ABC's Information Network has regained lead as top-rated radio network among persons 13 years of age and older, according to fall 1984 RADAR 30 (Vol. 2) report released last week by Statistical Research Inc., Westfield, N.J. Network registered average audience estimate of 1,666,000 listeners per commercial, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to midnight. Climbing from fourth place to second with 1,527,000 listeners is RKO One. (Network was just sold to New York-based United Stations [see "Top of the Week?"]) ABC Entertainment dropped from first place in spring report to third at 1,489,000. Next is ABC Contemporary at 1,330,000 followed by NBC Radio Network with 1,314,000. ABC Information also finished in top spot among persons 18 and older, posting 1,525,000 listeners.

Two new prime time series join ABC Thursday schedule, beginning March 21. First is Wildside, "Western action-adventure series with the accent on fun," will air at 8:30 p.m. (Walt Disney Productions). Second, Eye to Eye, "heartwarming character comedy laced with suspense," stars Charles Durning and Stephanie Faracy and is from Warner Bros. TV. It will air 9-10 p.m. ABC Thursday Night Movie will have last broadcast March 14.

ABC's first United States Football League contest of the 1985 season, played Sunday, Feb. 24 (2:30 p.m.-5 p.m.) between Birmingham Stallions and New Jersey Generals, scored 7.7/18, beating CBS's average 6.4/15 for Sports Sunday and golf match in same period, as well as NBC's 3.8/9 for NCAA basketball. ABC's first game rating was down, however, from first game covered last year which averaged 8.0/19. Decline was blamed in part by network on fact that clear this year for first game was down to 28% coverage of U.S. television homes, compared to 93% coverage year ago.

Quarter-inch videotape will be at top of agenda for scheduled Tuesday (March 5) afternoon meeting between senior officials of Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers and Julius Barnathan, ABC Broadcasting Operations and Engineering president. Barnathan raised stir at society with statements that SMPTE officials with "vested interests" had "derailed" attempts to standardize on newsgathering format and suggestions that his network would move standardization efforts elsewhere (BROADCASTING, Feb. 25).

"My frustrations are real," Barnathan told Broadcasting last Friday, "but this satisfies me that SMPTE is not trying to derail the standard. I believe that they're trying to get it back on track. Actions speak louder than words." Tentative meeting, hurriedly arranged last Friday (March 1) morning, will include other interested parties, according to Dick Streeter of CBS/Broadcast Group currently SMPTE's engineering vice president. "We will examine how to proceed and achieve a standard, if possible," he said. "A lot of positive things can come out of this." Topics under consideration were not made public, but likely subject will be whether to lower user benchmark requiring third generation quarter-inch match quality of first generation three-quarter-inch U-matic, current newsgathering format standard.

ESPN's coverage of highly publicized St. John's-Georgetown basketball game last Wednesday (which Georgetown won by score of 85-69) averaged 8.0 rating and 12 share in its universe of 35.7 million basic cable subscribers. A.C. Nielsen confirmed last week that game delivered biggest audience, 2.9 million, for any cable originated network program to date. Contest broke ratings record set on network in March of 1983 when St. John's played Georgia in NCAA regional semi-final basketball match, which drew 7.3 rating.

Cable News Network has asked Supreme Court to review decision barring cable network from electronic coverage of Westmoreland CBS trial. According to CNN, trial judge had found that coverage would have interfered, and might have even enhanced conduct of trial. But judge, according to CNN, felt compelled to deny permission for coverage because of 1968 ethics rule for federal judges. CNN argued that was violation of First Amendment rights of public and media, but Court of Appeals in New York upheld trial judge's decision. According to CNN attorney, cable network briefly important trials should be open for coverage as long as the coverage doesn't interfere with conduct of trial.

Seagram Co., major hard liquor distiller based in New York, hopes to launch $10-million television advertising campaign in spring aimed at getting message to viewers that potency of typical mixed drink, with one-and-quarter ounces of 80-proof liquor, contains more alcohol than 12-ounce can of beer or five-ounce glass of wine. Liquor industry has self-imposed ban on advertising of distilled spirits per se, which Seagram defines as "product advertising Company doesn't believe its proposed campaign, described as a "consumer education campaign," falls within ban. Seagram said last week Warner-Amex Advertising, with which New York has been assigned to develop campaign. Meanwhile, Seagram officials met with ABC and NBC executives last week about proposal, but neither network would comment on specifics. ABC spokesman said proposal decision had been made on whether such campaign would be accepted. CBS spokesman said meeting had not been schedule with Seagram officials as of last Friday, although he said rumor had last week that "CBS told them not to come" because proposal simply would not be accepted. Three networks have been against advertising liquor products. Some last week were questioning timing of Seagram's proposal, in light of all hoopla concerning beer and wine advertising. But source at liquor company said executives there felt campaign proposal was "long overdue."

Citing First Amendment, federal circuit court in Los Angeles last week ruled that municipality cannot limit "by means of an auction process" number of cable systems that may serve its residents to one as long as "utility facilities" and public rights-of-ways are "physically capable of accommodating" construction of others. Ruling stemmed from 1983 lawsuit in which Preferred Communications charged city of Los Angeles violated, among other things, First Amendment rights by refusing to allow it to build and operate cable system in section of city without going through competitive franchise process or "auction process," as court calls it. Federal district court dismissed suit and Preferred appealed to ninth circuit, which heard oral arguments last December. Court's ruling also discussed Cable Communications Policy Act, national cable regulatory bill that went into effect last December. "To the extent that the act would have permitted the government to promulgate regulations in exercising powers under the antitrust laws," court said, "the effect would have been to allow local authorities to regulate cable systems in a manner that unduly restricts competition. Such regulation would be contrary to the purpose of the act in furthering competition in the cable industry."

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