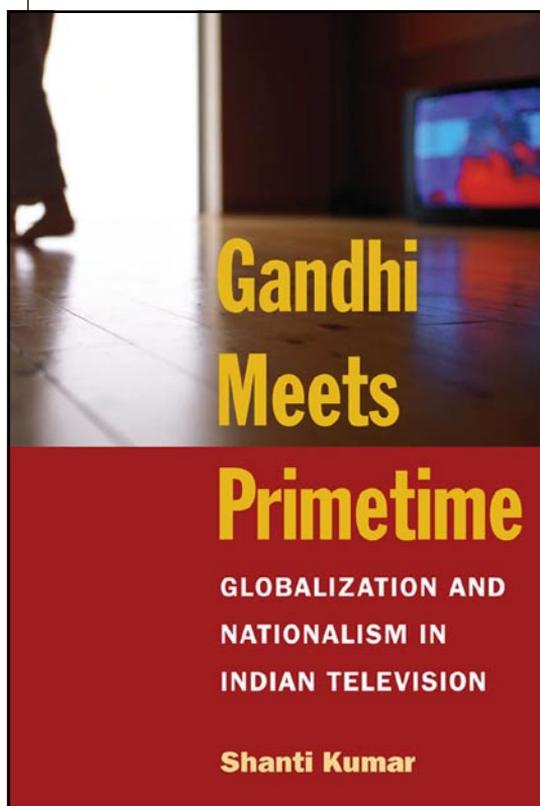
University of Illinois Press, Champaign, IL
(240 pages, \$45 cloth, \$25 paper)

By Srinivas R. Melkote

This is a welcome addition to the growing scholarly literature on the role and place of emerging communication technologies in globalization. Shanti Kumar looks specifically at satellite television in articulating a vision of nationalism in India. He places his work in the context of Mahatma Gandhi and how he has been used, abused, deified or defiled by the political, academic and economic elites in India as well as elites in transnational capitalism. The author combines his review and analysis of contemporary television programming, historical archives, journalistic accounts, scholarly writings, policy papers, and other documents with textual analysis of advertising messages in the print media and attempts to synthesize the myriad strains of ideas and views through theories and concepts from diverse fields of study. This book, then, provides a unique perspective to television culture in postcolonial India.

In Chapter 1, the author traces

the history of *Doordarshan*, the state-controlled Indian television network, from the 1950's to the late 1990's. Acting as the cultural arm of the federal government in New Delhi, *Doordarshan* was vested with the responsibility of fostering national integration in culturally diverse India and furthering the nationalist agenda of the state government through educational, entertainment and news programs. The entry of non-Indian STAR TV and other private networks in the 1990's and the consequent proliferation of television programs induced the Indian government to attempt to transform *Doordarshan* into a public broadcasting service under the control of an autonomous corporation.



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The author also addresses attempts by *Doordarshan* to carve an imagined Indian nation both as an ideal and a niche in the face of rapidly changing electronic communication scenario in India and abroad.

The second chapter is a critical textual analysis of advertisements in large-circulation Indian newsmagazines such as the *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *India Today*. The author examines the advertising messages of Indian electronics companies that purport to cast television viewing as a means by which the external world is brought into the home in dynamic detail. The author contends that such advertising practices by the electronics industry encourage televisual imaginations that promote a “synthetic sense of reality” in the minds of the readers of these magazines, and by extension, in the minds of the television viewers.

In Chapter 3, the author introduces the reader to the literature in development-support communication where communication media are utilized to promote or accelerate national development, mostly in the Third World. The author posits that this “utopian” vision aimed to promote national development via capital investments using modern technology and the scientific method. This chapter also addresses Marxist critics of Western models of modernization and development using the capitalistic route as well as the development ideas and policies of Indian leaders who attempted to carve a “middle ground” between Western capitalism and Soviet-style socialism.

In Chapter 4, the author

comprehensively documents how the name of Gandhi is used and abused by the forces of nationalism and electronic capitalism in India. He outlines how “an Indian *community* of television is imagined by overwriting the narratives of nationalism in the discourse of electronic capitalism.” The ideological battles as well as collusions are dramatically displayed via the television screen that attracts both the “hungry ‘haves’ and the hunger of the ‘have-nots.’” There is a subtle implication that most of the changes taking place in India such as the unbridled consumerism among the haves is due to the impact of satellite television.

The television set, therefore, has become the site where competing visions and imaginations of nationalism are played out, as described in Chapter 5. Thus, revered icons that represent national identity to many in India are defiled by others on the electronic screen, thus making television the new battleground where these competing visions of nationalism, internationalism, and localism are mediated and collective visions of national identity and cultural difference are brought into sharp relief.

In the final chapter, the author wraps up by re-visiting the five questions that anchor his thesis. Basically, he re-examines the concerns of media scholars, media critics, journalists and policy makers on the negative causal effects of television on perspectives relating to nationalism in India. Regardless of how one views the power of television to change society, the author concludes that television is now the new battleground for capturing the

REVIEW AND COMMENT

soul of Indian nationalism.

Ghandi Meets Primetime is valuable scholarship but it is not without its share of problems. The author claims that he is presenting empirical evidence complemented by a sound theoretical analysis. However, the empirical evidence is confined to interviews with journalists and the author's review and analysis of sources such as legal documents, policy statements, television programming, scholarly and journalistic writings. While these sources are valuable they cannot inform the author of the diverse imaginations of television viewers.

The author employs extensive textual analysis of advertising messages of national and transnational corporate media interests that attempt to transform the collective imaginations of the viewers regarding the world outside. The advertising messages are directed at the viewer and he/she alone determines meaning production of the text.

Mr. Kumar is critical of Benedict Anderson's idea of the nation as an imagined community and instead posits the notion that today the nation as a community is unimaginable. Yet, the author buys into the baggage and language of the imagined community as a nation. He constantly refers to Hindi as the "national" language of India and relegates other major Indian languages to the status of "regional" languages. The idea of a national language only makes sense when one buys into the idea of one imagined nation. In my view, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, etc. are Indian languages each with a rich history, literature, and culture and it is illogical to create

hierarchies such as national language and regional language when the nation is an unimaginable community.

While the author is critical of the Hindu-centric aspirations of *Doordarshan* that showcased Hindu religious serials as also being nationalistic and thus marginalizing the non-Hindu Indians, he does not problematize the role of *Doordarshan* in showcasing Hindi as India's dominant language. Scholars have contended that even among the Hindus in South India and West Bengal, the language of transmission was a sore point. These scholars have posited that *Doordarshan* marginalized the possibility of non-Hindi serials emanating from the center and thus leading to the marginalization of the discourses grouped around the non-Hindi languages.

Finally, the author accords too much power to television to mold viewers' imaginations. This is a recycling of the discarded magic-bullet theory of powerful media. This assumed power of the media needs to be tested and documented and not assumed. The receiver is not a passive entity who succumbs to the media onslaught without any resistance. On the contrary, the viewer employs intricate filters and complex reception patterns to distort and domesticate the message to his/her unique social, cultural, and individual perspective.

Srinivas R. Melkote is a professor of Telecommunications at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. He has authored and edited many books that include *Communication for Development in the Third World* (co-authored with Leslie Steeves) and *International Satellite Broadcasting in South Asia* (co-edited with Peter Shields and Binod C. Agrawal).

Those who are associated with the planning of this Journal believe it is time for a penetrating, provocative and continuing examination of television as an art, a science, an industry, and a social force.

Accordingly, our purpose is to be both independent and critical. We hold that the function of this Journal is to generate currents of new ideas about television, and we will therefore try to assure publication of all material which stimulates thought and has editorial merit.

This Journal has only one aim —
to take a serious look at television.

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