

Another station aloft

United Video, the Tulsa, Okla.-based satellite common carrier, announced last week that it would create yet another superstation by putting KTVT(TV) Dallas-Fort Worth on RCA's Satcom IV satellite this summer. It will be the carrier's third superstation: Since late 1978 it has been distributing WGN-TV Chicago to cable systems via Satcom III and later Satcom III-R and it plans to begin relaying WPIX(TV) New York to systems tomorrow (May 1) over Satcom IV.

United Video's decision to put Tribune's WPIX and Gaylord Broadcasting's KTVT on the bird is based on the belief that it can persuade many of the systems that now import the signals by terrestrial microwave through other carriers to switch to the satellite. According to Jeff Treeman, vice president of marketing, the belief seems to be well founded. He said United Video has been able to sign up 152 systems (serving around 900,000 subscribers). Most of the systems, he said, are switching over from microwave. Although the stations are intended to be "regional" superstations, their signals will be available to any cable systems with an earth station aimed at Satcom IV.

According to Treeman, KTVT will be put on the bird on June 15 for testing and the service will be officially launched on July 1. United Video is looking at independents that reach cable systems through microwave networks in other regions as potential future superstations. "Independent stations are the best bang for the buck in basic cable programming," said Treeman, "and a lot of cable systems are beginning to realize that."

'HiLife' coming to life

A new adult entertainment service, HiLife Channel, for cable and other pay TV outlets will debut July 1 and will be headed by Paul Klein, former president of The Playboy Channel. The service is being launched by Domestidyne, a joint venture of Microdyne and Domesticom Corp., the latter based in New Orleans and operating private cable systems (SMATV) and pay-per-view systems in hotels and motels. HiLife will offer adult-oriented programming on a pay-per-night, pay-per-view or monthly subscription basis, to cable operators, apartment complexes, hotels and motels. The company says it will offer a "tasteful" menu of programs, with nothing X-rated.

The new service will be transmitted by scrambled signal nine hours per night from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. via Westar V (transponder 10X), which has access to more than 5,000 cable systems reaching 30 million homes. Domestidyne is leasing its transponder space from American Buildings Inc. Microdyne will provide specially designed encryption and decoding equipment. Viewers will order pay-per-night and PPV programs

with a special telephone access code to cut down on unauthorized viewing (especially by children).

Initially, Klein said, all of the HiLife programming will come from outside sources, but the service intends eventually to produce some of its own programming. Klein will report to Stuart Levin, president and chief executive officer of Domestidyne.

It's Showtime, folks

Mike Weinblatt, president and chief operating officer, Showtime/The Movie Channel, told members of the Washington Metropolitan Cable Club that Showtime's original programming "will take the high road," but will not be "high brow" or of limited appeal. As an example, he cited *The Paper Chase*, the series Showtime picked up after CBS



Weinblatt

dropped it due to low ratings. The show has broad appeal, he said, although not broad enough for a broadcast network. "It is a high quality, intelligent program and the kind of project we intend to do more of."

At the same time, Showtime would eschew "exploitative projects the networks are famous for—particularly in the made-for-TV movie area," he said. "You will not see *Mother Was a Teen-Age Prostitute* on Showtime."

If Weinblatt has any doubt that the future of cable is bright, he wasn't about to let anybody know about it. Many of the homes in cabled areas that are now labeled "untouchables," he said, are, in fact, "distinctly touchable. . . . We'll get them as we keep learning how to market to them." Showtime will do its part, he said. At this year's National Cable Television Association convention, he said, Showtime will unveil a new advertising campaign.

Weinblatt also set forth his belief that in two years the triple-pay package will be the industry standard. "And because of the plans we're making, it's my belief that Showtime and The Movie Channel will be

two of the three pay services sold in that triple."

Mickey says a million

Disney Channel President James Jimirro is predicting that the family-oriented pay cable service will pass the one-million-subscriber mark "some time within the next several weeks." The estimate comes on the heels of an April 18 announcement that the Disney Channel is being added to Group W Cable systems serving 300,000 homes in the Los Angeles area. Disney officials peg the March 30 subscriber total at 916,000 homes with the break-even point of two million attainable by the service's second anniversary. Jimirro has also announced that the channel's third made-for-pay feature is in production with a fourth scheduled to begin filming soon in Spain.

Meanwhile, the Disney Channel came under attack from the National Coalition on Television Violence, which monitors television networks. NCTV said it found 18 incidents of violence in each hour of the pay service's cartoon programming and nine in each hour of noncartoon programming. In 43 hours of prime time programming surveyed, the coalition recorded 55 murders and 57 attempted murders.

Strike on hold

A decertification vote has been scheduled for May 3 for members of the bargaining unit represented by the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians at the Financial News Network in Santa Monica, Calif. FNN suspended negotiations with NABET on April 13 (BROADCASTING, April 23) after management received a petition signed by 41 of 61 employees indicating that they "no longer wish to be represented by NABET." The union, which represents news, production, technical, engineering and facilities employees at FNN, has been striking the financial and business news service since March 19. All employees, except for six who have taken other employment, have returned to work following suspension of picketing April 13. Processing of unfair labor practices charges filed against the network by NABET has reportedly been put on hold pending the decertification vote results.

New man in Beirut

Cable News Network has appointed Mark Dulmage bureau chief of its Beirut bureau, replacing Jeremy Levin, who was kidnapped March 7 and has not yet been released. Dulmage has been an executive producer at CNN in Atlanta since May 1980 and before that was a news editor at both WDM-TV and WTTG-TV in Washington. Meanwhile, negotiations to secure Levin's release are continuing.