

## Producer pulls final episode of 'Middletown'

'Seventeen,' on controversial subjects, is withdrawn from series

The final episode of the *PBS Middletown* series, "Seventeen," which caused much commotion, has been removed from the Public Broadcasting Service's programming schedule.

PBS announced last week that Peter Davis, producer of the six-part series that chronicles the lives of several Muncie, Ind., residents, "has withdrawn" the final episode. Davis's decision was a result of several discussions with PBS, which asked him to make "certain changes in the program in light of questions raised by several minors concerning their participation in the program," according to a PBS memo.

The memo said Davis preferred to "keep the program intact," rather than edit it. Davis would not comment any further than to say that the memo,

"speaks for itself." PBS now says it will announce a replacement program shortly for the April 28 episode. A discussion program is planned as a follow-up to the series, scheduled tentatively for May 3.

*Middletown*, which premiered Wednesday, March 24, generated a good deal of publicity before it aired (BROADCASTING, March 29). Controversy in particular developed over "Seventeen." The episode focuses on high school seniors and was labeled as containing offensive language. PBS has asked Davis to edit four-and-one-half minutes of the episode where a male student is bragging explicitly about his sexual exploits, and he complied.

Other complaints about "Seventeen" were raised by Xerox, one of the series underwriters, which saw the segment and decided not to promote the series as originally intended. PBS officials, however, say they don't know whether Xerox will change its position now that "Seventeen" has been removed.

PBS officials said they could not comment on details of the questions raised by the minors appearing in the segment. Representatives from the Muncie school

system met with PBS officials in March to discuss that final episode (BROADCASTING, March 22). □

## ABC pursues affiliate in Columbia, Mo.

ABC-TV let it be known last week that, though it hadn't acquired a major new affiliate in months, it was still in the market for acquisitions. The network and the University of Missouri announced that they would begin negotiations looking to a switch of affiliation for the university's KOMU-TV Columbia from NBC to ABC.

That "begin negotiations," ABC sources said, was largely a technicality. They said they had no doubt it would lead to an agreement to switch. The agreement, when reached, would be subject to approval by the university's chancellor, president and board of curators, but that, too, apparently was considered a technicality.

KOMU-TV, a commercial station, is closely identified with the Columbia University School of Journalism, long regarded as one of the nation's most prestigious journalism schools.

The station is on channel 8 and has been exclusively an NBC affiliate since 1971. The present ABC affiliate there, KCBJ-TV, is on channel 17. The CBS outlet in the market is KRCG-TV Jefferson City, Mo., on channel 13. □

## Monitor

**Warner-Spelling pact.** Warner Bros. Television Distribution has new "long-term" deal with producer Aaron Spelling for worldwide syndication rights to all his future TV properties. Spelling, who produces under exclusive contract to ABC-TV, uses various distributors for his current shows in syndication. □

**Howard awards.** WTHR-TV Indianapolis will be first-prize recipient of annual Roy W. Howard Public Service Award to be presented at April 7 luncheon at Westin hotel in Cincinnati. WTHR will receive \$2,500 prize and medallion plaque for its program, *Klan*. Two runners-up will receive \$1,000 each—WBBM-TV Chicago for *Watching the Watchdog* and WOR(AM) New York for special, *Goodbye Lucy*. □

**Bowing out.** Long-running comedy series, *M\*A\*S\*H*, produced by 20th Century-Fox Television for airing on CBS-TV, will conclude first-run production in middle of 1982-83 season. Reported agreement between CBS and Fox calls for series to film 16 segments for next season. □

**Saying goodbye.** *Barney Miller*, ABC-TV comedy series produced by Four D Productions, will not return to network next season, according to show's producers. Program, which is in its eighth year, briefly announced shut-down for current season last spring, but decision was overruled by ABC. □

**Prime target.** *Fridays*, ABC-TV's late-night comedy series, will move from current midnight Friday starting time (NYT) to 9 p.m. same night in special broadcast April 23. According to show spokesman, *Fridays* is being considered for permanent berth in 9-10 p.m. slot beginning next fall. Future of show has been unclear since ABC announced plans to expand news programming between 11:30 p.m. and 1 a.m. □

**Looking back.** *The American Diary* is package of 26 one-hour television episodes produced by American National Enterprises (ANE) with Americom International and Berkshire Productions. Series, hosted by E.G. Marshall, explores social, political, economic and technological events that shaped America over last century. ANE currently is offering series to American and Canadian television markets, with programming scheduled for fall. □

## Health Network sets the date

June 30 is launch day for new Viacom cable service; it will be delivered over Satcom III-R

The Viacom-backed Cable Health Network is scheduled for launch on June 30, Jeffrey Reiss, CHN's president and chief executive officer, announced last week at a press conference in New York.

Don Andersson, CHN's vice president, affiliate relations, noted that as of March 31, cable systems with a combined subscribership of 1.6 million had signed up for the service. He also said the network expected to meet and perhaps even surpass its goal of reaching 4 million cable subscribers by the June 30 launch date.

The CHN signal will be beamed to cable systems over Satcom III-R, transponder 17. Viacom, the rights holder of record for that transponder, has been subleasing it to resale carrier Eastern Microwave, which has been using it to distribute the signal of WOR-TV New York to cable operators nationwide on a full-time basis. Reiss noted