

ning at 8 p.m., which focuses on life and death situations in a modern hospital. ABC shifts the half-hour sitcom *9 to 5* from Tuesday night to 9 p.m. Thursday, followed by a new comedy half-hour, *It's Not Easy*, that examines "divorce, remarriage and shared families" through the lives of two couples living across the street from each other.

■ Friday: "Friday posed another major restructuring challenge for us," confided Erlicht. "We believe we have accomplished it with a combination of new and tested programming which should increase our chances of success." *Benson* returns at 8 p.m., followed at 8:30 with "a brand new and very compatible comedy," *Webster*, starring Alex Karras and Susan Clark as a newly-married couple who unexpectedly "inherit" the husband's godson, played by Emmanuel Lewis. The hour long *Lottery* premieres at 9 p.m. Erlicht termed the *Lottery* concept "the greatest fantasy of all—going from rags to riches overnight." The series, focusing on a lottery administrator and an IRS agent, will incorporate exotic locales and guest stars. For the 10-11 p.m. hour, ABC has shifted *Matt Houston* from Sunday.

■ Saturday: Erlicht told affiliates, "The Saturday schedule returns intact for a good reason: all the shows are hits." *T.J. Hooker* starts the night from 8-9 p.m., followed from 9-10 p.m. by *The Love Boat* and *Fantasy Island* (in which Ricardo Montalban will have Christopher Hewett as his new companion) at 10 p.m.

Two pilots were screened for the affiliates during Tuesday's meeting, *Webster* and *It's Not Easy*. A random sampling of station

executives showed *Webster* receiving generally favorable reviews and *It's Not Easy* garnering mostly negative comments.

Thomopoulos also disclosed ABC's plans for first-run summer programming, which he said will amount to more "than any year in recent memory." He said the original short-order series would help relieve "summer doldrums" while providing an opportunity "for on-air testing of new series, much as we do with spring short flights."

Summer programs will include:

■ *Best of Friends* (three episodes plus pilot)—a one-hour drama from Lorimar Productions "contrasting the traditional lifestyle of the Armstrongs with the combined family created by second marriages in the Daley household."

■ *Eye on Hollywood* (five hour-long shows)—highlighting people, places and events in the "glamour capital of the world."

■ *The Half Hour Comedy Show* (unspecified number of episodes)—starring the comedy team of Tom Sharp and Arsenio Hall and an ensemble of comedy players, also featuring such guest stars as Bill Cosby. Executive producer is Dick Clark.

During closed sessions on Monday and Wednesday there were some reported grumblings about the high turnover in the network's prime time slate, with a few affiliates confiding they'd like to see ABC put more time and effort into bolstering its series lineup. While there was uniform praise for the network's execution of *The Winds of War* and *Thorn Birds*, some critical statements were heard about scheduling of the two mini-series, with some stations hoping for

greater support during the May sweeps. ABC countered by claiming it had scheduled more first-run programming this month than the other two networks. Overall, concluded one station manager, "we're about as pleased as we're going to get—although it would be nice to say we were number one all the way across [the schedule]." And ABC's summer juggling act will indicate potential for that statement's truth. □

Arledge reports on ABC News

He promises increased emphasis on accuracy and viewer trust; defends decision to expand 'Nightline' by another 30 minutes

Roone Arledge, already president of ABC Sports, also took over as president of ABC News six years ago, casting before him what many perceived to be the long shadow of a showman. But in his appearance before the ABC television affiliates last week, Arledge appeared the responsible journalist, concerned about "arrogance" of some news organizations that he feels is in part at least responsible for the rising tide of damage awards juries are giving plaintiffs who sue the media for libel. ABC, he said, is taking steps to avoid that sin.

But if the affiliates in the audience were prepared to endorse Arledge's views on the importance of news organizations earning

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American Television and Communications Corporation

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We initiated this transaction, served as financial adviser to Peoples Cable Company, and assisted in the negotiations.

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