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THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF TELEVISION ARTS AND SCIENCES


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IN MEMORIAM:
Richard M. Pack

He really was a pioneer," said CBS correspondent Mike Wallace of Richard M. Pack, the editor of *Television Quarterly* who died last July 1 at the age of 83. "He was the person more than any other who built the reputation of the Westinghouse Broadcasting stations into news stations."

The former executive vice-president of programming for Group W (Westinghouse Broadcasting Company) and president of Group W Films, Pack created the Steve Allen Show, PM East with Mike Wallace, the Merv Griffin Show, the David Frost Show and the Mike Douglas Show. Under his supervision Group W Films produced motion pictures including the prize-winning "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" and "Outback."

Pack conceived and organized the all-news radio concept, which Group W pioneered on WINS/New York. His career began in 1938 as director of publicity and continuity for WNYC, the New York City radio station, and in 1940 he became director of publicity for WOR Radio, New York.

After service in the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II he rejoined WOR and subsequently moved to WNEW, then New York City's leading independent radio station, as director of publicity and special events, moving up as head of programming. He later became program director for NBC's owned stations, bringing them to life with innovative programming. At NBC Pack gave Barbara Walters her first on-air assignment and created the Steve Allen Show, which became the fabled Tonight Show. He joined Westinghouse in 1955, retiring in 1976. He was named editor of *Television Quarterly* in 1981.

"Two decades ago he came to us and guided *TVQ* to become a publication of quality and universal respect," said NATAS President John Cannon. "The magazine will always stand as a tribute to his leadership, intelligence and irresistible personality."

"As an editor, Dick Pack was a rare breed," said Michael Epstein, a law professor, television archivist and frequent contributor to *TVQ*, of which he is an editorial board member. "Whether the subject was courtroom news coverage, television history, or science fiction, Dick was well informed and thoughtful. Always helpful and sharp, Dick was one of a few whose sense of history was every bit as robust as his sense of humor."

Long before his death Dick Pack had envisioned a retrospective issue of the publication with which he had been intimately associated since its inception in 1962, first as a member of the editorial board and then, for the past 18 years, as its editor. In both capacities he furthered the original mission of *Television Quarterly*: to provide "a penetrating, provocative and continuing examination of television as an art, a science, an industry and a social force."

In his plans for this issue he selected articles which he deemed to have lasting value because they articulated concepts and convictions that are as valid today as when they were first expressed. From the wisdom of Hubbell Robinson and the wit of Goodman Ace to the insights of a later generation of informed observers of the television scene, these contributions represent the legacy of Dick Pack, a real pioneer.

Television's Purpose

by Hubbell Robinson

When I was a very young man my grandfather, an archetype Vermont Republican, once said to me, "Hubbell, the trouble with the Democratic Party is it's all top and all bottom—no middle."

Out-dated as that label is politically in 1961, it seems to apply rather neatly to television today. The top is represented formidably by the networks' continually expanding and effective thrust in informational programming.

In these years of incredible complexity, the very nature of the American democratic process make it self-evident that never did so many need to know so much. And I think by any measurement you wish to choose, more Americans know more about themselves, the world around them, their allies, and their enemies than ever before in the 185 years of the Republic's existence. I find it hard to believe any objective critic could question that this accumulated awareness is almost entirely due to those creative and imaginative talents the broadcasters have assigned to this task. We are deeply in debt to Fred Friendly, David Brinkley, Chet Huntley, David Schoenbrun, Frank McGee, Paul Newman, Don Hyatt, Burton Benjamin, Reuven Frank, their peers and their managements who provided the dollar sinew to do the job.

Television entertainment is, to put it gently, something else again. To put it precisely, it has become in recent years, with occasional exceptions, the bottom grandfather sighted from his Bennington cracker barrel.

Although I was happily 3,000 miles away during last June's Foley Square turkey shoot, all of us out there in the land of the vertical pronoun followed the battle reports as closely as five-day shooting schedules permitted.

Whatever the avowed purpose of that opportunity for soul-baring and breast-beating in protest against Madison Avenue's Brass Curtain, its apparent concern seemed, from that distance at least, an attempt to reach for some of the reasons as to why television programming today is the "vast wasteland" that man in Washington so aptly tagged it as being. I would have found the responses of the distinguished wanderers in the wasteland more persuasive if more of them had been practitioners who had not only demonstrated convincingly their ability to use this medium with consistent and impressive success, but had evidenced any sure

understanding of its real potential and how to energize it.

For that, it seems to me, is central to the dilemma facing those of us whose high hopes for television entertainment still endure despite its debasement by the belt-line merchants of mediocrity, imitation, and their final, inevitable bed-fellow—boredom.

Television is a mass medium. Its overwhelming characteristic is its size. The audiences that make it national and are rapidly making it international are mass audiences. The advertisers whose dollars provide the major share of its support make products designed to reach those masses. Mass sales are the blood stream of their existence. Anyone who loses sight of that basic condition of creative life in television is losing sight of the bulls-eye; he is ignoring not television's greatest creative handicap, but its greatest opportunity and challenge. Any creative team—producer, director, writer, cameraman, performer, designer—that has something worth saying can say it to more people more compellingly than ever before in the history of man. But as communicators they must realize the tender in which they deal has to be designed to attract, hold and engage mass audiences.

And I would like to urge upon you with all the vigor and resolution of which I am capable that there is no categorical antithesis between quality and entertainment for millions. For it is in its efforts to entertain that television's balance has been destroyed.

I am referring here, specifically and particularly, to quality of concept and ideas. Even television's severest critics have recently remarked that in terms of the craftsmanship, directing, and performance in its endless parade of totally forgettable drama and comedy there is some degree of competence.

It is in its almost total refusal to cope with themes of depth and significance that television entertainment reduces its audience to the ranks of the emotionally and mentally underprivileged. The great bulk of television drama, serious or otherwise, consumes hours of our citizens' time while saying precisely nothing. I am aware of the thunderous chorus proclaiming that in these times, which again seem destined to try the souls of men, audiences want only to escape from reality. I have no quarrel with the medium for providing that escape. I should like to contend as militantly as I can, however, against the fable that this is the only kind of entertainment that can involve the interest of a mass audience. The whole history of the entertainment business cries out against such conceptual myopia. As far back as the Greeks, the most successful playwrights commanding the largest audiences were writing dramas with a purpose. To the Greeks, Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles were entertaining because they dealt with problems, crises and values which the Greeks understood and which affected their daily lives. They were hits.

While Sir Walter Scott was beguiling readers with spectacular sugar-plums about brave knights and fair ladies, Charles Dickens was matching his success with a collection of work as purposeful as that of the most fanatic tract writer. Bleak House assaulted British jurisprudence. *The Old Curiosity Shop* knifed at the evils of the industrial revolution. *Nicholas Nickleby* hammered at the sanctity of the English public school system. Dickens was a hit.

And across the North Sea, Henrik Ibsen was writing plays which he held as their basic theme the distinction between the idea of rectitude and the idea of

respectability. He was a hit.

In the 20's, while Ethel M. Dell and Michael Arlen were detailing the fripperies of sheiks and ladies with Green Hats, Sinclair Lewis was presenting American culture and American attitudes towards its culture to the world and doing it so entertainingly, so grippingly, so compellingly, that a bulging bankroll as well as a Nobel Prize were his by-products.

In the first 26 weeks of *Playhouse 90* we dealt with religious discrimination and communism; with experimental marriage and sexual consummation out of wedlock; with a story whose key figure was an illegitimate child. We did not lose listeners because of these themes; our audiences grew. Lord Chesterfield, in addition to inventing an overcoat, said, "There are few things that may not be said if they are said well enough." I submit the examples I have cited indicate television can say almost anything if it says it well enough.

John Crosby has set down as one of "Crosby's Laws" that there are two mass audiences: one is that audience who will look at nothing that is thoughtful, and the other that audience who will look at nothing unless it is thoughtful; and that one audience is as substantial as the other. It may be possible arbitrarily to fragmentize all people in that way, but it is my deep belief there is also the opportunity to fuse those audiences. I am quite aware that such fiery demolitionists as Kierkegaard and Dwight McDonald have despaired of the mass taste and have dedicated themselves to the proposition that mass audiences will always and inevitably seek out and embrace the second-rate, the obvious and the shoddy. Any cynical producer, capitulating totally with the easy way to success, can align himself with this philosophy.

But such attitudes totally ignore the fact that great masses of people have also made the reputations of creators whose achievements stand as monuments today. Let me suggest to you that the burgeoning growth of the publishing business as an investment stock and the prairie fire expansion of the community theatre, which now approaches 7,000 separate projects, would scarcely be possible if the American public's only interest was Mickey Spillane, the Carpetbaggers, and comparable products of the cabbage patch.

I hold no brief for sagas of neuroses and neurotics or sexual deviationists, an area in which the mind staggers at adding to Mr. Tennessee Williams' definitive, exhaustive and exhausting labors. I do not have in mind resurrecting the all too frequent trivia about trivial people with which I am afraid *Philco* and *Studio One* wrote their epitaph. I do not have in mind stories pleading special causes for special groups no matter how eloquently Rod Serling and the few others of equal talent write them.

But I truly believe that television audiences en masse will not turn away from strong and sober themes if they are skillfully and absorbingly presented, if the characters and the dilemma in which they are involved have honesty and bite, if they relate to areas of experience with which an audience can actually or possibly identify. It is the playwright's magical gift to do exactly that, and I know as a matter of fact that there are television writers today capable of that kind of accomplishment-with specific and tangible ideas for achieving that very goal if they could find an arena in which to perform. Charles A. Dana, legendary editor of the old *New York Sun*, once said, "People are more interested in people than anything," and applied this principle in building mass circulation.

It is the dramatists' responsibility to interest people in people; to create characters that capture and compel an audience's attention in situations with which they

can feel personal involvement. At no time in our history has there been so rich an opportunity to create that kind of drama; drama of sharp conflict, deep emotional value, and irresistible excitement. For I take it that the drama's greatest responsibility is to probe and explore the work around us and to reduce it to terms which will be understanding, meaningful, stimulating, and entertaining to transplanted and somewhat bedraggled Dodger rooters in Los Angeles, to denizens of the industrial and business community, even to those who stalk the halls of ivy. Only television offers the opportunity to do this for all the people. And only television, of all the arts, is, as of this writing, totally devoid of any continuous, steady effort so conceived and so dedicated.

A great many well-intentioned and articulate people have taken to wishing that television was something it is not and never will be. They see it as a medium which must address itself largely to the audiences reached by the *Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, Foreign Affairs, The Partisan Review, The Paris Review,* and other distinguished quarterlies of that kind. This, in my view, is not only a duplication of effort, but a tremendous waste of this medium's giant potential. For as Jacques Barzun has said, "It's work to be cultured—few people are willing."

Television's opportunity is to reach the people who are *not* willing; to inform them, to enlarge their areas of enjoyment, to broaden their interests and, in so doing, to enrich their lives. But this must be done by words and methods of presentation that are within the tender of their understanding. One must communicate with them in terms of emotion, uniqueness, and excitement.

In doing this, I should like to see television comedy abandon its preoccupation with the split-level family on Elm Street; its fixation that only oppressively wholesome people can be fun; its stereotype addiction to the half-hour. People who live by the subway, who occasionally find the golden rule a trial, and whose personalities and problems with living are too expansive to be bobtailed into a half-hour can be fun too. Television seems to be almost totally unaware that a new wave of satire—the main current of American humor in the fine tradition of Mark Twain, Mr. Dooley and Fred Allen—is aborning. I would like to see television delve into the rich mother lode of biography, concerning itself with figures less removed and less saintly than the founding fathers and the American hero myths. I would like to see the cameras of television entertainment roam as widely in the world as its informational producers have taken theirs. Once the decision to buy a program is made, I would like to see advertisers and their agencies either get completely in or completely out of television's creative process. It is too massive and too demanding a task for part-time practitioners.

I would like to see television tackle the American family, not as a source of endless giggles—a unit whose most grinding difficulties spin off junior's marks, sister's dates, dad's boss and mother's struggle with budget—but as a microcosm reflecting the urgent and bewildermg problems that confront us all in a world of shifting and transitory values. Variations upon such themes as juvenile delinquency, geriatrics, and the loss of individuality—to name only a few urgent issues—need to be played more often.

In short, I would like to see television start imagining again. I would like to see it start wrestling with projects which, at the outset, must seem "the hard way" and which, I am afraid, is always the "best" way. The world of Spinoza may seem far away from Madison Avenue, Broadway and the movie lots of Hollywood, but when he said, "All things excellent are as

difficult as they are rare," he spoke for all men in all times. Five years ago I said, "The biggest gambles produce the biggest successes." I see no reason to alter that statement.

I am asking that creators start thinking first of what will give the medium vitality, reach, and an excitement which will last in the viewer's mind beyond the moment of broadcast. I ask the creators to think of values before they think "Will it sell?" This is not starry-eyed idealism. It is the most pragmatic kind of showmanship. I guarantee that one of every six ideas of genuine freshness and virility will sell. I cannot guarantee that any one of six saleable ideas cut to pattern and formula, and which only echo originality, will have the essentials of excitement. Originality, impact and permanence are what create important success—the kind of success the medium must bring forth again if it is to grow, prosper, and secure, enlarge and deserve its position as America's major recreation.

It seems to me that drama of the kind I have dwelt upon here today is one of the immediate and practical ways to restore to television some of its glitter, to transform the starers into lookers, listeners, and reactors, and to give television entertainment balance.

It seems to me that a conspicuous opportunity exists, not just for the creative elements of the industry, but also for the advertiser with the vision and understanding to seize it. Good programming can be good business. It seems to me that creating exciting new drama should be at least a part of television's immediate purpose.

For I believe, with Thomas Jefferson, that "We are always equal to what we undertake with resolution—it is part of the American character to consider nothing as desperate." ■

Hubbell Robinson was vice president for programming at CBS when he wrote this article for Volume I, No. 1 of *Television Quarterly*, which was published in February, 1962.

QUOTE...

Arthur Unger: "How about the on-camera Mike Wallace, the supposedly aggressive interviewer, and all the words that you've been called . . . the adversarial interviewer, the ambush interviewer? Are those words outmoded? Did they ever have any validity?"

Mike Wallace: "I think that I had a self-consciously adversarial position . . . it surely was there, and I think to some degree that was responsible for the initial impact of *60 Minutes*. People were rather curious to see that kind of 'Play-Action Journalism,' where the story developed in front of the audience as it developed in front of me . . . I think that to some degree-because it was new and because it was fresh and because there was a ricochet between what you saw on the screen and the audience and their reaction to it—it was exciting for us . . . But after you've done it for a couple of decades, I guess what you want to do is not be so self-conscious about doing that kind of thing."—from a 1986 interview by *TVQ*'s special correspondent Arthur Unger, former television critic of *The Christian Science Monitor.*

...UNQUOTE

Of Glamour, Grammar and Good Times Gone

By Goodman Ace

Call me deprived, but I missed being a true pioneer in television. I never wrote for Roberta Quinlan, Gigi Durstine or Captain Video. Being pretty shrewd in those days, I knew the picture tube would soon blow over. Viewers—that funny new word—would shortly be returning to radio and the incomparable one-inch screen up there in their heads.

Naturally, it took some time for me to accept the reality of television. It was 1952 when my agent finally signed me on as writer for a TV comedian who shall be nameless. Milton Nameless.

The publicity attending my plunge into the new medium stopped no presses. The *Times*, at the end of a column announcing the start of the Number One comedian's fourth triumphant season, had this afterthought: "Goodman Ace has been signed as one of the writers."

We were a crew of six. Six brains for our fastidious star to pick. If he happened to find two or three jokes unappetizing-in a weekly smorgasbord of some 200, all rip-snorters he would ask, "Can't you write something funnier?"

Since the one-liners were all of the same exquisite genre—insult jokes—the lot of them could have been deleted without upsetting our skimpy story line. Oscar Wildes we weren't. But it hardly lifts a writer's ego to find that he's turning out Funny Stuff on demand, like rolls of wallpaper.

In the early days of television, cynics now say, people would watch anything that moved. Sometimes that's all they got.

We did try to elevate the level of the humor and make the sketches "relevant." But it was soon apparent that we were operating under the Big Time Comedy Rule: "Man proposes, the Star disposes."

Mr. Television, who invented the hour variety show and was a household word long before Spiro Agnew, had a high sense of mission. That is, he knew every camera angle, every writers' angle, every upstaging trick and every sly device we were employing to lift the humor above the cretin level. He disliked subtlety. Also wit, whimsy and the off-beat joke. Topicality made him edgy. His argument was that while he appreciated such jests they were far over the heads of the audience. As he put it, "The peoples won't get it."

If obliged to cast an eye back over the Golden Years, I'd prefer not to remember the jokes the writers proposed and the star disposed. But I'll cite one example.

We had a lively script on politics. As lively as one could have with Eisenhower in the White House. Anyway, the public was well aware that the President frequently flew out to Colorado for a game of golf. The joke: "She's so dumb she thinks Washington, D.C. stands for Denver, Colorado."

Our star shook his head. "We've been rehearsing since Thursday," he confided. "This is Tuesday and I just got it."

I said, "Congratulations." He said, "I mean, if it took that long, the peoples won't get it either. Better think of another joke to go here."

"How about saying, 'she's so dumb she thinks the Electoral College is a school for TV repair men.'

"The . . . Electoral . . . *College*?" he puzzled.

"No, no, that won't do," I said quickly. "We'll come up with something else."

In the three years we wrote for Mr. Television, our brains were not only picked but washed and hung out to dry. As they say of the Paris peace talks, "There was no meeting of minds."

After I was fired, I finally decided to leave. Reluctantly. Somehow, I had grown to like the man. He could manipulate an audience as no other comedian ever could. He knew his trade because he'd invented it. We who wrote for him inevitably learned something. But now it was time to move on to greener—and pinker—pastures. (Green and pink were the only colors my early set dealt in.)

Compared to the chaos of most early TV, my next assignment was a deluxe accommodation at a rest home. It ran twelve years, and it was Nirvana all the way. The Perry Como Show, in retrospect, was the nearest thing to not being in television at all. The critics, whose affection for our star never wavered, called him Perry Comotose. The mood was contagious.

Perry was born relaxed. Mr. Nice-Guy, unlike Mr. Television, carried no whistle to blow at the troops. He didn't shout. Mostly, he didn't even talk. But when a song, a joke, or a dance number displeased him, his raised eyebrow was a clap of thunder out of China 'cross the bay.

To the writers, Como was better than tranquilizers. First, we had very little to write. Second, he read his lines casually, a few words dropped softly on his way to the next song. When he sang he was an artist.

It's incredible, looking back, but the Como show moved like a ballerina on ice from the very first line of the very first script. "Good evening, and welcome to our first show for NBC. How do you like it so far? . . . Drags, doesn't it?"

Oh, we did have a few testy moments, we scriveners and the star. There were a few lifts of the brow each week as I read the lines aloud to Perry over lunch. We strived for *le bon mot*, not *le mot juste*.

When the small screen brings you a man who can sing like Perry, you hardly need dialogue by Noel Coward. In consequence, our scripts consisted of deathless lines like "And now, in a gayer mood, we take you to South America..."

Or, getting a bit wordy, "Tell me, Rose-

mary Clooney, have you seen any good shows since you've been in New York?"

"Oh, have I ever," breathes Rosemary. "Last night I saw 'Fiddler on the Roof.' " To which Perry replies, "Isn't that a beautiful song in the second act?" Whereupon there's a bell tone and Perry and Rosemary are into "Sunrise, Sunset."

For this you need writers? You bet you do.

Song cues and other functional lines were regularly scrutinized by the producer and his staff for sneaky "plugs." Those were the years of the "payola" scandals, remember, and every writer was suspect. (Why, everybody knew that Joe had a six year supply of Scotch in his basement because he had casually mentioned Seagram's—or was it Johnny Walker?—so many times on the air.)

So suspicious was the mood in those days that we had to fight to get the most innocent jokes past the producer. Once we had a girl singer as guest and the joke called for her to look in her hand mirror, shudder, and say, "I look like the Avon Lady called and I wasn't home."

A small jest, but it's the small jests that sweeten life. And how we had to fight for that one! Until we demonstrated a willingness to sign affidavits, the producer was ready to believe that we were getting contraband cases of lipstick from an Avon courier every week.

There were other No-No's on the Como show. Controversy was strictly verboten. No messages, no opinions. Ethnic humor was taboo, also. The dialogue had to be choir-boy clean. Once we did manage to insert the line, "Heck hath no fury like a woman scorned" but that was really a private joke for the writers.

In contrast to today's highly permissive writing (*vide* Laugh-in and Dean Martin), the Como show was rather sedate. The only time a viewer ever took offense was when Perry sang Kol Nidre during the Jewish holidays. He sang it wearing a white yarmulke and standing in a soft white spotlight. The Gentiles deemed this solo a bit too sectarian—"that little cap and all." The following year, Perry sang the Kol Nidre without the yarmulke. This time the Jews complained! How dare Mr. Como sing this most sacred chant without wearing a yarmulke!

Our beloved star knew a ticklish situation when he saw one. He resolved the controversy by announcing he'd never sing Kol Nidre again.

As the Golden Years rolled on, I was engaged to write a number of "Spectaculars," as the 90-minute variety shows were then called. Now they've been de-valued to Specials, which sounds less elegant-and they certainly are.

There was nothing really special about most Spectaculars, except for a roster of glittering Big Name stars. This meant that the writers had not just one towering ego to please, but several.

It's curious, but what remains most vividly in mind from those years is the horrible grammar of the Big Stars. No matter how soundly a line was constructed, it would come out, "A person has to take their chances," or, "I feel badly about this."

On one Special, our star repeatedly said, 'Between you and I." Backstage after the first rehearsal, I found the cue card and double-checked. Yes, it did say, "Between you and me." Not wishing to diagram the sentence, explaining that between is a preposition taking the objective case, I simply underlined "me" in heavy black crayon. At the next day's rehearsal he read it again, "Between you and I."

Inspired, I changed the line. This time it read, "Strictly between *us*." That would throw him. It didn't. The night of the show he read the line, with perfect aplomb, "Strictly between you and I."

Ah, well, even David Frost has lapses in

grammar. And he went to Cambridge!

Grammar was no problem when writing for Tallulah. She talked too fast for anyone to notice her syntax. Besides, she was the sort who would have corrected *our* grammar, had the opportunity come up.

Miss Bankhead was, as the world knows, one of the stormiest, most volatile, characters in theatrical history. What became a cliché—"A day away from Tallulah is like a month in the country"—was all too true. Especially if you wrote for her.

None of the writing staff had ever met Tallulah when our work began. Our assignment was to capture her style, her wit on the basis of what we had read about her. There was plenty to read but nothing prepared us for Talluah in person.

I well remember her first entrance into our small office. She was wearing a black sweater and slacks at half mast. She carried a white caracul coat. Her hair was long and her lipstick had missed her lips by a chin. We stood up and she stared at us briefly. We had resolved not to be bowled over by her.

"Are you gentlemen the authors?", she asked.

Suddenly elevated from gag writers to gentlemen to authors, firm resolve vanished. What a lady! Then Tallulah put on her glasses and read our first joke. "I don't think it's funny," she said, We objected humbly. We thought it was funny. Tallulah went on to the next joke.

Rather than discard the script we had prepared with so much good will, I suggested Miss Bankhead wait until after the first rehearsal, then offer suggestions.

As she rose to go, she looked at me and said, "What's your name?" I told her. "Oh, darling!" she exclaimed. "It's *you!* I'm so glad."

Happily, Tallulah did get all the laughs we had promised her and from that day forward she was putty in our hands. She had grandeur and zest and she appreciated wit. I miss her.

There was a style in those dear, dead days that I also miss. Between you and I, as a certain famous entertainer would say, they were very merry. ■

Goodman Ace came to television comedy after 20 years of solid success in radio. He had been the writer, producer and co-star (with his wife, Jane) of the phenominally successful *Easy Aces*.

On Using the Media Wisely

by Robert MacNeil

The only things Americans do more than watch television is work and sleep. If you fit the statistical averages, you have each probably from infancy watched or been exposed to something like 20,000 hours of television. Twenty thousand hours! If you stay in that pattern and live till seventy you will watch 50,000 hours more. Calculate for a moment what you might have done with even small blocs of these hours, or what you could still do.

In 10,000 hours you could have learned enough to become one of the world's leading astronomers. You could have learned several languages thoroughly. Not, mind you, just enough to pass college examinations, but *thoroughly*. You could be reading Homer in the original Greek, or Dostoyevsky in Russian. If that doesn't appeal to you, you could, by investing that amount of time, be at the forefront of nuclear research, or aerospace engineering.

The trouble with having been born into the mass media age is that it discourages concentration. It *encourages* serial, kaleidoscopic exposure, it diminishes your attention span, its variety becomes a narcotic, not a stimulus. You consume not what you choose and when, but when THEY choose and what.

All Americans like to assume—and have had every reason until recently to assume that they had the highest standard of living, the greatest political freedom and the most satisfying lives of any people on earth. Viewed in the cold statistics of consumption, and by certain other intangibles measuring the quality of life, that is not quite true any longer. In crude per capita income tables, we can still hold our own very well, although we are no longer absolutely pre-eminent. But in other indices of the quality of life we have some catching up to do already and could rapidly slip further behind. And it is *that* area of the human condition (the quality of life) that will probably be of growing importance in the developed countries in the next two generations, while the underdeveloped nations of the earth try to catch up with us materially.

Our preoccupation will increasingly be not how much money we make relative to other peoples, but how satisfying, how fulfilling to the human spirit is the life we

can live with that money. And not just ourselves, but our neighbors and our fellow countrymen.

It is a time to look for new ways of doing things. And, if I may be self-centered for a moment, nowhere is the need greater than in my own business: television journalism.

My evidence is subjective, but I feel we are at the beginning of a quiet revolution in journalism. In any mass audience terms it may be too early. But from my own observations, there is a growing frustration with the constant bombardment of trivia that passes for news on so much tele-vision time. The British humorist Malcolm Muggeridge called it "Newsak."

People tell me they feel a media overload leading to dysfunction, that they are getting too much too briefly, with too little attempt to explain or put in context. The commercial television networks have evolved brilliant and convincing formulas. For a generation of Americans they have created a marvellous illusion of significance. Now I believe that illusion is beginning to look threadbare.

The network people are prisoners of their own success. They have a monopoly of the form. Millions of Americans think that is the news because they have been told for 20 years that it is. They monopolize the imagination in the way that Detroit has monopolized our imaginations about cars. Detroit said for years: that flashy, shiny, huge thing with all the fins and chrome is an automobile, America, and that is what you want.

In Walter Cronkite's phrase: "That's the way it is." Well, both Detroit and Cronkite have discovered in recent years, that that is not necessarily the way it *needs* to be. Cronkite, for whom I have the greatest respect, is the most outspoken critic of his own newscast; and many of his colleagues in the commercial networks know that their formats are exceedingly limited. Just as Detroit, under pressure from the competition of foreign designers, is having to re-think the automobile, so television is beginning to re-think what it calls the news. In a small way, we are trying to force some of that re-thinking.

Almost any interesting goal in life requires constructive effort, consistently applied. The dullest, the least gifted of us, can achieve things that seem miraculous to those who never concentrate on anything. But this media age encourages us to make no effort. It sells instant gratification. It diverts us only to make time pass without pain. It is the soma of Aldous Huxley's prophetic novel *Brave New World.*

The media, being a business, bombards you with seductive pressures to consume. You are expected to follow the media's lead, as they make your life a perpetual guided tour Thirty minutes here, an hour there. In short, the media are steadily usurping your God-given right to focus your attention where you will.

If you wish to be your own person, you will be alert to the dangers of this spiritual quicksand. You will use the miracle of television selectively. ■

The foregoing essay was excerpted from the commencement address delivered by Robert MacNeil at William Paterson College, in New Jersey, in May 1977. He was at the time the co-anchorman, with Jim Lehrer, of the nightly *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* on PBS.

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Arthur Godfrey: Television's Huckleberry Finn

He was pure television. Never had the success of one network been so dependent on one performer.

By John Crosby

In ten years will anyone remember Arthur Godfrey? Or Dave Garroway? Or Faye Emerson? All of them giants of early live New York television. We in the newspaper business like to say we write on water but at least the stuff is in the files and in the libraries if anyone wants to go look where those early live TV performances are gone, baby, gone forever.

In the early 50's Godfrey was the biggest thing on television, possibly the biggest man in show business. He was on the CBS television network thirteen and a half hours a week—two and a half hours every morning Mondays through Fridays, and on prime time at night Mondays with his *Talent Scouts* show and Wednesdays with *Arthur Godfrey and His Friends*, the last two always in the top ten and frequently one and three in the ratings which sometimes hit fifty.

At his peak Godfrey brought CBS $12,000,000 a year from his thirteen

sponsors. In today's dollars that would be more than $100,000,000. At one point Godfrey was the profit margin of CBS. The whole ball of wax, all by himself. If Godfrey had fallen under a bus—or gone to another network—CBS would have had trouble paying all those vice-presidents. Frank Stanton, president of CBS, said to me at the time: "Never again will CBS allow itself to be so dependent on one man." It was a very scary situation.

And what was the fuss all about? Well, it was the charm era of television and Godfrey was loaded with charm. He was the Huck Finn of television. (Also of radio and radio was still very big then.) He'd come on the air dressed in a short-sleeved Hawaiian shirt, strumming his ukulele, a shock of red hair falling over one eye, a mischievous smile on his cherubic little-boy face and sing: "You can have her I don't want her. She's too fat for me," in his beery baritone.

"Gather around, chillun, what have we

today?" He'd exchange badinage with Archie Bleyer, his orchestra leader, or Marion Marlowe, one of his singers, or the rest of what he called the Little Godfreys. his family of entertainers, in what Fred Allen called his "barefoot voice."

He'd tell you what he did last night, what he ate, and what he thought—all of it as American as apple pie. The Moms loved him. He was the boy they all wished they had (instead of the brats they did have). He was also loved by the taxi-drivers, the cemetery lot salesmen, the short-order cooks, and the sailors. (He'd been all those things himself.)

It was the age of informality in TV and God knows you couldn't get any more unbuttoned than Arthur Godfrey. I loved his morning shows (I was less fond of his evening ones). They bubbled. They made you feel good. Godfrey was exuberantly alive and he lit up his audience with his own aliveness. What he did was pure television of a kind that has altogether disappeared.

Not everyone loved him. Other entertainers commented bitterly that Godfrey was the No Talent Man on *The Talent Scouts*. He couldn't act, dance, sing, tell jokes or perform any of the other show biz skills they had had so painfully to learn. Yet there he was—on the top of the greasy pole. It's no wonder the other entertainers resented him.

They also underestimated him. I was on his shows several times and I was awed by the tremendous professional ease with which he handled singers, guests, audience and above all the *time* which is the essence of television. Time slipped by imperceptibly on his shows and all of a sudden—it always seemed much to soon—there he was saying goodbye and God bless you. (He was always God blessing us. After an operation on his hip, he emerged from the ether saying: "Bless you all.")

He was one of the world's great salesmen, Right there on the air he'd drink the orange juice (in which he owned stock) or show off the hair spray or any of the other products of his thirteen sponsors. Each product he said he'd used himself and approved—or he wouldn't sell it. I believed him and so did millions of others. He could empty whole shelves in every store in the country.

Although that lazy voice always sounded vaguely southern, Godfrey was born and brought up in the Bronx, not far from the Polo Grounds. At an early age, he went to sea as a radioman third class with the U.S. Navy. For years after, he told many tall stories about his Navy years, some of them true. When he got out of the Navy he became a disk jockey, and a very successful one in Washington. In 1952 came the car crash which almost killed him, crippled him for life and changed his style on the air. Lying in the hospital, listening to the radio, Godfrey decided all radio announcers were too pretentious. Queen Victoria once complained of Gladstone: "He addresses me as if I'm a town meeting." So did the radio announcers, Godfrey decided. When he got back on the air, he slowed his tempo to a walk: he was talking to one person in a living room. Not millions, just one. It was his great gift and while dozens of other tried imitating him, none did it so well.

But as the fame and wealth and glory grew, Godfrey, alas, outgrew Huck Finn. He'd chatter on about his two airplanes, his 1,200 acre farm in Virginia, and his friends—Hap Arnold, head of the Air Force; Charlie Wilson, president of General Motors; Eddie Rickenbacker president of Eastern Air Lines—none of them exactly Tom Sawyer.

The disk jockey with the barefoot voice

had become big business. Such big business that the network had to hire Peter Lind Hayes, a very talented entertainer, who was put on the weekly payroll just to stand by in case Godfrey got sick, which he rarely did. At one CBS stockholders meeting, stockholders raised the roof because Hayes had been paid a quarter of a million dollars in one year for what turned out to be about nine hours on the air.

In 1953 Godfrey's hip gave him so much trouble he went to the hospital to get one of the new plastic hip joints put in. For three months he was off the air and darkness fell on the earth. When he came back, it was the Second Coming. CBS and the AT&T spent $100,000 and three months building a 144-foot tower in Godfrey's backyard in Virginia just to bring the sight of the great man by relay to his millions of worshippers around the country. On the first program, there he was in his flowered Hawaiian shirt and bare feet, God blessing us, thanking God no American boys were dying anywhere in the world. The climax of the show came when he threw away his crutches, crawled to his swimming pool and dove in.

He was talking to one person in a living room. Not millions, just one.

It was all a bit much. *Radio-Television Magazine* commented sourly: "The deification of Arthur Godfrey has been in progress for some time. It's only a matter of time before the second syllable of Godfrey will be forgotten."

The word around Madison Avenue was that Godfrey was entertaining political ambitions and actually had his eye on the White House. (This was before we actually had an entertainer in the White House and it seemed, at the time, implausible.) Budd Schulberg had written a novel about a TV entertainer who was worshipped by millions and entertained thoughts of being President. It all sounded like Godfrey (though Schulberg told me he modeled the man after Will Rogers). Anyhow, Schulberg had written a movie script which was then being directed by Elia Kazan. I had lunch with Kazan and Schulberg, and they told me they were at a loss for an ending for their movie and did I have any ideas?

I told them a story then going the rounds (I have no idea whether it's true or not). In the very early days of the Eisenhower Administration Godfrey had thrown a party at his Virginia estate and invited everyone—Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, Charlie Wilson, then a Cabinet member. Someone with a public relations sense got to Eisenhower (according to this story) and pointed out that this would be the first big social event of Ike's administration and it would demean the Presidency to have it at the home of an entertainer. (Now that we have an entertainer living in the White House, all this sounds a bit old maidish but it didn't then.) Anyway, nobody came, at least nobody in the top ranks. The lower ranks came.

Kazan and Schulberg actually put a scene in the picture in which the Godfrey-like character throws a party to which nobody—nobody at all—came. The film was a huge flop.

In 1953 Godfrey fired his lead singer, Julius La Rosa, right there on the air in front of his millions of adoring fans. La Rosa, said Godfrey, had lost his humility. Humility was a very big thing with Arthur. Sackcloth and ashes was part of his routine. It was YOU, the viewer, the listener, who was important. He, Godfrey, was just your humble servant.

Still, sacking the employees on the air did not go down well with the little folk who were Godfrey's great fans. Some of them made so bold as to say Godfrey has lost *his* humility. Two years later Godfrey

sacked six more of his gang—the Mariners, a male quartet who had been with him for decades, a couple of female singers and three writers. By then he'd fallen out of the Top Ten to thirty-fourth. Eventually he was off television altogether though he lingered on CBS radio for decades.

I liked Godfrey personally though I was always a little afraid of him. (A statement that would probably astound him.) There is an aura about all these great idols of millions that is very intimidating. I once flew with Arthur and his wife Mary and a few of the little Godfreys in his plane with himself at the controls from Miami to Jamaica where we spent a weekend. He was a jolly good pilot with a Green Card which is the highest rating a Navy flier can have. (He was a Commander in the USN Reserve.) We got to know each other a bit on that trip largely because both of us were early risers.

I'd get up at 6 a.m. and go for a swim in the ocean. There would be Arthur ahead of me on the beach, hobbling painfully up and down inspecting every seashell with that insatiable curiosity which was one of his characteristics. We'd have breakfast together, talking small talk, avoiding the big subjects. He and I were miles apart in politics. Actually Arthur would be right at home in the present White House with Reagan and Weinberger and all the right-wingers. Arthur was a big Army and Navy man, a Stars and Stripes Forever patriot, a believer in the old fashioned virtues—and in Mom 'n' Pop and apple pie. But always with a twinkle in his eye, a bit of humor.

One thing I will never forget about that trip. I was snorkeling, something I had done very little of, and I was not in very good condition. There was a strong current running which swept me much further from the boat than I had planned. I started to swim back and suddenly I was struggling with that current and not making any headway. It was Arthur on the boat who first noticed. He dove right in, gimpy legs and all, swam to me, and pulled me back to the boat with those powerful big arms of his. I never forgot it.

And now he's dead and there will never be another one any more than there will be another Charlie Chaplin. Both of them came in when their respective industries were just starting, when a fellow could spread his wings in any direction and fly as high as he felt like. He was the Peck's Bad Boy of television and yet, my God, how innocent it all was next to the murder and adultery and incest and the rest of it that is the staple fare of television today. ■

John Crosby was considered the best of television's earliest critics; he wrote not only with insight and understanding about the new medium, but with wit and style. He gave up his assignment as syndicated columnist of the *New York Herald Tribune* in the Sixties because "I found TV increasingly hard to watch, and even harder to write about."

The Closing Down of Woody Allen

His TV show was political and funny. What happened to it was political and not funny. Whodunnit? A producer recalls a curious episode of the Nixon era.

By Jack Kuney

" 'Satire is what closes on Saturday night' on Public TV . . ."
*(*Variety *headline, February 16, 1982)*

It's been ten years since Woody Allen attempted a bit of satire for public television called *Men Of Crisis*. It was a program that never saw the light of day, abandoned by a group of politically intimidated men from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Public Broadcasting Service, and Channel 13 in New York City. There are quite a number of 10th Anniversary celebrations going on at the moment, and I would hate to see Woody's short-lived marriage with educational television go unremembered, especially in light of a recent black-tie dinner in Washington which celebrated the decade since Richard Milhous Nixon was re-elected to the Presidency. A goodly crowd was there: Nixon himself, John Mitchell, Dwight Chapin, Charles Colson, among others. A few were not invited, one or two refused the invite, or couldn't come. Anyway, they say it was a lovely dinner.

So this is as good a time as any to go public with a story that until now has been untold about the union of one of America's funniest men with ETV. I had the good fortune to be present during the mating process, as a Producer for National Educational Television.

In that winter of 1971-1972 I was having difficulty recognizing exactly whom I was working for. After the passage of the Public Television Act in 1967, with the subsequent formation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and its stepchild, the Public Broadcast Service, changes were in the offing, but they were developing slowly. At the time, the main production center for educational televi-

sion was still a company called NET, National Educational Television, with offices in New York City.

I was then one of approximately 20 men and women who were producers of news, informational, educational, and cultural programs for most of the nation's 246 public television stations. National Educational Television was funded primarily by Ford Foundation money, answerable to no one except NET management. In some eyes, we were part of the infamous "Eastern Liberal Establishment" the Nixon White House saw as one of its prime antagonists. NET's supposed role in undermining the mission of the Nixon administration was rather overplayed. How influential could we be representing, as we did at that time, less than one percent of the American viewing public?

Actually, I didn't feel political during my NET years—my main job was producing and directing cultural programs, lovely work that regularly took me cross country and half way 'round the world.

Then one day in November of 1971 the phone rang. It was Sam Cohn, a high-powered agent employed by International Creative Management. Sam wanted to know if I'd be interested in having Woody Allen do a program of political satire for public television. After I had picked myself off the floor, I asked Sam what the catch was. In his bland style, he swore that there was none. Woody was just finishing shooting *Play It Again, Sam* in San Francisco, and had some free time, before starting a new film in Hollywood about Sex, and he had a few things he wanted to say about the current occupants of the White House, and would we be interested?

No sooner had I hung up the phone, then I raced into the office of Bill Kobin, who was the vice-president in charge of programming at NET—my boss—and told him about the surprising phone call. (It had always been articulated as NET policy that humor, and better still, satirical humor, was an important item on the public broadcasting agenda.) Bill leapt up from his desk with an incredulous, "Are you serious?" and before we knew it we were in bed with Woody Allen.

It all started slowly enough. I was to meet the great little man at the offices of Rollins and Joffee, Woody's personal managers. Sam Cohn was again the intermediary, and in the space of two or three phone calls a date was set, and I was on my way to Woody's 57th Street penthouse offices. My reception was surprisingly warm, and soon I was in a story conference with Charlie Joffee and Woody about our upcoming film. It was all heady stuff for me, and I am not sure that I really remember the exact text of that conversation. I do recall Woody saying something in the softest of tones about some substantial disagreement he felt with the way things were being managed in the White House, and how he had some thoughts about how to reveal the true nature of that Administration.

He had a character in mind, an oversexed power broker named Harvey Wallinger, someone whom the President counted on for his every move. Woody would play this character himself, and it didn't take too much imagination to identify the role-model as Henry Kissinger, in spite of some very graphic physical differences. It all sounded very funny, and I responded enthusiastically. That was the end of the meeting, except for a few cryptic questions on Woody's part. "Are we talking about an hour?" he asked.

"Yes," I improvised.

"I'll try and get a script to you as soon as I can", Woody said.

I didn't hear anything from Messrs. Allen, Joffee, or Cohn for about ten days, and then a call came from the Rollins and Joffee office saying that a script from Woody was on its way. Sure enough, in a few minutes, a messenger arrived with a package. I picked it up myself from the

reception desk, tucked the envelope under my arm—it was surprisingly bulky—and hurried to my office and started to read.

It was a completely articulated script. The thought occurred to me then that perhaps the script might be something Woody had written over a period of months with a more commercial audience in mind. But I was wrong. He had spent the ten days since our 57th Street meeting holed up in his apartment working full-time for educational television!

For the first time I began to think—and subsequently came to believe—that writing the show (and eventually doing it) was truly an altruistic action on Woody's part. As great artists often are, he was extraordinarily prescient, and his perceptions of the Nixon regime struck as close to the bone as anyone's could six months before Watergate. Woody wanted to make a political statement in the way he knew best—through his comedy—and he figured that educational television was the logical conduit.

These were tumultuous times at NET. All kinds of internal changes were going on: James Day, a new president from KQED, the ETV station in San Francisco, had recently taken over, and he was to become the unwilling administrator of NET's last rites. Other changes were also occurring at the local level. At Channel 13, the station call letters had been changed officially from WNDT/13 to WNET/13, and a couple of inexperienced broadcasters named John Jay Iselin and Robert Kotlowitz, were lured from the New York publishing scene to take over, respectively, as Vice-President, and Director of Programming at the local level. All of us at NET were curious to see how they would respond to the external pressures that were developing. Most important of all, Ford Foundation support, the mainstay of NET's financial backing, was about to evaporate; the Foundation was now planning to phase out of its support for educational television.

The long-awaited defusing of our small segment of the illusive Eastern Liberal Establishment was now taking place. It's hard now to fix the blame on any single individual in this small media witch hunt, since there was pressure on from all quarters. Before his demise, Spiro Agnew spoke out often and irrationally, about the "media" and their supposed sins. Clay Whitehead, Nixon's appointee as Director of Telecommunications Policy, was even more specific, and as a consequence, even more insidious.

Courageously, in those rough times, NET did anything but maintain a low profile. We struck out boldly in any number of programs against hypocrisy, injustice, bigotry, ignorance, abuse of privilege, profiteering and other corrupt practices.

One of my colleagues, Mort Silverstein, even took on the Congress of the United States in a program titled, *Banks and the Poor*, a brilliant indictment of certain abuses in our banking system, with a summary calling for reform of these abuses by our legislative bodies. The program closed with a list of more than a hundred members of Congress who each had a vested interest in American banks.

Anyway, it was now my job to get Woody's script to Bill Kobin: I sat in his office as he read it. He finished quickly. "Well?" I asked.

"Well, what?" he replied.

"This will never get on the air, not with Nixon still in the White House!" I said.

"That's not the major problem," he replied, "I just don't think it's very funny."

He was wrong. The script was deceptively simple, but funny. It was titled *Men of Crisis* and was rather loosely patterned after the old *March of Time* newsreels. In a series of barbed staccato scenes, Woody took his protagonist Harvey Wallinger, as

Nixon's key aide, through a series of events which dogged Nixon's footsteps from the Eisenhower Vice-Presidency into the Kennedy-Nixon campaign of 1960. The TV debates were seen through the eyes of a makeup man who wanted to know what kind of makeup to use on "Dick," because he has a face that . . . makes no statement."

The script then proceeded through the debates to Nixon's subsequent defeat. It picked up again with Nixon's Senatorial race in California, including the infamous "You won't have Nixon to kick around" farewell. It climaxed with the presidential campaign of 1968 with Nixon running against Hubert Humphrey, ending with Nixon victorious, going to Washington to be sworn in as President.

This brief history became especially telling because Woody wrote the script in such a way that it could be expanded with as much actual stock news footage of the Nixon entourage as we could find. The shooting script called for this material to be intercut with some new footage of Woody (as Harvey Wallinger) interposed in the Nixon scene. It was not a new technique, but in this context it worked brilliantly.

Within three weeks we were ready to shoot. Woody had a date set for his new Hollywood picture, now titled *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, and if we were going to be able to take advantage of his talents, we had to get moving. My one-man office quickly expanded to include an associate, Mary Ann Donohue, and a unit manager. Casting was in the hands of Marion Dougherty, with whom I had worked during my *Play of the Week* days, and with Woody's advice and consent she began assembling our cast. First to come aboard was Louise Lasser, Woody's ex-wife; next, a current girl friend—a young actress named Diane Keaton. Everybody was working for scale, and most were people he had worked with before.

There were to be no large parts, everybody was to have his "shtick," except for the *authentic* comic characters we were to have on film: Nixon, Agnew, Melvin Laird, John Mitchell, etc.

Also working with us at this time was an extraordinarily hard-working, tenacious, and perceptive film-finder named Dell Byrne. Her job was to dig through thousands of feet of newsreels, searching the years outlined in Woody's script. We literally reshaped the script around some of the delectable footage she found for us. The best thing about her was that she was apolitical in her search, and the result was a couple of wonderful shots of Hubert Humphrey that we used to introduce the whole '68 campaign sequence—Senator Humphrey, for example, in Doctoral robes, mounting a stage with great dignity, obviously about to be awarded an honorary degree, and suddenly tripping as he crossed to the podium.

Then, too, I'll never forget the day that Dell called from the stock-footage library where she was going through endless reels of film, and said that she had found something that we just had to use. It was so unlike Dell's usual quiet air of rectitude that I hurried over to the vaults to take a look. Dell had discovered some footage of the famous Agnew tennis game. It was a well-publicized event early in the Nixon presidency, when the Vice-President playing an ungainly game of doubles, managed to hit his own partner while serving. An astute cinematographer with a great sense of timing had captured it all on film. When Woody saw it he roared, one of the few times I ever saw him laugh aloud, and the sequence appears in the final version of the show.

We shot the rest of the film in ten days in early December of 1971, and it was a constant surprise to me just how close we

stayed to Woody's actual first script. Most of it was shot on the campus of Columbia University on a succession of cold winter days. We were trying to replicate the look and feel of Washington without leaving New York, and we generally found it. We even staged a McCarthy-like hearing in the moot courts of the Law Building.

By Christmas-time, the film had been processed and a work print was in the hands of our editor, Eric Albertson. Woody had hurriedly supervised a rather rough assemblage before he had to leave for Hollywood to begin work on *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*. The plan was for Eric and me to get the film as close to completion as we could and then follow Woody with a rough cut to Hollywood, where we would fine cut it. Woody planned to join us on his free evenings and help us finish the job.

Those weeks of working with Woody in California stand out in my memory as one of the great treats of my working life. It was just Woody and I, the editor and a Movieola, and I really enjoyed the closeness and camaraderie. I think he opened up to me a bit, but it's hard to tell with Woody. He's very diffident in social situations, especially with relative strangers. I kept asking him all kinds of questions that he must have thought were simplistic, but he was always kind and generous with his answers.

For instance, I would question Woody about a bit of business or a gag, "How did you know 'that' was still funny?"

He would reply "I remember, or try to remember, my initial reactions to scenes we've shot, and trust them."

He was very quick to cut something he didn't like, excising whole scenes without compunction. I worried about the eventual length of the film, and frequently asked, "Couldn't 'this' be re-worked?" . . . "Do we have to discard 'that'."

"No," he would reply, "It's better to get rid of it," and there was always an explanation why.

The film was a series of black-outs, bits and snatches, and all of them were exposed over and over again to Woody's discerning eye. Eventually I saw a film that had initially been over an hour long in roughcut, get honed down to 50-40-30, and finally 25 very tight satirical minutes.

Just how funny was it? It's hard for me to say. I've now seen the completed film well over a hundred times, and a few of the things which I initially thought were funny no longer appear so. But I think most of it holds up.

I still remember fondly a sequence in the film, when Louise Lasser, with disarming sexuality, appearing briefly as Harvey Wallinger's "ex", describes the relationship as something less than the wonderful first experience every girl should have.

The completed film was simple enough. What we now had was one episode of a supposed series called *Men of Crisis*. The distinguished personage to be saluted in that particular episode—Harvey Wallinger. Up on the screen, flashes the timeless phiz of Woody Allen as Harvey, the globe-girdling diplomat!

Woody had agreed to do an hour show, but here we were with less than half of that. Well, wouldn't you know, amiable as a pussy cat, Woody agreed to come into the studios of KCET, Los Angeles' educational television station, and fill in the remaining minutes of his allotted hour by discussing some of his ideas about comedy and satire. Our show was now strengthened by a remarkable film essay on the nature of humor by one of the great American comics, and that added to our *Men of Crisis* comedy, gave us an hour program, titled: *The Politics—and Comedy of Woody Allen*.

Almost all NET programming had to be submitted to the networking agency of the new Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Public Broadcasting Service, for review. Public television stations, espe-

cially those operated by State Educational Systems, have always been essentially conservative establishments.

CPB now took over the "flagging" process, warning stations in the network that some shows about to be broadcast might contain certain language, or scenes, supposedly difficult for them and their viewers to handle.

During this period, NET was distinguished by its creative and political boldness. Everyone on staff was committed to turn out the finest work possible, and in advancing the art of television, both its technique and its content. NET was not afraid to experiment; even when it failed, the productions were interesting, and often ahead of their time.

For instance, NET's *Great American Dream Machine* series was a splendid collection of short video essays, bright little features, and courageous documentary material. Its crusading and investigative reporting were frequently effective. At the beginning of the consumer movement, it broadcast an inspired piece describing the ingredients of a frozen lemon cream pie which contained no lemon or cream only a collection of many multi-syllabic chemical ingredients. This aroused the manufacturers of the pie and the baking industry to a frenzied attack on *Great American Dream Machine* and NET.

A continuing foe was Republican Representative Clarence Brown who seemed to spend most of his waking hours trying to slash any funds for public television. He attacked *Great American Dream Machine* in Congress as "leftwing" criticizing "Dream's" then correspondent Andy Rooney who went on to greater fame with *60 Minutes* for his pieces on Nixon.

Another controversial feature by *American Dream Machine* correspondent, Paul Jacobs, a report on the FBI use of *agents provocateurs*, was excised from one of the programs. Some of the stations, and the new regime at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, were becoming wary and timid.

Unfortunately, it was a time when the entire Nixon gang was riding high, and television, especially public television, was responding to the pressure, both inferred and direct, emanating from almost every office on Pennsylvania Avenue. CPB chairman Frank Pace, and his president John Macy, appeared before the Senate Commerce Committee, and as *The New York Times*' Christopher Lyndon interpreted it, the CPB officials "deferred broadly" to White House Office of Telecommunications Policy director Clay Whitehead. A few weeks prior to that confrontation, as reported in *Variety*, Whitehead made the stunning statement "that he saw no need for news and public affairs on public TV because the commercial networks were doing such a swell job."

I never knew exactly who made the decision not to air the Woody Allen show. I suppose the ultimate responsibility for it must lie in the hands of Hartford Gunn, at that time the president of PBS.

Actually the phone call to kill the program came from someone named Billy B. Oxley. At the time, *Variety* commented "Who he?" Oxley had been brought into the national public television decision-making machinery from somewhere in Nebraska, with the title of "Associate Coordinator of Programming for PBS."

Bill Kobin broke the news to me on an early Tuesday morning in February, a few minutes after he had received Oxley's call announcing that PBS was cancelling the projected February 21st air date, replacing it with a show called *Come to Florida Before It's Gone*, starring a comedian named Myron Handleman. Oxley was quoted as saying that the Woody Allen program was scrapped because of "problems of equal time, personal attack, the fairness doctrine, and the subjective issue of good taste."

To my regret, Woody stopped taking my phone calls the moment the show went public in the press. Charlie Joffee, always amiable, kept saying that Woody would get back to me, and we would all decide what collaborative action to take. In the meantime, Joffee kept issuing grandiose statements to the press about how "We had brought the show to public television because we knew that there we would have complete freedom."

At the time of the show's rejection, no more than a hundred people had seen it, mostly people in the business, friends and acquaintances of mine, associates at NET, pals of some of the show staff. The feedback had been pretty good. Everyone laughed in the right places, but strangely, almost to a person, they all had some criticism, something they felt uncomfortable with, one joke they felt should be changed or eliminated. But now, the show had become strictly a "house" item. We stopped screening it for our friends and started twice daily showings among ourselves. In attendance, at one showing or another, were most of the top management of Channel 13 and NET, and they always kept coming back to the same notion the elimination of that one "tasteless" joke or bit of business that somehow would make the show acceptable to all.

Some of the things we were accused of fell rather loosely under what is called the "fairness doctrine," a policy of the Federal Communications Commission. It's a series of rather loosely drawn propositions, but not without force, because they have been supported by Supreme Court decision. Under this general "fairness doctrine" umbrella comes something called the doctrine of personal attack, which states that when someone is about to be attacked on the air, he must be notified, and given time to rebut such an "attack."

If PBS ever had to give air time to everyone satirized on the show, it would have been quite a problem, because Woody was not particularly selective in his satirized attacks—among others, he hit Nixon, Agnew, Hubert Humphrey, George Wallace, John Mitchell, Melvin Laird . . . and *The New York Times.*

What a joy it would have been to see all of the above—Nixon and Company and the *Times*—broadcasting a "fairness" reply to Woody Allen. It could have been funnier than the original show!

Humor should never be examined under a microscope or by a committee. Many of the jokes dealt with the love life of the jetsetting and heavy dating Wallinger, and even I found a few of the jokes in poor taste. But in context of today's television, the best and worse of Woody's gags seem tame in comparison with *Saturday Night Live.* As for Woody's Nixon barbs, some of them pale alongside of many of Johnny Carson's political zingers during the Watergate era.

No matter how many times I view it most of the film gives me pleasure. Among the bits I treasure is one late in the film when, with the Nixon gang firmly entrenched in the White House, Wallinger is asked about the whereabout of the Attorney General; he replies "Mr. Mitchell is busy he's wiretapping Mr. Nixon's phone at the moment." How truth often replicates fiction!

Of all the criticisms that we received, my personal favorite occurred in one of the last viewings that we held trying to decide what cuts might make the show acceptable to all. (Woody, of course, was out on the Coast during all of this, not taking my phone calls.) There were six or seven of us in the room, and we had each expressed our notions of acceptability, when one of the Channel 13 executives piped up, "but what about those homosexual jokes?

I almost fell out of my chair, "What

homosexual jokes?" I asked.

He explained to me that he had divined that two of the jokes had a "homosexual thrust" to them. One dealt with a bit by Conrad Bain (now one of the *Diff'rent Strokes* stars) who, commenting as a political insider on the friendship of Nixon and Harvey Wallinger, announces that "Harvey is one of the few men who can make the President laugh. He just goes up behind him and tickles him. He tickles him, and he laughs."

The other example was a gag which dealt with Nixon's social unacceptability. Harvey explains, "The problem is, you see, that at most social functions, no one will dance with Dick except me."

By this time we had pretty well bottomed out in our office and screening room discussions. No one could agree about anything, and it was decided to shelve the whole program.

And there it has rested, for ten years. Since then, quite a few events have occurred to prove that Allen's satirical shafts were directed at the right targets. A couple of brilliant reporters from the *Washington Post*, the Congress of the United States, and our judicial system have also supported Woody's satire. The basic picture that emerged from the show has proven to be an accurate one.

The program could have been broadcast, and public television should have been strong enough to withstand any governmental pressure, implied or direct. As a great, democratic nation, we should be able to recognize our foibles and weaknesses and if we choose, to laugh at our leaders.

Curiously enough I don't think anyone really owns the Woody Allen film. NET paid its production costs, and there is an Educational Broadcasting Corporation copyright on the film which I put there, but it's never been registered with the Library of Congress copyright office. Woody never signed a contract or received a single day's pay for writing, directing and appearing in this film!

I wish the rights could be cleared. I had always hoped that the film would see the light of day on television, and in theatrical release. It's a short film, so it would have to play on a double bill with one of Woody's other comedies. A generation is growing up with a rather relaxed image of the Watergate Gang, and perhaps the Woody Allen film would be a not too gentle reminder of nasty goings on that happened a decade ago—an amusing history lesson. ■

During three decades in television, Jack Kuney served as producer and director of more than 1,000 shows, including the famed *Play of the Week* dramas. He was also a faculty member of the television and film department at Brooklyn College.

Heroes and Other Villains: Politics, TV and Charisma

A counter-attack on the critics who claim that because of television Americans are finding it impossible to find great leaders. What sort of heroic figures do people turn to in fiction and in actuality?

By Bert R. Briller

College professor Joshua Meyrowitz has written a book, published by Oxford University Press and excerpted as the leading article of *Psychology Today*, proclaiming the thesis that television has destroyed the Hero, and therefore has subverted the American political process. "Where Have All the Heroes Gone?" the headline asks, and the professor of communication answers that by showing our politicos candidly and off-guard, TV has tarnished and shrunk the image of our leaders. He mourns their loss of charisma and sheds tears over the fact that the camera has removed the *distance* that could lend the mantle of greatness to our country's present political leaders. The heroes have been hamstrung, he argues, and video is the villain.

We should examine these ideas and judgments carefully, because they have serious implications for television. If what he says is true, changes should be made in television journalism, in television entertainment and in our political process. And, indeed, there is a struggle going on over the nature and direction of television's news and information programs, over the content and themes of its comedy and drama, and the conflict over the nation's political direction is sharp and many-

sided.

Although we—you and I—will be thinking about both news and entertainment, we will be careful not to blur the distinctions between them. News is news and entertainment is entertainment. The tautologies emphasize the separation between the two programming modes. If we talk about them in the same article it is because the men like Jesse Helms who wish to become "Dan Rather's boss" will be equally ambitious in desiring to control stories, stages and studios. Let us start with political coverage.

Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln—these are heroes, to you and me no less than to Dr. Meyrowitz. But they stand so tall and imposing to us not because television wasn't there to show us their faults, not because they were painted in more appealing colors by the portrait artists and authors of their time, but because of our seeing them in historical perspective. Time and tradition have winnowed out the forgettable and irrelevant words and deeds and have highlighted the apt phrase and brilliant political act. The image and the record have aged, matured, taken on a special character and polish.

But there is another side which people like Professor Meyrowitz forget—the fact that these founding fathers were not heroes to everyone. They were reviled, mocked, pilloried, lampooned, cartooned, ridiculed in ditty, verse, joke and jibe, in every medium the forces they fought against could muster.

With the French Revolution so vivid in people's minds, the Federalists opposing Jefferson tarred him with the epithet of Jacobin, shouted that "our wives and sisters aren't safe" and called Jefferson an out-and-out atheist. They spread the word that if Jefferson were elected, citizens' bibles would be confiscated. So blatant was the campaign that a woman brought her bible to one of Jefferson's followers, appealing to him to keep it safe in his home. He asked why she felt the bible would be safe there if they were all to be taken away. "Oh," she explained, "they'd never think of looking for a bible in the home of a Jeffersonian."

Lincoln was the target of criticism from many quarters, from those who were pressing for immediate emancipation and those who felt he was moving too rapidly. Sen. Wade of Ohio, trying to get Grant fired, told Lincoln, "You are the father of every military blunder that's been made during this war. You are on the road to hell, sir, and you are not a mile off this minute!" (Abe replied that a mile was just the distance from the White House to the Capitol.) The opposition to him did not stop at draft riots in the streets of New York. Lincoln's greatness stems not from the abstract quality of "distance" and the absence of television cameras but from his ability to lead a coalition of diverse interests against strong and determined antagonists in a period of crucial conflict.

It is understandable that the new media draw the ire and fire of people who see the old ways of influencing the electorate lose their effectiveness. In the mid-1920's the news photo began to make its appearance in our daily tabloids, and so news photography became the target of critics. Humorist Will Rogers twitted candidates on their use of photos. Nominees for the Presidency, he wrote, are less interested in their platform or in getting a statement into the newspaper than in having their picture taken in a feathered headdress with an Indian chief.

The phrase hadn't been coined yet, but the photo with an Indian chief was "just a media event."

Rogers saw radio changing the nature of the nominating conventions. Before radio, he noted, the delegates didn't need to talk any more carefully than to be understood by other delegates. But when radio started

to cover the conventions, delegates had to talk to impress the radio audience.

Our democratic process has seen a steady expansion of the means of mass communication from the colonial days of the town meeting. Free public education brought literacy to the middle and working classes. In the mid-19th Century the mass circulation daily newspaper, costing only a penny and supported chiefly by advertising, gained popular favor over the higher-priced small circulation newspapers bought by richer people with more education. Elitists express concern over each new medium, whether it is the phonograph record, which Harding used to distribute his speeches, the photo in the tabloid newspaper, or radio and television broadcasts of conventions. Our democratic process has not been subverted by these expansions of mass communications. It survived, just as it will live in the era of computers, telecommunications and other technological innovations.

Prof. Meyrowitz feels a threat from this increase of communications and information channels. We hope for dynamic "great leaders," he writes, "but television is making it virtually impossible to find one. There is no lack of potential leaders but rather an overabundance of information about them. The great leader depends upon distance, mystery and careful management of public impressions. Through television, we see too much of our leaders, and they are losing control over their images."

In a democracy, one would hope, more information would be better than less information, enabling the voter to make a better informed and wiser choice. It should be more desirable for the voter to have more information than for the candidate to have greater control of his image.

Certainly, the White House does not seem to have lost control over the President's image. President Reagan demonstrates mastery of image presentation on a wide range of stages, deftly using the ad-lib quip and the telepromptered address.

As an example of the "hardships" television places on office seekers, Prof. Meyrowitz writes, "politicians can no longer easily enhance their positions with different promises to different audiences. Because they now confront so many types of people simultaneously, they cannot speak in specifics."

What his complaint comes down to is the recognition that it is difficult for a national candidate to tell the farmer that he is going to raise farm prices and in the same speech tell the consumer that he will lower the prices consumers have to pay for those products in the supermarket—without coping with how to do both simultaneously. It is getting more difficult to be self-contradictory. I suppose the professor will gripe over use of the videotape recorder, which can juxtapose a candidate's pledge not to lower social security benefits with his later statement in office that he is willing to make those cuts. The new media have added some new tools of evidence in the court of honesty and consistency. And that should not be deplored as Dr. Meyrowitz does.

The professor is unhappy that on television "politicians can see exactly what the public sees. A speaker's nervousness and mistakes usually are ignored by 'live' audiences and therefore soon forgotten by the speaker too. With videotape, politicians have permanent records of themselves sweating, stammering or anxiously licking their lips. It not only reduces our awe of politicians; it increases politicians' self-doubt and lowers their self-esteem. Television may be a prime cause of the complaints of indecisive leadership and hesitant 'followership' that we have heard since the mid 1960s."

"Politicians must often begin a sentence

before the end of a sentence is fully formed in their minds." Dr. Meyrowitz writes. But the public is mature enough to discern the casual slip of the tongue from substantial errors. Moreover, I believe, voters respond to real issues and not to images, no matter how well crafted, in a vacuum. CBS's Leslie Stahl noted that the nation's oldest president had strong support from our youth, "who saw no war, no draft, and an improving economy . . . People generally wanted to have good feelings about their country."

Because its audiences are large, the pressure to influence the content of television is great, even though the actual effects may be less than some pressure groups believe. Much of the fire is directed at entertainment programs to change the kinds of things we laugh at in comedies and identify with in dramas. Several campaigns use statistics on how many people of various ethnic and demographic groups appear in various roles. In some respects the reasoning is fallacious.

The proportion of kings and queens in Shakespeare's dramatis personae far exceeds their proportion in the Bard's England or in today's world—but that does not make them in any way less valid. In present day popular drama, corporation executives are seen in disproportionate numbers. The reasons are many, one of them being that people wish to see characters who have the capacity to take action—and so more dramas are written about tycoons than about mailroom tyros. It is much more difficult to make the stuff of drama out of the less significant conflicts of the common man or woman in the street. His and her struggles and decisions tend to affect the lives of fewer people than those of the head of a large institution. Of course, the more ordinary people like those in Arthur Miller's *Salesman*, merit our attention, but plays of that quality are rare.

Why do people like fiction, stories of heroes, stories of villains? More often than not they want escapist stories to take them away from their humdrum lives. In a workaday world in which they are part of a larger institution and where they feel restricted in their ability to act on their own, they see the hero as someone who is powerful, who can decide and act effectively on his own. The villain, too, demonstrates an ability to break out of the conventional boxes, transcending the rules that hem us in. We like to see someone flout the law and "get away with it." But even if the criminal does not get off free, if he is caught and punished, that is not bad either—it reassures us that we were right not to try kicking over the traces and breaking the law.

Those watchdogs of public morality who want to make television "toe the line," who shudder when they see an unmarried couple living together or a J.R. of *Dallas* pulling off a shady deal, don't realize that showing deviant behavior provides an escape valve—an opportunity for some bored viewer to feel that he has broken out of a suffocating sameness. Vicariously, of course.

The villain has his rooters, people who wish to see him succeed. The villain has his heroic qualities, too, courage and intelligence and even the search for excellence. Some villains, like some heroes, have true charisma. They are people you love to hate. The line between villainy and heroism often is blurred, and one person's villain is another's hero—like Napoleon. The Corsican's position in history is generally a question of one's perspective on him.

Those critics and analysts who carp at television with quantifications of its law makers and law breakers would do well to look at Henry Fielding's 240-year-old novel, *Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743). It's a good antidote to simplistic

thinking. In his opening chapter Fielding writes, ". . . we shall often find such a mixture of good and evil in the same character that it may require a very accurate judgment and a very elaborate inquiry to determine on which side the balance turns. . . ."

Jonathan Wild laid down 15 maxims as the most certain methods of attaining greatness. Space permits my citing just a few. "1. Never to do more mischief to another than was necessary to the effecting his purpose: for that mischief was too precious a thing to be thrown away. 3. Never to communicate more of an affair than was necessary to the person who was to execute it. 6. To shun poverty and distress, and to ally himself as close as possible to power and riches. 10. That all men were knaves or fools, and much the greater number a composition of both. 12. That virtues, like precious stones, were easily counterfeited; that the counterfeits in both cases adorned the wearer equally; and that very few had knowledge or discernment sufficient to distinguish the counterfeit jewel from the real. 15. That the heart was the proper seat of hatred, and the countenance of affection and friendship." The language is archaic, but the sentiments might be those of a J.R. Ewing of *Dallas*.

Jonathan Wild was a real person, born in 1682 and hanged on the gallows in 1725, one of the most notorious criminals of his age. Why did Fielding choose to model his villain after this great rogue? "The true iron or steel greatness of his heart was not debased by any softer metal," Fielding wrote. "While it is in the power of every man to be perfectly honest, not one in a thousand is capable of being a complete rogue." In short, Wild's life is entertaining and it presents an opportunity for Fielding to use it ironically in a commentary on the society of his day.

If the content analyzers go through the book, they will find a plethora of criminals, a scarcity of virtue. As Wild notes, every person mentioned as being great in the book was hanged, except for one who was broke on the wheel and a woman who was transported to America, reformed, and made a good wife.

It is understandable that the new media draw the ire and fire of people who see the old ways of influencing the electorate lose their effectiveness.

Many of the critics of television, movies and other popular arts fail to understand the paradoxical nature of contemporary culture—that it both mirrors reality and distorts reality, at the same time. The tensions between reflection and distortion serve a purpose. The function of some contradictions in entertainment is indicated in a recent article in the *Christian Science Monitor* by Melvin Maddocks. This took off on the fad of renting cassettes of awful horror movies in order to have a good laugh. Among the reasons people love horror films, Maddocks noted, is that they are "nightmares under control. You get the dark at the top of the stairs—with a flashlight." They are "the catered oblivion we choose in order to forget actual horror. We run gladly into the arms—or whatever—of the nearest monster, rather than contemplate The Bomb."

He quotes writer Isaac Rosenfield who said of junk-food taste in the arts: "We find ourselves enjoying things which we hold in utter contempt. Our repugnance, in some strange way, provides sauce to our pleasure."

Perhaps we'd be better off tackling Proust's *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, but it was a rough day at the office, the IRS forms have got to be worked on and Junior needs a talking to about his homework. So

let's tune in to a program of cops and robbers, heroes and villains, something that's really beneath us, and if it makes the flesh creep too much we can always turn to Johnny Carson.

There is something to this notion of our interest in things which are repugnant to us or for which we have contempt. We can feel relaxed with them, superior to them, detached from them. They have the fascination of being illegal, or dangerous or sinful. Or unhealthy. Would you have had that extra helping of pecan pie a la mode if they told you it was good for your liver? No. But you relished it because you knew the extra calories made it even more delicious, and you even enjoy those little twinges of conscience.

People wish to see characters who have the capacity to take action— and so more dramas are written about tycoons than mailroom tyros.

We are exploring these paradoxes of audience psychology because some critics of TV have a simplistic view of the heroes and villains that people turn to. And we wish to examine the ideas of those who would legislate quotas for various groups of people, occupations, etc. to manipulate viewers' minds.

Let me cite a case going back to 1962. The program *Bus Stop* on ABC was due to have an episode in which the young villain (played by the very popular singer Fabian) who had committed a murder was freed by the court. As an ABC V.P. I was with a group of affiliates who raised the problem while visiting 20th Century Fox studios. Producer Roy Huggins replied that in real life a great many criminals escape the law and he defended the program's artistic integrity. Later there were protests from some viewers, which brought withdrawals by Singer Sewing and other advertisers and cancellation of clearances by about 25 affiliated stations. Government got into the act, too, and the *Bus Stop* case became a hot issue in the hearings on TV violence conducted by the late Sen. Thomas Dodd. Looking back at the hearing record sheds some light on concepts of hero and villain, on pressures on the medium.

The series was a spin-off of the play by William Inge which had also been made into a feature film. The script was based on a book, *Judgment*, by *New York Times* writer Tom Wicker. The starring of the charismatic Fabian as a killer drew protests from people who felt his popularity might lead to imitation by other young people. The time slot (9-10 PM EST) was criticized because it was 8-9 in the central zone.

Early on, ABC's Continuity Acceptance department had problems with aspects of the script and made changes. After sponsor defections, Roy Huggins changed the title from "Told by an Idiot" (from the Macbeth soliloquy) to "A Lion Walks Among Us" (from the New Testament). In morality play terms which the Senate Committee entered into the record. he wrote, the story "works beautifully as an illustration of the ever-present existence of pure evil in this world, or in other words the presence of Satan in this world."

One element which produced criticism was the fact that a woman, previously attracted to the young killer and seeing that he is going free, drives them both over a cliff to their death. This suicide was deemed a violation of the Television Code's standard (at that time) that suicide should not be presented as an acceptable solution to a problem. But it was the opinion of ABC continuity editors that the woman's action was an act of self-sacrifice

to curb the psychopath.

Prior to the broadcast a representative of the Code requested a screening of the film. However, ABC refused, saying that while it adhered to the principles of the Code it would not abandon its responsibility to an outside authority and prior censorship, and that it had shown the episode by closed-circuit to all its affiliates for them to make their own responsible decision on its suitability.

Despite the pullouts by agencies and advertisers (one of which also yanked its spots from ABC Radio), the Code's red flag and cancellations of clearances, the Fabian telecast was aired.

What about the effects on young people? ABC President Ollie Treyz cited a letter to their local newspaper from an eighth-grade English class in Solvang, California: "We liked the particular show and had discussed it in class the day after its showing. If this is filth and trash, then there are many true-life situations in the news today that are just as nauseating, tawdry, and ugly. Are these conditions remedied by an angry twist of the wrist in turning off the station that dares to present such life-in-the-raw realities? We do not think so. We, of the teenage group, are aware of the fact that people do not always live together happily, harmoniously, and decently."

Two historical points. First, there is no longer a television code, which was disbanded after a federal court found part of it "in restraint of trade." Secondly, Committee Chairman Dodd, who was concerned about delinquency and morality, was himself censured later by the Senate for "financial irregularities." A 162-page document included these facts: the senator had put more than $150,000 of contributions to his campaign into his personal checking account; there were 14 instances when he had submitted double travel bills, to the organizations that had invited him to speak and again to the U.S. Senate; he used campaign funds and money from testimonial dinners for household expenses, renovations on two houses, personal travel to Curacao, California and Florida, restaurant, liquor and private club bills. The *Times* commented that by signing the document and throwing himself on the mercy of the Ethics Committee, Sen. Dodd avoided the spectacle of daily headlines as the testimony was revealed.

Now for a more recent episode of pressure to change the nature of television entertainment's heroes and villains. In the House of Representatives subcommittee hearings on crime and violence in the media (April 13, 1983), the biggest section of the 305-page report is devoted to a study done by Dr. Linda Lichter and Dr. S. Robert Lichter under the aegis of the conservative Media Institute. In it, by and large, the Lichters make television the villain.

They studied six weeks' worth of prime time shows in 1981, involving 35 series such as *Hart to Hart*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *Dukes of Hazzard*. Their conclusions include:

(1) There were 1.7 crimes per show

(2) "Crime on TV is far more violent than in real life." Murder is most common crime—one in every 2-1/2 programs.

(3) "TV criminals tend to come from the 'establishment.' Most prime time lawbreakers are middle or upper class white males over 30 years old. Businessmen are responsible for more crime than any group other than professional criminals.

(4) "Almost all TV criminals are caught or thwarted, unlike crime in real life," the Lichters wrote.

They cite FBI data that in the real world "crimes are disproportionately committed by males, young people, non-whites, and the poor and unemployed . . . and more

often than not their crimes go unpunished." In the fantasy world of prime time television, they wrote, most of these relationships are reversed.

The study noted that on TV 90% of the violent crimes were committed by whites and 10% by non-whites, while FBI data shows that only 54% were committed by whites and 46% by non-whites.

The Lichters express concern over the upper class status of villains. Among characters whose economic status was shown, the murderers were all wealthy.

Actually, the Lichter figures show 20% of the homicides were committed by rich characters, but the remaining 80% were the work of characters with no clear economic status. Perhaps the ambiguous economic status of four out of five murderous villains is the script writers' attempts to avoid criticism from vocal special interest groups such as the Media Institute.

The Institute has published a book *Crooks, Conmen and Clowns* on another Lichter study, showing a high proportion of businessmen portrayed as criminals in TV entertainment shows. One flaw in this study is that what the Lichters code as a businessman may not be perceived by viewers as a businessman. They cite a drama of an art dealer who kills young painters to raise the value of the victims' canvases. Viewers, however, may not perceive the dealer as a businessman, or conclude from the story that a corporation executive will commit murder to increase profits. Most likely, the viewer will see the story as a fictional exercise in puzzle solving and suspense, without conveying an ideological message.

Part of the Lichter testimony was a study of the "TV elite." These were 104 persons supposedly important in determining program content. Among the data presented were the percentages whose "father voted Democratic," were "raised in the Jewish religion" and are a "political liberal."

One wonders whether the Lichters would view these same questions as significant for themselves in determining their qualifications for performing their work. Do they feel they should be asked about their religion or their father's voting record as an indication of the reliability of their work?

When government begins to get involved in program content, one doesn't know for certain where it will end. At those same hearings, Daniel Schorr, once a CBS newsman who later worked for CNN, cited an article he wrote attacking violence on television. Although his point was to reduce the exposure given to terrorists and criminals who take hostages, he soon found that the thrust of some members of the Congressional committee went farther than that. One congressman took issue with the fact that too much attention was being given to the 1983 mayoral race in Chicago.

The Representative expressed the view that the media were spending too much time on the racial implications of the contest. He declared that it was a local election, not a national election, and therefore shouldn't be given national coverage. It is unfortunate that the Chicago campaign had racial overtones, and perhaps they were more fundamental than overtones. But there are two questions that should be asked: (1) were the racial notes introduced by the press or did they originate in the campaign itself? and (2) should the congressional committee be used as an instrument of government to influence the role of the press?

Schorr, as a journalist, did not like the injection of the congressman into the reportorial role of television—but the fact is that he had himself opened the door to government by this testimony. Giving politicians *some* influence on how the press covers the news has that danger—that they will try for more. Perhaps that is why the founders of our system of govern-

ment included the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights: "Government shall make no law abridging freedom of the press. . . ."

The government enjoys a tremendous advantage over the press. It has access to tremendous amounts of information. It can choose what to release, and when, and how. It can reward the cooperative reporter and punish the independent one. Prof. Meyrowitz seems to feel that the American public cannot have true regard for the President as a leader because: television has brought him too close to us, showing us his indecisions and mistakes. That doesn't seem the case, however.

Some critics of TV have a simplistic view of the heros and the villains that people turn to.

Traditionally, the party that is out of the White House complains that the "ins" have an advantage in the media. In October 1984 the cry was accompanied by a 163-page report from the Congressional Research Service. prepared at the request of House Speaker O'Neill (D-Mass.). Supporting the complaint that the President almost routinely is granted requests by the networks for coverage of addresses the President considers important, it also offers evidence that the White House's advantage can even pay off in legislative victories.

Although the situation is not new, the Democrats seem particularly troubled by the fact that President Reagan has demonstrated remarkable skill as a communicator. According to public opinion polls, voters have shown notable swings toward the President's views after a Reagan fireside chat or address. The report mentions three occasions when "the President's superior access to network television" was helpful in getting the House of Representatives to adopt his budget and tax measures over the Democratic leadership's opposition. The document also cites an address by President Reagan as helping to tip the balance in favor of the Administration's position pushing immediate increases in economic and military aid to El Salvador.

The Administration has been using tools such as the sophisticated Political Information System (PINS) of pollster/strategist Richard Wirthim in fine-tuning President Reagan's image. For example, in 1983 PINS detected unfavorable trends in the public's attitudes toward educational policy. Disapproval of the Administration's cutbacks in federal aid to education hit the two-to-one level. To counteract this, advisors to the Administration launched a communications campaign centered on the White House's dedication to excellence in education, merit pay for teachers and tighter discipline in classrooms. In two dozen speeches and appearances around the country the President endorsed these stands. The result was that while the Administration's policy actually remained the same, the PINS poll showed a dramatic reversal, to a two-to-one level of support for the President.

The decisiveness of President Reagan's electoral victory in November was not a feat of sleight-of-handiwork. But it does reflect the fact that Mr. Reagan is a master of public images and that, by and large, the media treated him carefully, respectfully, positively.

A national poll by Roper found that 64% felt that TV treated candidate Reagan fairly, 23% thought TV favored him, and only 8% thought TV news people were unfair to him.

The relations between the President and the press in the Reagan Administration are being acted out in this context—Mr. Reagan is an exceedingly popular figure and journalists are perceived as pushy,

prejudiced, out for personal advancement and too quick to raise the banner of Freedom of the Press. The public fails to recognize that the aggressive reporter is pressing on behalf of the people's need to know. Even when the camera is pushed into an official's office or a microphone prods a politician, we may criticize the fourth estate's impoliteness, but we should also clap the media on the back for giving us a closer look at our government. In the light of the President's popularity, the journalist who digs up a story unfavorable to the White House is likely to earn his audience's hostility rather than an accolade.

One veteran political observer who echoed some of Prof. Meyrowitz's criticism of TV is Robert Bendiner, a former member of *The New York Times*' editorial board. He speculated on its Op Ed page about the charisma former presidents would have lost "if there had been TV to divert the voter's minds from a man's position on, say, war and peace to his looks and personality, if any. He pointed out that Washington was handicapped by "the severity of a face rarely lit by a smile." The pudgy John Adams was sometimes tagged as 'His Rotundity.' "Madison was only 5 feet 2 and described by Washington Irving as "a withered little Apple-John." And Lincoln's awkward body and dangling arms would have had viewers agreeing with one of his many detractors that "Barnum should buy and exhibit him as a zoological curiosity." Writing with irony, Bendiner said those who lament Walter Mondale's lack of "image" should undoubtedly find the "Presidential look in that trio of political giants," Franklin Pierce, Chester A. Arthur and Warren G. Harding.

Presidential candidates look too small for the job until they have been elected, Bendiner wrote, "then the trappings of office and the fierce concentration of the media add 10 or 12 inches to their stature overnight. The phenomenon, which might be called Tom Thumb's Law, is as old as politics, but television has greatly heightened its effect by displaying, day after day, the challenger's desperate struggle to look Presidential while his incumbent opposition has only to stand tall to the strains of 'Hail to the Chief.' "

I am willing to grant some effects of charisma, the influence of media, the power of style, smile and guile, but only to the extent of a few percentage points. Deep down the voters are casting their ballots for real reasons, which have a lot to do with their wallets, their welfare, their vital issues and values. Much of the latter they learned at the family hearth, and the current news and opinions they see on television do not have the effect of changing but rather of mostly reinforcing long-held, fundamental beliefs.

The Economist of London has given a reasoned analysis of television's potentials and limitations: "Simply because of the size of its audience, television will always deeply affect any political process which it reports. It might exaggerate that process, but it is more likely to speed it up. . . . The best-informed generation in history is becoming increasingly alienated from both politicians and the traditional political process . . . Thanks to television they know their politicians too well; they have seen and heard the glib promises and the equality glib excuses too often. It is not television which has brought politics into contempt but the politicians. Television cannot save the politicians from themselves."

And *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker adds, "In Presidential politics, television can neither redeem an otherwise lifeless campaign . . . nor kill by inattention a campaign that has a real base of public support. But nothing, any more, is quite so important to a Presidential candidate as television coverage."

The pulling and hauling goes on, therefore, to manipulate the viewers and the

voters by attempting to control the hero-making process, to exercise power through the Halls of Fame and the Hells of Infamy. Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television spoke out against one group's effort to police the morality of television: "The Coalition for Better TV . . . is trying to dictate what the American public may or may not watch on television. Perhaps no one will miss the first program forced off the air in the name of morality. But the New Right's censorship crusade will not stop there. What will be the next target? A production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*? A documentary on teenage pregnancy? The news?"

If Prof. Meyrowitz wants heroes, let there be heroes, and heroines, but don't ask television to hide their clay feet or plastic principles. Let us see the real person. Walter Scott wrote of the meeting of two of the Eighteenth Century's intellectual heroes, Samuel Johnson and Adam Smith. Literature's giant shouted at Smith, "You lie."' and the noted economist retorted, "You are a son of a bitch."

Sir Walter commented, "On such terms did these two great moralists meet and part."

Heroes—but not to each other.

Heroism, like beauty or morality, is in the beholder's eye. And he who would choose your heroes for you may have the gleam of villainy in his. ■

Former executive editor of the Television Information Office, Bert Briller previously was a vice-president of ABC-TV, a reporter and critic for *Variety* and served hitches at WOR-Mutual, WNEW, the newspaper *PM* and the Richard K. Manoff ad agency.

QUOTE...

NBC's John Chancellor: "Both my father and my mother were eloquent people, but my father wanted me to be a lawyer and my mother thought that journalism was really very close to organized crime. I mean she really didn't think this was the way her son ought to lead his life. My father told me in sorrow that I was condemning myself to a life of poverty outside society. I think he was absolutely right, but I didn't care . . . the community of journalists on a newspaper is still one of the most attractive things that I find in life."

—from a 1989 interview by *TVQ*'s special correspondent Arthur Unger

UNQUOTE...

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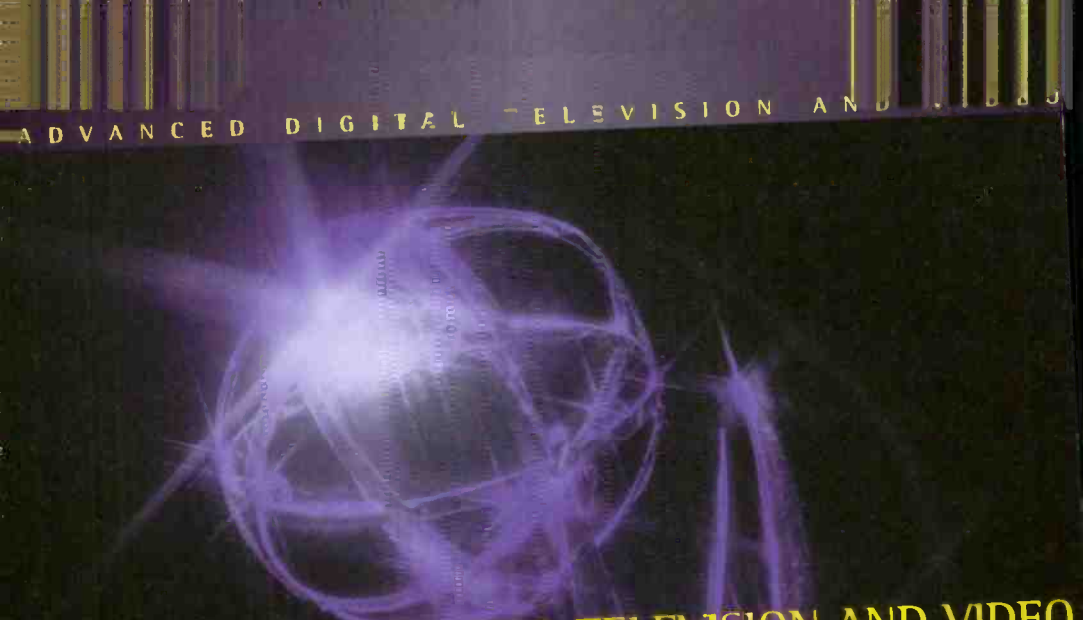

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The Maybe Golden Days of Live Local Television

It was "LIVE from New York!" Not just Saturday night, but daily. A survivor tells the story.

By Richard Pack

Once in the dear old days of early early television that are not beyond recall, there must have been tens of thousands of hours of shows that were never recorded. Did you ever wonder where they all went? Are they still floating somewhere in outer space, lost like abandoned satellites? What an idea for a sci-fi story: a mad genius invents a VCR that can capture all those disappeared programs, and becomes wealthy from this boundless treasury of reruns.

Of course, most of these missing shows were local productions, because Life Before Tape meant nothing was recorded locally; only network shows were put on kinescope, and not all of them.

Nostalgia is now the game of all generations, young as well as old in this era when even twelve-year-olds wistfully enjoy the reruns of the *Lassie* shows they watched at age six. So a senior television citizen can be allowed the nostalgia of recalling what it was like in the early years of local programming, during the pioneering period when viewers moved up from the 12-inch sets to really big screens—sixteen inches, courtesy of RCA, Philco or Dumont.

From 1952 to 1954, I was Director of Programming and Operations for WNBT,* Channel 4, the New York key station of the NBC Network. (At the same time, I was also programming chief of WNBC radio, but that wasn't much fun.) For the network, it was also the era which later was dubbed Golden, the time of Milton Berle, *Philco Playhouse*, Sid Caesar and Howdy Doody. And Pinky Lee. Golden? Well, maybe....

At NBC, "local" was a world apart from the network, and the two worlds never mixed. Locally, we had our own directors, writers, producers, salesmen, talent, and executives, and many hours of time to fill each day. Unfortunately, we had to rent studios and engineers from Big Daddy NBC, and they really socked it to us, because somehow that made their books look better.

Most of the network brass looked down on us local yokels, did not know what we did and cared less. As one of the upstairs VP's said to me with lofty condescension, "All you guys do is make money by putting spot announcements in between *our* programs."

Well, what we really did was to program all those hours that then were not serviced by the network; all things considered, we did it rather well, and although we were not appreciated, we had the quiet satisfaction of knowing we were doing a difficult job with skill and style. It was an exciting time.

Looking back now, I wonder how we ever managed, limited as we were by staff and budgets. For WNBT produced more than fifty-five hours of local programs each week, most of them live. Most shows had no camera rehearsal, a few had a half-hour or less. We had very little film available in those, the Cisco Kid days of syndication, and obviously no tape. Weekdays, the islands of local programming which WNBT occupied, were something like this:

Four local inserts in *Today* at 7:25, 7:55, 8:25, and 8:55; 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.; 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.; 6 to 7:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. to signoff around 1 a.m. No prime-time access then, since the network news (*The Camel News Caravan* with John Cameron Swayze) rode from 7:45 to 8 p.m. But that very prime half hour from 10:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. was still local territory.

We had a lot of time to fill over the weekends, too, for the networks had not yet marched boldly into Saturday and Sunday day time. WNBT was local all day Saturday until 7:30 at night, and following *Your Hit Parade* with Snooky Lanson, from 11 p.m. until signoff. I must admit we could not afford much on Saturdays, and we filled mostly with old Westerns and older features. Sample: *Passport to Heaven*, described by *TV Guide* thus:

Released from prison, a cobbler needs a job to get his passport back, but no one will hire him without a passport. Albert Basserman, Mary Brian.

On the Seventh Day we did not rest. WNBT was local all day, except for the standard network religious and public affairs programs like *The American Forum of the Air, Youth Wants to Know* and *Meet The Press*, plus Milo Perkins and *Zoo Parade*. Our local shows included a familiar radio retread, *The Horn and Hardart Children's Hour*, kid variety with Ed Herlihey, and not bad for its time, and other kiddy stuff like *The Magic Clown*, and artist Jon Gnagy. It was difficult to pry loose a crew from the network on Sundays, but when we finally did manage a small studio and two cameras for a 3 p.m. half-hour, we produced *Let's Look at The News* with John Wingate, our nighttime anchorman, an experiment of which we were

***The call letters later were changed to WRCA-TV, and then to WNBC-TV, the present identification.**

justly proud. As far as I know, it was the first attempt at news for youngsters.

How did we do it, day after day, faced with such a staggering production load? Maybe because we didn't know any better. Or perhaps it was the creative juices that bubbled in all of us, the exhilaration of being pioneers. We enjoyed working in a new medium that had not yet found all the answers, set its boundaries, defined its terms. Ideas and formats were not yet frozen, and the clichés of the business had not yet been manufactured. And we could afford to make mistakes. We made plenty of them, but we also had a few hits.

Another force in our favor was the General Manager, the late Ted Cott, a young and difficult man, yes, but a manager who created an unsuppressed environment of showmanship, what *Variety* used to call razzle-dazzle. You needed a leader like Ted. There never has been a showman like him, running a major television station. He was also the first big league TV G.M. to have graduated from the ranks of program managers, rather than sales.

Our staff made up in quality what it lacked in quantity. My directors included men and women who later went on to become major network directors like Dwight Hemion, Bill Harbach, Mike Garguho, Ted Nathanson. Enid Roth, today a top director, was one of our AD'S (she should not have had to wait as long as she did to become a director!). Barbara Walters was assistant to the station's Publicity Director, Phil Dean, and for a while a staff producer. Our Director of Community Affairs was ex-baseball great, Jackie Robinson.

Schuyler Chapin, who later became Manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and now is Dean of Columbia University's School of the Arts, was Executive Producer of *The Tex and Jinx Show.* Bob Stewart, a staff producer, is today one of the major game show packagers and creator of shows like *The Price is Right, I've Got A Secret* and *The $20,000 Pyramid.* Steve Krantz, now a Hollywood feature film producer of hits like *Fritz The Cat* and *Cooley High*, and major network miniseries, was the station's Executive Producer. Pete Affe, now a VP of Disney TV sales, was our Production Manager.

You had to be young and eager to work the hours those men and women did, especially the directors and producers. (Most of the directors, by the way, were combination director-producers, an excellent system.) A director might be assigned, say, to *The Richard Willis Show* five days a week at 1:30, and then have to come back in the early evening for a fifteen minute daily across the board program. Bill Harbach, for example would direct/produce *The Faye and Skitch Show* at 6 p.m. (Faye Emerson and Skitch Henderson) and then have to return for a live station signoff feature aired around 1 a.m.

To be a bit of a character also helped. It eased the tensions and lubricated the creative juices. Bill Harbach was not only an immense talent, he also was colorful and offbeat.

There was the time, Harbach recalls, when he was assigned *The Nancy Berg Show.* Show? Well, it was a gimmick way of closing down the station, that made *Time* magazine and the wire services. Nancy Berg, a top model of the period, was hired to sign off the station each night with some chatter and promotion for the next day's schedule, photographed seductively in bed, clad in a lacey nightgown.

I can claim neither the blame nor the credit for this historic program, since Ms. Berg was already a WNBT attraction when I joined WNBT.

Anyway, this particular night, Bill Harbach was suffering from a bad cold, and after the *Faye and Skitch* show he went

home to get some sleep, but when the alarm woke him before midnight he still felt too sick to work.

So what Bill did that night (*Now* he tells me!) was to phone the station, get the Technical Director in the control room for the Nancy Berg epic and tell this TD, "Joe, keep this line open and listen carefully . . . when I tell you, just fade up on camera one, and then I'll tell you when to pan and when to go to flip cards, and when to get close on Nancy . . ."

So Bill Harbach became the first—and only?—director to direct from his own home.

How did we do it, day after day, faced with such a staggering production load? Maybe because we didn't know any better.

Harbach recalls those wild days with some affection and a remembrance of dyspepsia lost, for those were the years even at the NBC flagship station of cooking shows. "I can hear myself now," Bill recalls. "Pan left on the ketchup—okay, pull back on the schnitzel—dolly in on the cream puffs, but not too tight."

All over the country battles waged around cooking shows, not just those skirmishes after each show between members of the cameramen and the stagehands for the food, but also between program executives like myself and the sales managers.

Even though by 1954, we all knew that local cooking shows were audience chasers, the salesmen still insisted on selling them, because they were bringing in the easy bucks. One of my early victories at WNBT was finally getting sales to go along with putting the cooking lady into an entertainment show, as a brief daily segment rather than a half-hour on her own.

Another delightful character in our WNBT family was the late Richard Willis, who had been a Hollywood makeup man, and ran an afternoon series called *Here's Looking at You* which was a guide to fashion and makeup, and never dull because it was enlivened by Dick's wry, and sometimes, sly wit. Willis himself was an elegant dresser, who wore only the most expensive, custom-tailored suits.

Cott was not just a program savvy GM, he also was very commercial. Having just convinced the low-priced Robert Hall men's clothing chain to try a big local TV spot buy, and only on WNBT, Cott baited the deal with a special inducement: each of the station's many male program personalities would wear Robert Hall suits, and appropriately, credits for each program would include in big type a line like "Mr. Willis' clothes by ROBERT HALL."

When dapper Richard Willis heard about the deal he flipped. "I will not wear Robert Hall suits!" he announced angrily.

"My suits cost $400 each, and you want me to wear schlock $40 suits from Robert Hall and the plain pipe racks. But Never!"

Cott kept insisting. Willis wouldn't budge. Finally, Willis's wife, Astrid, came up with a compromise which Dick accepted: he continued to wear his luxurious handmade suits, but inside of each of them they sewed a new label, in case anyone challenged the validity of the program credits. A Robert Hall label.

The goings-on sometimes were rough on newcomers. Bob Klein, who now heads his own Hollywood promotional agency, Klein &, recalls his first day as producer of *The Tex and Jinx Show.* He came into the control room during Tex's first interview of the day with a famous mountain climber. Tex McCrary had a habit of directing directors while a show was on the air, and the directors didn't like it. His directions arrived not via intercom, but directly over the air.

"Jim, Jim!" Tex was shouting, "Take a closeup of *this*!"—and he pointed at the climbers right hand—"Get a close-up of

his hand here—he lost a finger from frost bite during his big climb—get up tight, Jim!" Jim Elson, the director, ignored him.

So then Tex yelled orders at the cameramen themselves: "Camera One, dolly in for a closeup! Camera Two, dolly in!"

Both cameramen lost their cool, forgot Elson and began to dolly in, but fast—suddenly in the control room Jim realized both cameras were on a collision course.

The floor manager was screaming "Stop them somebody! Stop them! Quick!"

At the moment when the cameramen finally woke up to what was happening, turned around and narrowly averted a smashing collision, Elson, white-faced, stood up, slammed down his clipboard and stormed out of the control room. Ten minutes later, after the commercial break, Elson returned, and continued as if nothing had happened. Klein had been inducted into the WNBT family.

WNBT turned out a lot more than specialized service programs, talk shows, and variations thereof. Our major attractions included several entertainment shows. First of the day was *The Morey Amsterdam Show*. A really big show. Big for a local station, that is. Morey, plus Milt DeLugg and a small house band combo, Francis Lane, an all around vocalist, and various members of the small production staff including the program's Gofer and producer Bob Stewart doubling as stooges in the comedy sketches.

A comedy-variety show five hours a day, five days a week, and a pretty good one, too. It was wild, woolly and free-wheeling. And genuinely entertaining. Only Morey, a trouper, veteran of years of vaudeville and bigtime radio, who brought to the show his boundless energy, cardfile mind of gags, and a gift for improvised schtick, could have brought it off successfully day after day. That and a producer like Bob Stewart who also wrote bits and gags, and directors like Dwight Hemion and Mike Garguho.

One of the show's delightful ingredients was the unexpected. Like the time, Bob recalls, when the Man from Gimbel's (one of their major sponsors) unwittingly became a comedy stooge.

Every morning Gimbel's upholstery department sent over one of their upholsterers to do a pitch for their fixit business. One day, Bob wanted Willie Stein, the show's utility assistant and occasional gag writer, to play a bit part which called for a large Groucho Marx mustache. The studio makeup man arrived late, saw the Gimbel's man sitting in the wings patiently waiting to go on with his plug, assumed he was Stein, walked over, stuck a funny hat on his head, and painted him with a huge Groucho mustache.

The Gimbel's man never blinked. When his cue came he calmly walked in front of the camera and did his commercial, hat, mustache and all. Seems that it was his first appearance on TV and he assumed that such things were standard practice.

The Morey Amsterdam Show really flourished when the program was moved uptown from Rockefeller Centre, where it had been forced to use a small network studio, to a large new studio in West 67th Street (now an ABC studio) which was set aside exclusively for WNBT programs. Another large studio at the same location was used for a big weekend network variety show and that provided Stewart with a splendid opportunity. Strictly unauthorized.

"Every Monday, the sets they had used over the weekend were stored for a couple of days in a workshop next to our studio," Bob remembers. "So I was able to 'borrow' some of their sets for our show. If they had a Chinese set, Morey would dust off one of his Chinatown routines; if we found a Western saloon set, we'd cook up a Western skit, and so on. We never told Cott. He

used to compliment us on how lavish the show looked, despite our tiny budget."

Eventually, WNBT acquired another star, in addition to Morey Amsterdam: Steve Allen. I suppose this is the time to set the record straight:

In '53, WNBT was being clobbered most nights from 11:20 p.m. on, because WCBS-TV, the CBS flagship Channel 2, was spending a great deal on movies to supply their new *Late Show* strip. All I had to compete against them with were some awful British-made imports which were so bad they had never played in American movie houses. Anglo-American relations suffered from those films; so did our ratings.

Finally, I decided we should abandon movies, and I recommended to Cott that we counter-program with a daily variety show. Cott agreed. "Who'll we get to do the show?" he demanded.

I must confess that my candidate was Jack Carter. Fortunately, Cott had a better idea: Steve Allen, who had just finished an unsuccessful run on the CBS daytime network.

So we launched a daily 45-minute variety show built around Steve Allen. It was called . . . not the *Steve Allen Show* . . . but, appropriately for those days when sponsors usually forced their names into show titles, *The Knickerbocker Beer Show*, since we managed to sell a major local brewer full sponsorship.

From the start, it clicked, and in a month we were beating Channel 2. We had a bigger staff than usual: Dwight Hemion as fulltime director, Bill Harbach as fulltime producer. One writer: Stan Burns. A fulltime secretary and general assistant, Doris Benson; an AD, Virginia Dunning. No stooges for Steve yet, other than the bandleader and a small house band. Steve Lawrence and Edie Gorme joined after a few weeks.

After a 13-week run, the sponsor decided not to renew, which pleased everyone except the sales manager because without agency interference the show was really able to take off, on the road that eventually led to the network bigtime. Steve was happy, too, because we changed the show title to *The Steve Allen Show*.

He was also pleased that we were able to get rid of the sponsor's stock opening which each night called for a fat, costumed Father Knickerbocker to waddle on stage, ring a Town Crier's bell, and in a high-pitched voice invite the home audience to ". . . have fun with Father Knickerbocker's old friend, Steve Allen!"

Finally, after a run of more than a year as a local attraction, *The Steve Allen Show* was easily converted into *The Tonight Show*, aired coast-to-coast as *The Tonight Show—with Steve Allen*.

What happened was simply this: Pat Weaver, NBC VP in charge of programming (and later President of NBC), the great showman who created *Today*, *Home* and *Tonight* and so many other innovative television concepts, had always planned to have a *Tonight Show* to parallel his successful *Today* show. And it was supposed to have been a journalistically news-oriented format like *Today*, a sort of night edition of *Today*.

Somehow, Pat was never able to find the right combination of production and performing talent to build *Tonight* the way he had originally intended. Finally, he decided that since the local *Steve Allen Show* was doing so well, to convert it into... *Tonight*.

In typical Weaver fashion, he wisely had his executives keep the original gang together, and along with Steve to the network went Hemion, Harbach, Burns, Steve and Edie, and the others from the original local gang. Added eventually were an additional 45 minutes daily, more money for sets, music, a second writer and supporting cast, and, in time, those

wonderful Allen characters like Bill Dana and Louis Nye.

The show also acquired a regular theatre with first-rate audience facilities, the old Hudson near Broadway, which made Steve, Hermion and Harbach ecstatic. At the 67th Street studio, which in the earliest years of TV had been built on the fallacy that directors would want to hide the studio audience from the cameras (!) the audience had to be seated high up in a balcony, with so many lights in front of them that they could never see the action, except on small, badly-placed monitors. What was worse, whenever Steve wanted to do one of his bits with the audience, he had to climb up a high, shaky ladder to reach them.

Eventually, WNBT acquired another star, in addition to Morey Amsterdam: Steve Allen.

In the early fifties, news was still a sometime thing in television. NBC network news with John Cameron Swayze at 7:45 p.m., CBS network news at seven-thirty with Douglas Edwards. ABC network? John Daly at 7:15 p.m. Locally most stations had only ten-minute news programs, once or twice an evening, and some only had five minute news periods.

As program head of Channel 4, I had some responsibility for news, in a curious way: the network news department "packaged" the news for us. I selected the anchormen, which annoyed the network people. I was also supposed to have some sort of creative involvement in the production of local news, which meant I was assigned to submit my ideas and criticisms to a network news executive, who ignored them. I remember one fight with the network, when I dared to suggest that since we got very little local newsfilm from the nationally-oriented network news staff at least we ought to use some still pix. The putdown was instant: "Unless pictures move, we don't want em."

Fortunately, our competition was weak. WCBS offered a 15-minute early evening thing at six, with five-minute segments each of news, features and sports with Bob Trout, Bill Leonard and Jim McKay. We saved our news for a more solid presentation of 15-minutes at 6:45 (*The Esso Reporter*). As for WABC-TV, they didn't compete at all in the early evening.

At 11 o'clock, we beat WCBS easily because an opportunistic local sales department at Channel 2 had apparently persuaded management to break the daily 11 o'clock news strip by putting in a fully-sponsored program break called *Chronoscope* Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 to 11:10 p.m. which featured dull interviews with Washington personalities. sponsored by Longines; if anything it was even duller than their old Symphonette radio concerts. And the WCBS-TV news? That was scheduled only at 11 the other nights of the week! (As if news did not happen on Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays.)

In that era, 11 p.m. news programs with the exception of a few stations which preferred five-minute formats, were only ten minutes long, followed by five-minute weather and five-minute sports, or vice versa. Each was a separate segment, because sponsors liked it that way.

Before news programs became spot carriers, it was impossible ever to convince a sales manager that the sports and weather ought to be integrated into the news. And no one would have ever dreamed that eventually news programs would be expanded to a half-hour . . . an hour . . . an hour and a half . . . two hours.

Feature films were not yet a significant part of local programming. The major studios enforced a ban on the sales of any of their product, old or new, to television. Later that decade. when first RKO, next Warner Brothers, and then Twentieth-

Century allowed their pre-1948 libraries to be sold to TV, the era of local TV movies flourished. Stations now were able to schedule as many as two and three film strips each day; a Big Movie, an Early Show, and Late Show, and a Late Late Show, etc. Finally, the majors decided to make even their post—1948 movies available, and movies on TV became bigger than ever. Locally.

Network movies, however, were still in the future. For more than a decade the three networks had rigid policies—they would not program movies (even if they were to be made available). Strangely, this was out of an unfounded fear, that if the networks began to program movies, somehow it would undermine the need for interconnected national networks.

I remember one NBC affiliates convention in Miami Beach where David Sarnoff, the RCA chief, warned the stations about the perils of feature films, and scolded them for showing too many movies locally.

As for movies made for television, nobody thought then that it would ever be possible economically or creatively to produce feature films just for television.

By 1953 on the local scene, syndicated film was starting to become available. The Age of Ziv was upon us. In the fifties, it was still possible for a syndicator to produce acceptable first-run drama and sitcom film series for local only, and make money doing it. Most of the Hollywood Majors, displaying their usual lack of foresight, still had not entered TV production, either for network or local, because they apparently feared they might knock the glitter off the golden goose of theatrical exhibition.

Still, we didn't have much to choose from when the syndicators came peddling their product. Judged by today's standards, most of the film series were rather poor, but slotted in the right period (7:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m., 6:30 or 10:30 p.m.), you could build a substantial audience. Remember *Foreign Intrigue? The Ruggles? Boston Blackie? The Cisco Kid? Janet Dean, Registered Nurse? Annie Oakley? Range Rider? Ramar of the Jungle? Sheena? Highway Patrol? Navy Log? Sea Hunt?*

Since most network shows were live, there were no network reruns to slot in local time. Besides, most of us probably would have thought then that network reruns would not have performed effectively in local time; we were overly afraid of reruns.

Still, we did experiment. I remember one day when John Mitchell of Screen Gems, who later became President of Columbia TV, came to pitch a bold idea: *The Ford Theatre*, a filmed network series—an anthology program—was now available for local. How would we like to try it out, and see if under a new title (*Story Theatre*) reruns would attract an audience?

We decided to take a chance. And it worked—at 7:00 p.m. instead of a live local show. Maybe it was the beginning of the end for live local production?

Were the early fifties the good old days for local programming? Well, yes and no. A lot of the stuff we churned out at Channel 4 was trivial, some of it mediocre or worse. But we blazed some trails, and we developed first-rate talent, for on-the-air, and off-the-air-performers, producers, writers, program managers, executives. Shows like *Tonight*, among others, grew out of roots at WNBT.

Our public-affairs and cultural programs, like *Through the Enchanted Gate*, the Museum of Modern Art's first TV series, a program on art for children, and *Princeton '54*, that university's first adventure in video, can stand up with any current local series. And above all, we lived every workday in a climate of creativity, enjoying ourselves in an atmosphere of challenge and opportunity.

At the same time, this was happening

not just in New York; certainly WNBT was not the only station where local production was booming. I knew then that there was also a lot going on in some of the other major markets, especially Chicago, Cincinnati, Boston, Los Angeles, and even smaller cities like Columbus, Ohio, at WBNS-TV under the late Tad Reeves. And do you remember that wonderful and sometimes wacky era when the Los Angeles independents—KTLA, KCOP, and notably KTTV were battling it out with all sorts of local shows, great, good and just plain lousy? Raise a toast, too, to the old WPTZ, Philadelphia, where their local morning show was built around a young comic named Ernie Kovacs.

Nevertheless, I must admit that too much of local television in those years consisted of cooking shows, plus one-man or one-woman gabfests, most of which were even worse than some of those morning local talk throwaways which still clutter up so many stations today. Plus guys in firemen's hats, clown costumes or policemen's suits who fronted all those daily cartoon shows.

But something is missing today. For the most part, local stations are no longer a wonderful training ground for programming, production and performing talent. Too many program managers have become mostly glorified film buyers, jugglers of schedules, and master shufflers of paper, lacking show savvy and the skills to build and develop programs. ■

The late editor of *Television Quarterly*, Richard Pack migrated from WNBT in the mid-fifties to Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. as national Program Manager, the first group programming manager In the industry. He became Senior Vice President, Programming and Production, a post he held for more than fifteen years. He was also President of Group W Films.

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"Cue the Avalanche!" He shouted

In the early years of local news when "anchor" was only a nautical term, and a couple of Bell & Howell-70 hand-held cameras, plus a few amateur stringers, could put a station in the television news business, a veteran of that era recalls what it was like to run a news "department." And what happened when Pat Weaver's Wide Wide World *on NBC asked for coverage of a special event, sort of.*

By Jack Goodman

History can repeat itself in odd fashion. Time came full circle in the wide wide world of television when Time, Inc. melded with Warner communications, Inc., in a multibillion dollar deal likely to reshape the world of TV, cable and mass entertainment.

This essay is a flashback to an earlier multimedia marriage almost four decades ago, albeit on the rather more modest canvas of Salt Lake city. In that Mormon mecca, central to a market of fewer than a half-million souls, power-conscious Henry Luce and his farsighted henchmen at Time-Life, Inc. somewhat belatedly decided to dip a toe into, or, to mix metaphors, sip the bubbling brew of electronic journalism.

Early on in the 1950's, a message wig-

wagged from somnolent Salt Lake city apprised Manhattan's money-bags that radio station KDYL and its newly hatched television offspring, KDYL-TV (channel 4), could be purchased for a comparatively few farthings. As many of his colleagues knew, industry pioneer Sidney Fox, owner of the Utah pair, was an ex-movie house entrepreneur notoriously afflicted by an unconquerable lust for the gaming tables of Las Vegas. Time-Life promptly plunked down the then astonishing sum of $2,100,000 for Sid's profitable NBC radio station plus its less dollar-productive TV stablemate.

With commendable zeal, Time-Life next sought out and hired G. Bennett Larson, a native of the Mormon kingdom. Larson (who died in March 1989) began his memorable career in Salt Lake City as a very youthful "Uncle Ben" in a locally well-fancied kids' opus. Ben had headed east to successfully pursue production and managerial chores at network and independent radio and TV stations in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., including WPIX, WCAU, and WWDC.

Almost simultaneously with Larson's 1953 arrival to take up his reins at the KDYL duo, Sid Fox cheerfully sped to burgeoning Las Vegas and its alluring green-covered crap tables. There, among other things, a guy could get a drink without the indignity pursuant upon the purchase of a $2 license from the Utah State Liquor Commission. (Parenthetically, before being borne to his final resting place mourned by not a few old media cronies, Sid blew his entire million dollar wad with considerable alacrity.)

Happily, someone leaked word to Ben Larson concerning my potential availability for the News Director's role in Channel 4's new scheme of things. In the full flush of youth I had served as news editor at WNYC, the City of New York's own station, in the LaGuardia era, and had been lured west to become news director at sparkling-new radio station KALL, flagship of the regional Intermountain Network. But when Time-Life arrived on the scene, I was an indentured servant in the City Room of the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

This leading daily of the state and its metropolis was tenuously linked to KALL-Intermountain. Indeed the newscasts of the latter emanated, as our announcers were wont to say, from the Main Street show-windows of the Tribune Building.

By that juncture I had acquired an amiable wife, three children, an ancient station wagon, a rebuilt barn plus several suburban acres. Ever hard-pressed to make fiscal ends meet via my daily labors, I busily spun off mountain west pieces for the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, a brace of McGraw-Hill magazines, and even sold an epic or two to the *Saturday Evening Post*. I readily succumbed to Ben Larson's cajoling, especially when he pledged Time-Life salaries would approximate "New York scale," and that I would be recompensed for not stringing for *Newsweek*!

In return for such largesse, I contracted to set up a functioning news gathering, news dispensing department for Channel 4. To my honest admission that my knowledge of TV news was nonexistent, Ben airily replied, "No one else knows anything about television news here either."

His reply seemed just a bit churlish. True, KUTA, the ABC radio outlet owned by Frank McIntyre, at the time had no television counterpart. Indeed McIntyre, an extremely competent sheep rancher before being beguiled by radio, was reputed to have encountered some difficulty shepherding a bank loan into his fold. But 50,000-watt, clear-channel KSL, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, had placed KSL-TV on the air as Channel 5. Its picture and programming were at least as intriguing as those dispensed by Sid Fox.

KSL-TV carried a semblance of news

programs, as well as sleep-inducing "live" telecasts of Latter-day Saints religious conferences. In addition, this churchly outlet brought viewers the slightly more lively, admittedly more melodious, Sunday songfests of the famed Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

As purchased by Time-Life, KDYL-TV occupied a drafty second-story loft, unfortunately afflicted with very creaky wooden floors, directly above Salt Lake's now vanished Pioneer Post Office. Once, twice, or thrice daily, the late Gene Paul King, a recent exile from New York, and locally trained Del Leeson (also, alas, now departed) would hasten from our freshly purchased radio studios to this historic, but temporary television center.

Rip-and-read wire service copy in hand, but with a free hand positioned behind an ear in proper radio style, King or Leeson would declaim the news in the direction of a red-eyed studio camera. In this manner, the audience inhabiting our town's few bars could absorb the day's events while imbibing Utah's sole legal brew, beer of no more than 3.2 alcoholic content.

In addition to network news from Washington or New York, we soon proved able to add a few local items to the existing fare. Softened by my tearful pleas for assistance, my former co-workers at the *Tribune* would slip me an almost illegible fourth carbon of fresh local or state news relating perhaps to fatal railroad crossing accidents or court pleadings of miscreants caught in the law's toils for peddling penny stock in nonexistent uranium mines.

Now and again, after my especially piteous pleading and promise of recompense at some distant date, a kindly *Tribune* photographer might even slip me a glossy Speed-Graphic photo of a fire or bus wreck rejected by an overworked city editor. By agreement, said photos, when affixed to the TV studio on-camera easel, of course had to bear a *Tribune* credit line.

During those initial months after Larson's canny choice put me in charge of this simplistic form of news gathering, I told him it had occurred to me our television news programs should, as soon as possible, be transformed into newsreels, duplicating in format, content, and sound the popular products of Pathé, Hearst Metrotone, and Paramount. Larson vehemently agreed. Like myself, he had spent many a happy hour in Manhattan at the Translux Theatres on Times Square and in Grand Central Station. In such comfortable havens, we newsreel mavens had long enjoyed, on screen, the sight of many a ponderous dreadnought firing its broadsides at peacetime targets, had oftimes lusted after the bathing beauties parading at Atlantic City, had even occasionally viewed an exploding Zeppelin or a raging oil well fire.

"Newsreels! But of course," said Ben. "We'll buy daily newsfilm service, but I must warn you not to expect much, if any, 'March of Time' footage." Not that Henry Luce and his legions were penurious. They simply envisioned bigger bucks than Salt Lake offered, selling MOT and Westbrook Van Voorhis to networks, and stations across the land.

Happily enough, Time-Life funding for the chosen Utah venture into the mystic arts of television came flooding into Channel 4's treasury within a month or two of the takeover. Larson was soon supervising the gutting of a vacant Packard showroom and repair shop on downtown Motor Avenue. There his forces began constructing our city's first purpose-built studios, film lab, and TV newsroom—plus handsome executive and sales offices, screening rooms, and, wonder of wonders, an employees' lunchroom staffed by a chap named Gus.

Success was to follow success. Block-long Motor Avenue soon held not just Channel 4's state-of-the-art studios, but

also those built by KSL-TV Channel 5, freshly licensed KUTV Channel 2, plus a brace of advertising agencies and small beanery. Before two years had passed, the city fathers designated the block-long thoroughfare "Social Hall Avenue." Denizens of the newly arrived industry termed it TV Row.

But renaming the street was the least of television's encounter with nomenclature. Even as photographer Don Christiansen was being lured from the *Tribune* to serve as our first news photographer, even as we were acquiring three 16 mm Bell & Howell model 70 hand-held cameras at Don's behest, our efficient chief engineer John Baldwin was building a new transmitter 8,500 feet above sea level in the copper-rich Oquirrh Mountains.

Early on, at a staff conference, Ben Larson told us that in New York City, even a station signoff must have showbiz pizzazz. "WNEW-TV shows a still shot of the Empire State Building, there's an American flag on a stand in front of it, and an out-of-sight electric fan makes it ripple. The flag, not the building."

He further informed us that a recorded version of the Star Spangled Banner was followed by an impressively deep voice intoning, "It is midnight. From our transmitter high atop the Empire State Building in midtown Manhattan, this is WNEW-TV signing off until 6 a.m. tomorrow." While we, with our newly acquired call letters KTVT, would sign off at 10 p.m. in deference to local mores and folkways, we must whomp up an equally big-time signoff for somnolent Salt Lake City.

"John," queried Ben, "what's the name of the mountain where we're putting the new transmitter?"

Baldwin cringed visibly, then replied: "Ben, you're not going to like this."

Larson, slightly affronted, grunted, "How come?"

"Well," Baldwin bravely continued, "it's called Coon Peak. That's official. On the U.S. Geological Survey maps."

No racial slur was intended by the federal mapmakers—the peak was indeed named for a pioneer ranching family. In fact, the Coons had laid claim to the eminence since territorial days, well prior to Utah statehood.

Only momentarily nonplussed, Larson or some other quick-thinking type among us suggested redubbing the site "Mount Vision." And Mount Vision it remains some thirty-six years later, with upwards of a dozen TV, radio, and relay towers riding the now crowded ridgetop.

By the time we began saturating Salt Lake, Ogden, and Provo with our superlative mountaintop signal, we placed our equally superlative news programs on the air. They must indeed have been better-than-best, since we said so with maddening regularity in a flood of promotion announcements, billboards, bus-side signs, and newspaper advertisements.

Our flagship newscasts aired at 5:30 p.m. and again at 9 or 9:30 p.m., with radio-trained announcers Alan Moll or Gordon Owen making daily but brief on-camera appearances between our filmed reports. There was as yet no such designation as "anchorman."

Newsreels opened with a fine flourish, highlighted by a KTVT-Channel 4 "logo" designed by Ted Anderson, our crack Art Director. A John Philip Sousa march melodically announced our upcoming view of great events after which either Moll or Owen appeared on camera, pridefully introducing our exclusive presentation of the day's news. At this juncture, control-room engineer Charlie Stockdale or Chauncy Powis started the film rolling. This stirring opening took 45 seconds or thereabouts—no time wasted on non-news.

National and world events reached us, in

film form, in flat green cardboard boxes air expressed from New York or San Francisco by United Press, International News, or Pathe' News services. Copy accompanying these brief film segments was updated by Yours Truly who bravely faced the difficulty of "explicating" without prevaricating. The film segments, a minute or so in length (two minutes or more if they bore a sound track), might arrive from the Korean peace-talks or from the White House or even from a disaster scene two days after the event.

Taking into account that radio and newspapers (or network TV) had long since carried the self-same story, we "fudged" by never using the word "today" in connection with our film. You could write, "President Eisenhower has condemned North Korea's refusal to free UN prisoners," after which the announcer read an accurate report that Ike, seen on film at that juncture, had decorated wounded veterans of the recent battling near the Chinese border. No date, no mention that the film was 24 or 48 hours old.

Our newsreels, we thought quite cannily, must contain a mix of world, national, and local news, of thought-provoking items, of lightweight odd-ball stuff. Our film reels, with optical wipes separating each story, ran perhaps ten minutes in length. They were speedily sold to single sponsors including Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution (the ZCMI Department Store) or UTOCO, the Utah Oil Company.

We graciously provided each sponsor somewhat less than three minutes of commercial time, enabling sportcaster Paul James and weatherman Bob Welti to do their thing in our quarter-hour segment. On Saturdays or Sundays, Channel 4 even proffered a half-hour *Weekend News in Review* with Alan Moll (nowadays a County Attorney) and G. Homer Durham (later to be president of Arizona State University) as our on-camera deep-thinkers. Their musings were liberally buttressed with film culled from the preceding week's daily newscasts.

Filtering up-to-the-minute local news film into our twice daily newsreel proved taxing, due to electronic exigencies made instantly manifest. We could "kinescope" President Eisenhower, Secretary of State Dulles, or similar Washington impresarios, but getting kinescope film processed for an afternoon or even an evening newscast proved quite a chore. Filming such events as a downtown fire had become routine when we set up a newsroom shortwave receiver bringing in police and fire department dispatch calls. But Salt Lake City, in those days had just one lab processing 16 mm motion picture film. Located under the Congress Hotel and owned by a chap named Wally, it was merely a sideline business, he being a Western Airlines pilot. When Wally flew off in a DC-3 or DC-6, his lab door was shuttered, much to our disgust.

Never nonplussed, Ben Larson reinvented the wheel. More precisely, he installed a pair of bicycle wheels sans tires athwart a chemical bath in our new darkroom, thereby duplicating a setup glimpsed in some eastern city. Film our news cameraman had shot was cranked through a brew of chemicals from wheel to wheel, hung to dry, cut, and hastily spliced into our afternoon or evening reel.

Two problems, virtually insoluble, quickly appeared. When we kinescoped from the network, the optical track was not enhanced—indeed, quite the opposite—by our impossibility to synchronize the sprocket speed of the camera shutter with the icon tube. Further complications arose when, to save precious minutes, the film spinning of the bicycle wheel was "processed negative." In other words, whites were devel-

oped black, and blacks were white.

To properly reverse polarity in the control room video chain, a producer or engineer must push the proper button. If he neglected to do so, such distinguished citizens as Utah's Governor George Dewey Clyde or Salt Lake Mayor Earl J. Glade would appear in, as it were, blackface. The glaring white Salt Flats speedway or the pristine white snow of the Alta ski jump looked odd indeed when black. This situation eventually resulted in daily Channel 4 business for engineer Charlie Stockdale who soon opened a film developing business nearby.

Meanwhile, we fleshed out statewide news coverage by judicious use of "correspondents." These included such gentlemen as trucker John Sullivan who worked out of the mining town of Tooele, piloting huge long-distance rigs. We provided him a Bell & Howell camera, and 50-foot or 100-foot rolls of raw film. Apprised by fellow truckers of major highway accidents, railroad grade crossing crashes, fires, overturned school buses and the like, John would shoot, then speed film to us via drivers of similar rigs.

We also found one Gordon Havenor at Ogden who not only sent us film reports from Utah's second most sizeable city, but "had connections" with Utah's first uranium millionaire, the rather eccentric Charlie Steen, a relationship productive of considerable news.

Meanwhile, I was not averse to free footage from public relations men if suitable stories turned up. Bob Rampton, Public Relations Officer at Hill Air Force Base, sent shots of newly arrived Air Force planes, of practice bombing runs, and a general or two. Interior's Bill Davoren happily secured film showing controversial dam-building on the Colorado and Green Rivers if I could not spare part-timer Ray Mangelson for a two-day trip to distant corners of the state. Parenthetically, there were never enough dollars even in a Time-Life station budget for plane flights or long-distance highway mileage.

"A news department can never make money. The operation is just too expensive for our commercials to pay its way," Larson would assure me. "But stick around. One day, TV will all be in color. One day we'll send live cameras to Makoff's fashion salon so housewives can see models parading down the runways and order gowns by phone."

Alas, I never believed news in color or electronic marketing would come to pass. In truth, before it did, Makoff's shut up shop, a victim of the national mania for suburban malls.

While color had not arrived on the scene, other technical improvements came thick and fast. One happy arrival was our rear screen projector. Such talented spielers as Alan Moll or Gordon Owen could then dispense savvy pieces concerning state or church affairs while seemingly standing outside the State Capitol or Mormon Temple.

Sometimes the utility of new electronic devices proved mixed, as when KTVT engineers countersunk a small video tube in a news set desk. The announcer, while reading from a script, could then view news film from the corner of his eyes. This worked well indeed for Alan Moll, who matched film and script with precision.

Not so Gordon Owen. His timing often seemed askew, as he perhaps described the IRS-baiting activities of senate candidate J. Bracken Lee while film of white-maned U.S. Senator Arthur V. Watkins showed on the tube. Or vice versa. These snafus proved all too common until Larson chanced upon Owen doing eye exercises in an unused studio.

Gordon reported his peripheral vision was indeed changing. He simply could not readily adjust his eyes between script and

video tube. Adamantly unwilling to wear glasses, Gordon was switched to duties not requiring instant acute vision.

One triumph of that place and time occurred when we covered the 1954 state and municipal elections without the services of the *Tribune* or *Deseret News*. "We'll beat 'em all." said Larson, instructing me to hire correspondents in each of Utah's 1,100 election districts buttressed by even more expert aid in each of the state's twenty-nine counties. "We'll pay them $1 per phone call," he said—blowing a mammoth hole in any conceivable news department budget.

We triumphed over all odds in great measure through the special aid of art director Ted Anderson. A former member of the Utah State Legislature, Ted's political cronies statewide proved at least as numerous as my contacts. But a very real reason for our ultra-high election night ratings was sex!

Lissome, short-skirted young ladies were hired by Larson and program director Danny Rainger to write our election tallies on huge pads of newsprint placed within easy sight of the studio cameras. But Rainger, Larson, and Anderson had thoughtfully ordered construction of a raised platform two or three feet above the studio floor.

Backstage, a dozen or so not-too-presentable newsmen and aides manned telephones to garner the vote and efficient but plain-faced gals from accounting and sales tallied the incoming count on the most modern of adding machines. But the Larson-Rainger-Anderson corps of pretty co-eds from the University of Utah bounced into the studio with the totals while cameras positioned low on the floor eyed bosomy potential beauty contest winners who reached upwards in fetching fashion to crayon the latest returns on the well-positioned wall-pads.

Our election coverage proved so visually popular before the long evening was over that candidates and political leaders who in previous years scanned tallies in the *Tribune's* smoky city room, streamed to our Channel 4 Election Headquarters where beauty, plus a buffet table, awaited all comers.

We had learned by then that the viewing public cared not a bit for call letters such as old KDYL-TV or our new KTVT, but identified stations by channel numbers. As with the elections, so also with sports. At campus football or basketball games, sportscaster Paul James stood before cameras wearing block letters reading "Channel 4." Our "weather set" where Bob Welti traced isobars on a glass map sported a big Channel 4 as its background.

Life was simpler in other ways. Indeed, even rivalry with the city's other channels featured in formal fun and games. With the first winter snowfall, a live studio camera was trundled out our front door to give homebound viewers a look-see of falling flakes. By then, KSL's Channel 5 had moved across Social Hall Avenue and its camera crew and weatherman appeared at curbside almost simultaneously with ours. Soon the first televised snowball fight in local history was under way. We were, I believe, victorious, but when Time-Life bowed out of Salt Lake to purchase a station in the larger San Diego market, both Welti and James departed for church-owned Channel 5, where both remain till this day.

Time now to report our greatest news department non-exploit. A year or two earlier, I had penned a piece for Jesse Gorkin's *Parade Magazine* concerning the picturesque hazards emperiling the avalanche patrol experts of the U.S. Forest Service. Now a missive arrived from NBC reporting that their new *Wide Wide World* program sought *live* material that could be sent thence on the new coaxial cable for telecast to all the nation. After consider-

able conferring, program director Dan Rainger got NBC's nod for a snow-country feed featuring the avalanche busters.

We left no snow-blanketed stone unturned as we prepared for our network feed. Prior to our big Sunday telecast, video cameras were mounted on the open deck of the Alta Lodge, 8,500 feet above sea level in the scenic, snow-lathered Wasatch Range. A line-of-sight relay down Little Cottonwood Canyon carried across the Salt Lake Valley to our transmitter atop well-named Mount Vision.

A handsomely rugged giant of a forest ranger named Montgomery Atwater plus a few other suitably garbed heroes would ski perilously across the uppermost ridge of High Rustler peak, plant explosives under a 25-foot high snow cornice, then gracefully but hastily ski back to semi-safety to trigger their charge.

The resultant man-made avalanche would billow down the snowy Alta slopes, eliminating a perilous snow ledge that, left "unshot," could smother skiers far below. Indeed, if their initial blast failed to induce an avalanche, a World War II vintage howitzer would pump shells into the snow to assure its awesome descent.

All would have gone well had Mother Nature cooperated. Alas, thick snow—a major blizzard—arrived simultaneously with program time. But somehow, the cameras at the ski lodge deck picked up the tiny, ant-like figures of Atwater and his fellows as they skied out across the ridge, planted their charge and, trailing wires in their wake, zoomed out of harm's way.

"Cue the avalanche!" came the command from Rainger to ranger.

Squinting through thickly falling snow, we could barely see an orange flash as the rangers triggered the explosives. The blast did indeed send a very sizeable avalanche flowing like a waterfall down Rustler Peak.

Unfortunately, no one in New York, or elsewhere in the nation, saw anything.

This was, alas, black-and-white television. Even under sunny blue skies, an avalanche of deep white snow spilling down the white slopes of a mountainside might not have been visually exciting. But with densely falling white flakes blanking out most of the scene, little wonder the NBC director in New York kept shouting, "Fire it, damn it! Why don't you fire it?"

"We have," Rainger reported sadly. "It went off on cue." Alan Moll did his best to fill the remaining half of our allotted eleven-minute segment, while we warmed our innards at the Alta Lodge bar. ■

Jack Goodman began his journalism career at WNYC Radio in his native New York, later served as news director of KYDL-TV and KUTV in Salt Lake City and as Utah correspondent for *Newsweek* and *The New York Times*.

Confessions of a TV Wrestling Fan

From Gorgeous George to Hulk Hogan, an ardent follower traces the course of this ancient television art form. He says it's lasted so long because wrestling loves the camera.

By Richard G. Carter

I saw my first pro wrestling match on television in Milwaukee, in 1947, at the home of my Uncle Cal and Aunt Neil. It was the very first thing I can recall ever watching on TV. I guess you could say wrestling led me to television, or vice versa. But whichever came first, ever since then I've never been very far from either.

I recall always rooting for the youngest, most clean-cut-looking grappler and believing, as did many people for many years, that it was all on the up-and-up. And why not? This was the ultimate in good vs. evil. And in those post-World War II days, it still meant a lot to cheer for the good guys. It was sort of like rooting for America against the fascist forces we'd just finished fighting, and beating, on far-flung battlefields.

Presented live in black and white on channel 3, WTMJ-TV (*The Milwaukee Journal* station), the matches began at 7 p.m. and lasted a long time, which was fine by my cousin Tommie and me. Such was the hypnotic effect of TV in those early days, the small, curved screen notwithstanding. And such was its hold on us—a couple of 10-year-olds caught up in the sight of big men (who, years later, would be huge) tossing each other around or locked in hand-to-hand combat. Nothing we'd ever seen came anywhere near this mayhem except maybe barroom fights in Saturday afternoon cowboy movies. But that was kindergarten time compared to this stuff.

Back then, the televised matches originated from the old South Side Armory Hall, in one of the city's Polish neighborhoods. This was fitting and proper when you think about it, because pro wrestling, even then, never stopped at heroes vs. villains. The matches—even those featuring women or midgets—always seemed to pit ethnic group vs. ethnic group, dark vs. light, fat vs. skinny, muscular vs. obese, tall vs. short, and later on, black vs. white.

Contrasting appearances and contrast-

ing styles were, and are, the name of the game in pro wrestling—especially on television—which magnifies attributes and flaws, and challenges the viewer to select a favorite. Which Tommie and I gleefully did. We soon began a first-name relationship with the grapplers who grunted and groaned with such gusto for our pleasure. At times, it seemed our enthusiasm would carry us right through the small screen into the ring with them.

Foremost among our favorites in those halcyon days was "Mr. America" Pat Graham, a blond, body-beautiful type, who fought fair. But for sheer down and dirty enjoyment, we preferred to watch Billy Goelz, a plain good guy, and Gypsy Joe Dorsetti, a swarthy villain of the first magnitude. These two seemed to lock horns just about every week. First the jut-jawed Billy would throw a flying mare at the curly-topped Gypsy, and then the dastardly one would retaliate with some dirty trick involving a foreign object hidden in his trunks. And on and on.

Inevitably, the pair would manuever themselves into some long-lasting hold—often an ear-crunching headlock administered by Gypsy Joe and punctuated with vicious knuckle smashes to the forehead of the helpless Goelz. This could last a half-hour or more and inevitably drew a steady flow of what looked to us like real blood. But nobody in the capacity crowd at the Armory seemed bored—certainly not Tommie and me in TV land.

This was high drama. We sat there awestruck, listening to the spellbinding commentary of friendly Bob Heiss. It was television and pro wrestling—two new, exciting areas of life—and we loved 'em both.

Eventually, our interest in watching wrestling on TV whetted our appetite for the real thing. We *had* to see the big guys go at it in the flesh. So off adventured my cousin and I one winter night in 1948, braving one of those typical, heavy Midwest snowstorms to take a bus down to the South Side Armory. And there, a strange thing happened.

While we had a great time whooping it up and hamming for the TV camera—something we'd always wanted to do—it all felt anti-climatic. We seemed to have been spoiled by television. For us, the matches actually looked, and felt, more real on the tube.

Even the crowd noise sounded louder from the den of Uncle Cal's house. It was weird.

Although I suspected my Aunt Nel wasn't really thrilled with our weekly presence—what with all the yelling—and shrieking between bites of popcorn and slugs of pop—we made the visit a Thursday night ritual for a couple of years, until television finally arrived at each of our homes.

In those early days of TV wrestling, the biggest names on the national scene included Antonio (Argentina) Rocca, Nature Boy Buddy Rodgers. Lou Thesz, Man Mountain Dean, Bruno Sammartino, Maurice (French Angel) Tillet. Vern Gagne. The Mighty Atlas and the one and only. Gorgeous George. the man whose style and showmanship later was so successfully copied by boxing's Muhammad Ali.

In those days. flamboyant announcers such as Jack Brickhouse in Chicago and Dennis James in New York called many of the matches for the DuMont Network, which spotlighted the grunt and groaners and helped turn wrestling into a national fad. James aided and abetted things with snappy gimmicks like snapping chicken bones next to his microphone while a grappler was supposedly experiencing excruciating pain in a lethal-appearing hold. Even then, it was mostly show business and viewers loved it.

James also played to the big TV audience with his trademark phrase. "Okay, mother . . ." directed to all the housewives

rooting like crazy for their favorites. But back then, wrestling on TV didn't need a whole lot of hype, although interviews and confrontations so much a part of today's scene had begun. Like boxing, this tough stuff was literally made for the tube, and for the millions who eagerly gobbled up the mayhem and begged for more.

For early television, wrestling's one-on-one or two-on-two (in tag team matches) combat provided tight, focused action that was easy to follow as well as fun to watch. Even with but a single camera pumping out black and white images, you could clearly see facial expressions. Unlike team sports which relied for a center of action on a small, difficult-to-see ball or puck, there was no problem keeping up with what was going on in the ring. And the gladiators weren't slowed down by protective equipment. What you saw was what you got.

Wrestling continued its toe-hold as mainstream TV fare in the '50s and its success was even sufficient to inspire a couple of moderately popular movies—*Mr. Universe*, a fair comedy with Vince Edwards and Jack Carson, and *Night and the City*, a good crime melodrama with Richard Widmark and Gene Tierney. Everybody, it seemed, was getting into the act.

During those years, with wrestling also going strong at the Ron-De-Voo Ballroom in my hometown, I attended a few cards in person. And Lo and Behold, the effect was the same. To me, it just couldn't compare to the sensation of watching on TV. And this was long before slow motion replays, acrobatic leaps off the top rope, steel cages, snakes, parrots, painted faces and rock music.

As my family and I became accustomed to watching television every night in our own living room, I found other things on the tube that interested me. Even other sports like football and basketball. Nonetheless, I rarely missed the weekly wrestling exhibitions (by then, I'd gotten the message that maybe all the mayhem wasn't for real), and when I did, I felt bad. There was something about grunt and groaners going at it hot and heavy that, in some strange, fascinating way, seemed to mirror my life. Maybe it had to do with going one-on-one with your chief competitor, like so many of us do in our careers.

With the passing years bringing so many advances in television for the viewer—bigger screens, a brighter, clearer picture, better sound, more functional cabinet designs, and perhaps most noteworthy, living color, it was inevitable that television wrestling change as well. But it didn't happen overnight. Most matches continued to be held in arenas of varying sizes from Madison Square Garden to high school gyms. And many weren't on TV—attended only by diehard, old-time fans and many who became addicted by watching on the tube.

And then one day in 1966, after moving to Cleveland, I discovered the wrestling I'd so eagerly embraced in the infancy of television—and taken for granted—had put on a spicier, faster-moving face. The Saturday afternoon bouts were staged in TV studios and described by the dulcet tones of youngish Jack Reynolds, a commentator who carried on like a real fan. Excitement reigned supreme.

Foremost among the grapplers were soft-spoken, 600-plus pounds Haystacks Calhoun, a country-boy hero; dastardly, mustaschioed, bigoted Ox Baker, and colorful, burly, loud-mouthed Bulldog Brower and Dick the Bruiser, who could be both hero and villain. Egged on in confrontational TV interviews with Lord Athol Layton, a British ex-wrestler whose favorite expression was, "He's giving as good as he got," they made the game more dangerous and more fun than ever.

It was during my Cleveland TV wrestling period that black grunt and

groaners began becoming more visible. Huge men like Bobo Brazil, master of a head butt called the "koko bonk," former pro football star Ernie Ladd and Bearcat Wright got their share of glory. Interestingly, just about every black wrestler was a hero, as if the promoters of the day—at the height of the civil rights movement—were skittish about publicly portraying blacks as villains. Art, in this case TV wrestling, was imitating life. And the millions who followed it on the tube couldn't have cared less.

Cut to the present, which began, TV-wise, at the beginning of this decade. The World Wrestling Federation (WWF), along with the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), put on bouts all over the country and sanction various champions. Both utilize television in masterly fashion. But it is the Connecticut-based WWF that has parlayed a passel of painted performers into TV entertainment that rates high in popularity and profit-making potential. This was largely accomplished through slick marketing which included selective winnowing-out of performers lacking pizzazz. an alliance with rock music, and recognition that pay-per-view represents a viable television programming choice.

In the early '80s, TV viewers of WWF shows became familiar with a host of serviceable heroes and villains. Included were names like Jimmy (Superfly) Snuka, Sgt. Slaughter. the Wild Samoans, Greg (The Hammer) Valentine. Rocky Johnson. Tony (Mr. USA) Atlas, The Tonga Kid. Tito Santana, Mr. Fuji. Mr. Saito, Ken Patera. Ray (The Crippler) Stevens, the Iron Shiek, Ivan (Polish Power) Putski, Don (Magnificent) Muraco, S.D. (Special Delivery) Jones, Big John Studd, George (The Animal) Steele, Andre the Giant, Tiger Chung Lee. Paul (Mr. Wonderful) Orndorff, Dr. David Schultz, Chief Jay Strongbow, Superstar Billy Graham, Rowdy' Roddy Piper, a fresh-faced Hulk Hogan—plus managers classy Freddie Blassie and Captain Lou Albano, and a boy-next-door-type named Bob Backlund.

And then, buoyed by a new generation of boisterous new fans who discovered the bouts all over again on TV, bigtime pro wrestling almost overnight became big business. Rock stars like Cyndi Lauper were enlisted to hype the product, slick videos were produced, recordings were cut; wrestling magazines gained new life, conniving managers like Slick, Bobby (the Brain) Heenan and Jimmy Hart came to the fore, and grapplers who didn't want to play ball or who lacked star quality, were dumped.

New names popped up, like Randy (Macho Man) Savage with his manager, the lovely Elizabeth, Brutus (The Barber) Beefcake, Junkyard Dog, The Natural Butch Reed, the Road Warriors, the Ultimate Warrior, the Big Boss Man, Leaping Lanny Poffo. Hillbilly Jim, the British Bulldogs, Bad News Brown, Ted (Million Dollar Man) DiBiasi with bodyguard Virgil, Jake (the Snake) Roberts, Koko B. Ware, The Mighty Hercules and Ravishing Rick Rude. Hulk Hogan—the WWF's most celebrated, recognizable commodity—became world champion.

The WWF aided and abetted all of this good new stuff and these colorful new characters with innovative camera angles, slow-motion and stop-action replays and even some out-of-the ring, publicity-producing shenanigans. On one such occasion, Dr. David Schultz—a real meanie—throttled New York television reporter John Stossel for having the audacity to question the legitimacy of wrestling. Shame on him/them!

And, of course, fun-filled interview spots on the weekly televised shows, hosted by the likes of Rowdy Roddy Piper and Brother Love—a beet-faced evangelist type—allow even more hype. They also provide staging areas for grudge matches,

displays of bad temper (like sneak attacks with chairs), and all the other ingredients that make pro wrestling on the tube the all-time favorite of so many TV viewers.

As a result, the WWF can give the revered National Football League a run for its money (in the many, many millions) as probably the premier sports marketing organization in televised sports. Its secret of success is mainly due to providing Americans with what Americans always have loved—blood and guts action in which everybody has tons of fun, nobody gets hurt and good triumphs over evil. In other words, big-time, up-to-the-minute, wild and woolly wrestling on television. They've even coined a catchy name for the most spectacular shows—"Wrestlemania!"

And just how successful has the business of TV wrestling become? Whoa! just sit in front of the set any night and count the times you see a commercial for a big wrestling show at Madison Square Garden or the New Jersey Meadowlands or the Nassau County Coliseum or the Silverdome near Detroit, or countless other big arenas from coast to coast. And count the times you hear the names Hulk Hogan or Jesse (The Body) Ventura or see them touting a new movie or a video or a record album or even a certain brand of beer, assisted by recognizable celebrity faces, like football's John Madden.

Hey, let's face it—the old DuMont Network was never like this! Yet, the little old ladies who used to flock in the flesh to matches armed with an umbrella with which to take a swipe at their favorite bad guys. still come out. But many more are much more likely to watch on the tube-soaking up the commercials, buying the mementos and memorabilia and helping to make today's big-time wrestling on TV far bigger and better and more profitable than anyone ever dreamed.

Thus, the wonderful people at the WWF who are bringing us all this stuff are making megabucks in the process. Their vaunted Wrestlemania on pay-per-view over cable TV is a primary vehicle. When you tune in, you not only see a galaxy of wrestling's top stars, but you re apt to spy a bevy of showbiz celebrities, and assorted athletes from other pro sports, apparently eager for the exposure.

But for my money, paying $20 or more extra to watch wrestling on a TV screen after years of getting it free, is taking fun and games a little too far. And remember, I groove mightily on the orchestrated silliness. I'd still rather relax in front of regular television on Saturday morning or an occasional weeknight and casually take in the weekly, hour-long WWF highlights, so engagingly reported by the likes of Ventura, Heenan, Vince McMahon Jr., Gorilla Monsoon, Mean Gene Okerlund and Lord Alfred Hayes.

I get a kick out of today's bigger, stronger, more muscular, far-flashier wrestlers who eschew long, drawn-out punishment holds for rip-snorting, slam-bang action, just as I used to enjoy the smaller, duller but more technically skilled grapplers of my salad days as a TV wrestling fan.

While this ersatz sport may decline in popularity from time-to-time, pro wrestling never left television and it never will. Like boxing, wrestling still loves the camera. Its masked avengers and helter-skelter tag-team matches are made for closeups. But the basic attraction is not about to wear off. And the reason is simple: Wrestling's good vs. evil face-offs are very much like everyday life. ■

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Leonard Bernstein– The Television Journey

He is remembered as a great conductor and composer, but he was also a remarkable figure in the history of television. A colleague provides a memorable closeup of Bernstein as a teacher who showed how to use the medium as an instrument for making great music accessible to the millions.

By Schuyler G. Chapin

On October 14, 1990, Leonard Bernstein, America's seminal force in the world of music, died at age 72. Exuberant and uninhibited as a composer, conductor, pianist, writer and educator, he was arguably the most talented musician this nation ever produced. He was also, for over thirty-five years, a good friend and colleague who detested any thought of aging or dying yet even during his excruciatingly painful last weeks never lost his overpowering passion for music or his humor. A few days before his death, with friends and family sprawled around his bedroom, he began sketching his own obituary. "Struck down in the prime of life . . ." he said. His friend, the actor Michael Wager, asked what came after that beginning. "I don't know," Bernstein murmured, "that's up to you!"

It's my view that an unspoken part of the "up to you" centers on television, a fact brilliantly recognized by critic Robert S. Clark in his tribute essay marking the Museum of Broadcasting's 1985 Bernstein television celebration: "Some of the gifted among us are twice blessed: they

yoke arresting talents to historic coincidences that enable them to make the most of their gifts. Leonard Bernstein is one of these: it was his—and our—good fortune that he and American television grew to maturity together."

Clark goes on to say that had television not existed, Bernstein's career would have been the most remarkable career ever for a classically trained musician in America, yet to him—and to me—it's seems unarguable that his creative and recreative work is indivisible from its television manifestations.

Bernstein's activities in this field seem to fall into three distinct but interconnected areas: the first are programs where he acts as teacher/interlocutor for music of many different kinds—mainstream classical, contemporary classical, jazz, musical comedy and rock—and where, beginning in 1954, he took this role to its ultimate in a continuing string of appearances on *Omnibus*, *Lincoln Presents* and *Ford Presents* and, from 1958 until 1972, in the fifty-three remarkable programs that make up the acclaimed *Young People's Concerts*; the second are programs of his work as a composer, including his symphonies and some of his stage works—*Mass*, *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Wonderful Town* and *Candide* in particular, plus his deeply moving Chichester Psalms; and third in the over seventy programs of his appearances as a conductor, with orchestras that included the New York Philharmonic, the London Symphony, the Israel Philharmonic and, especially, the Vienna Philharmonic.

In my view, however, the programs that brought the most unbelievable dimensions to the medium are in the first category: his role as unique musical mover and teacher, talents which first came to public attention in 1954 as a result of the program *Omnibus*.

A word of history here. *Omnibus* began its life in 1952, created as the TV/Radio Workshop of the Ford Foundation. It was the first commercial television outlet for experimentation in the arts, and from the beginning the program's approach to music was fresh and unusual. As an example, an early telecast featured selections from Modeste Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, but instead of a traditional concert-style performance the program enlisted showman/maestro Leopold Stokowski to explain the story behind the composition. Stokowski gave viewers a guided tour through a mock art gallery, pointing out the particular pictures that inspired each musical section.

Excerpts from the pieces were played along the way, causing the critic Howard Taubman to note that "if the television

audience must be led by the hand, it should get its verbal guidance at the beginning and the end, but once the composer has the floor he should be allowed to hold it." Never mind: the program clearly demonstrated *Omnibus's* determination to make the arts come alive on television.

The series' most slam/bang music programs, however, took off with Bernstein on November 14, 1954, oddly enough eleven years to the day since his first front-page explosion with the public when, as the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic, he stepped in to replace an ill Bruno Walter on a Sunday afternoon Carnegie Hall concert and CBS radio broadcast. The November 1954 program, his first on television, featured the then 35-year old maestro discussing the structure of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. From its opening moments, it was obvious that a totally new approach to music and television was underway. Bernstein stood on a huge studio floor painted with the score of the first movement and pointed to the first four notes with his shoe. "Three G's and an E-Flat," he said, looking straight at the camera, "baby simple . . ."

During the half-hour that followed he took viewers on an intense and fascinating exploration of musical creation. He deployed instrumentalists as stand-ins for notation, alternating visual representations of Beethoven's first, second and sometimes later-generation thoughts about now familiar passages with illustrations of their sound.

It was both illuminating and amusing; the orchestra—unaccustomed to the glare of the camera's eye—sometimes looked like a bunch of embarrassed children caught playing hooky. Using the giant score as a backdrop, and with the camera looking down at a high angle, the musicians were arranged in positions which corresponded precisely with their instrument's notation in the score—the oboist seated above the oboe's musical part, the clarinetist above his part, and so on. All this was accompanied by the maestro displaying his unique gift for combining homely metaphors (the "last lap" of a symphonic movement) with nutshell lessons ("The artist will give away his life and energies to be sure that one note follows with complete inevitability").

This first TV appearance opened up a revolutionary era in music telecasting. The maestro brought the medium more than just his boundless enthusiasm and natural gifts: He knew how to convey the intellectual and emotional passion of his art in a way that was accessible and stimulating to all types of viewers. His style at once confronted the middlebrow on his or her own level, without stooping: you might say he escorted and seduced his viewers along the paths of least resistance. As a result, more than any musician before—or since—Bernstein understood television's potential to unlock the mysteries of music and make the home audiences care as deeply as he did about the glories of its expressive language.

A year later, another *Omnibus* appearance confirmed his status as one of the medium's "great communicators." This time, in a segment entitled "The World of Jazz," he applied his skills to explaining the intricacies of "The St. Louis Blues." With slides, piano demonstrations and a jazz quintet to support his points, he again revealed his special knack for making musical discussions vivid and fun. Even if viewers couldn't completely grasp all of his examples of harmony and minor scale developments, it was easy to be carried along by his charm and infectious enthusiasm.

"The World of Jazz" was followed in late 1955 by "The Art of Conducting," a program in which he discussed and illustrated the importance of the conductor,

and what might happen if an orchestra worked without a leader. A year later he explored "The American Musical Comedy," tracing its history back to *The Black Crook* of 1866, Gilbert and Sullivan and Victor Herbert, discussing its roots in vaudeville and variety shows. Carol Burnett was one of his assisting artists on that program, doing a never-to-be-forgotten imitation of Ethel Merman in *Du Barry Was a Lady* as well as singing excerpts from *South Pacific.*

One of my favorites of the *Omnibus* series was aired on March 31, 1957. On this program he set out to demolish the notion—often widely held—that the music of Johann Sebastian Bach is boring. Right at the start, he plunged in by declaring that when he was a young piano student he was taken by the "immediacy" of the slow movement of the Italian Concerto. He proceeded to illustrate his point but then conceded that much of Bach can come across as "more motion than emotion." Asserting that audiences today are accustomed to music of dramatic contrast, he characterized Bach's music as being "about one thing at a time, just as the architecture of a bridge grows inevitably out of one initial arch." He went on to talk about Bach's musical structures as basically being a single theme or idea, after which came elaboration, discussion, reiteration and argumentation.

"That frightening bugaboo counterpoint," he said, "is nothing to be afraid of," and he illustrated from scores, showing at one point how the countrapuntal strands of Bach's chorale preludes resemble "smoothly flowing rivers dotted with islands" of chorale tunes. A choir, dressed to suggest the churchgoing fashion of the composer's time, as well as a troupe of instrumentalists, aided in his remarkable effort to get beneath the skin of Bach's scores.

That same year, CBS decided to feature Bernstein's talents on a more regular basis by televising the New York Philharmonic's *Young People's Concerts.* The concerts themselves were a longtime Philharmonic tradition; I can remember as a child sailing paper airplanes around Carnegie Hall during long, and I'm afraid, boring presentations of various kinds, but in Bernstein's hands the concerts had become the perfect forum to showcase his flair for instruction and inspiration. But the question remained of how to transform those live music events into interesting television.

Enter Roger Englander. a young musician and stage director who had worked with the maestro at Tanglewood eleven years earlier, when Bernstein conducted the American premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes.* They had become good friends, even at one point discussing a collaboration to adapt a James M. Cain novel for what would have been Bernstein's first opera. When that project evaporated, Englander moved on to television, where he became a CBS staff producer-director assigned to news, sports and public affairs. At heart, though, he was still a musician, and as such deeply concerned about finding more television commitment for good music, especially for young people. Richard Lewine, then Director of Special Programs for the network, suggested he might be just the person to work with Bernstein, a collaboration that grew to create what is now recognized as television's greatest contribution to music and arts education.

The format devised by Bernstein and Englander began with the first broadcast on January 18, 1958. Recognizing that few people could match the maestro s attention-holding powers, Englander knew it was equally important to use some of the medium's unique resources to enhance and underscore each concert's primary themes. Not only was camera-

work carefully planned in advance to coordinate with the music being played, but special visual material was inserted to illustrate key points.

Pictures of composers appeared at the mention of their names; so did views of rocket ships when they were needed to demonstrate the propulsion of, say, a Gioacchino Rossini overture. In this way the Young People's telecasts combined the best features of a live concert program—the excitement of musicians performing before a large audience—with technical feats more often associated in studio productions.

Bernstein's magic with the audience at Carnegie Hall, and later at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall, and his fervor in discussing the first concert's topic of "What Does Music Mean?" came across with such effectiveness that two more Young People's broadcasts aired in the months that followed, and their successes, in turn, persuaded CBS to keep the series going, airing them live on the Saturday mornings when the concerts actually took place.

They probably would have stayed indefinitely as live presentations tucked safely away in broadcast limbo had it not been for the famous Newton Minow speech voicing public sentiment about the blandness of network programming. Minow, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission at that time, lashed out at network television, calling it ". . .a vast wasteland." CBS countered his stinging words by scheduling the Young People's Concerts at 7:30 PM on Saturday nights, virtually prime time. They stayed that way for three seasons, until the FCC went on to other campaigns and the pressure was off. Then they were transferred to Sunday afternoons, and many of the new viewers followed.

By this time, the Young People's Concerts had become part of pop culture. They were parodied on nighttime comedies, cartoons appeared in magazines and there were references to Beethoven and Bernstein in *Peanuts*. Films of the concerts were loaned to schools through the Bell System and McGraw-Hill; two volumes of Bernstein scripts were published by Simon and Schuster and the shows themselves were translated into twelve languages for syndication in forty countries.

As Englander himself described, Bernstein usually planned the subjects and the programs in such a way as to include music he was also rehearsing for the Philharmonic's regular subscription series. Weeks before the concert date he would send a draft of his script, handwritten in pencil on yellow legal pads, ready for typing. "The script conferences were happily anticipated rituals held at Bernstein's apartment," Englander noted.

"Our staff was small, but boisterious and creative. Mary Rodgers, with her experience in writing children's books, would suggest ways to clarify and simplify the text; young John Corigliano would advance musicological arguments befitting a budding composer; Ann Blumenthal, stopwatch in hand, would time Bernstein's script-reading and piano snippets, miraculously allowing for the badinage of crosstalk and peppery asides; Jack Gottlieb would meticulously catalog the musical examples for the orchestra's cue sheet; and Candy Finkler would document the word changes in the script, and insist that we maintain some level of decorum."

Englander went on to say that Bernstein always wrote every word of each script, inviting suggestions and comments in the process, but insisting that since he was doing the speaking he would not be comfortable delivering someone else's words. "On the other hand," according to Englander "he left the visual side of the productions completely to us.

And that visual side was really the orchestral score. It became the shooting script, with the music holding the answers to the director's task of translating sound into pictures. Englander goes on: "As in all temporal forms, the individual shots were important only in context: changing the image at the correct musical moment was more important than the content of the picture itself."

These methods did not pass unnoticed. An early review in *The New York Times* commented that "the exceptionally good camera work of the television crew appeared as if it were part of the orchestrations themselves."

During the early years of the Young People's Concerts, Bernstein was also, occasionally, invited to return to the more adult-oriented format he had pioneered with *Omnibus*. On a late Sunday afternoon in November 1958, in a slot usually reserved for *Ted Mack's Amateur Hour*, the maestro and the New York Philharmonic offered another of his ebullient lecture/demonstrations, this time on the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Seated in what appeared to be his office, the program opened with the maestro grabbing the score, looking directly into the camera and proclaiming: "What a phenomenal work; there's so much in this work!" He then began an enthusiastic discussion, punctuated at the piano by assorted examples, and once again uncovered the wonders of musical structure in a way that helped even inexperienced listeners come to terms with Beethoven's formal power.

This time Howard Taubman wrote: "Bernstein has the gift of making music fascinating. His talks are knowledgeable, witty, serious and ingeniously threaded with musical illustration . . . As an intelligent musician he never loses sight of the fundamental nature of the art he is analyzing. As a performer who rejoices in the pleasure that flows from a responsive audience, he has mastered the knack of throwing light on the processes of music in an exciting way. He knows the uses of legitimate showmanship; he can illuminate his subject without patronizing or demeaning it."

After the performance of the "Ode to Joy," with the Westminster Choir and soloists Leontyne Price, Maureen Forrester, Leopold Simoneau and Norman Scott, the program concluded as it had begun, with Bernstein back in his office, calmly smoking a cigarette. The toll of conducting was apparent in his sloped shoulders and more relaxed manner, but with the graciousness of a host at the end of a long party, he thanked the audience for watching. The intimacy of television made a small moment like this almost irresistible.

In 1968, Bernstein stepped down as the New York Philharmonic's music director but continued the *Young People's Concerts* until 1972. 1968 also marked the year I was winding up my job as vice president for programs at Lincoln Center; he and I decided to create a small production company together in anticipation of major technicological changes in television and home video. Our prime purpose was to film or videotape musical performances for the then non-existing cassette market. No American broadcasting company had any interest in what we proposed to do, but Roger L. Stevens, the distinguished Broadway producer did. He bankrolled our first venture, a video recording of Verdi's *Requiem* made in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, with the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Chorus and soloists Martina Arroyo, Josephine Vesey, Placido Domingo and Ruggerio Raimondi.

The success of that project led CBS to invite us to create a ninety-minute prime time special celebrating Beethoven's 200th birthday, which we filmed in Vienna in 1970. With the distin-

guished BBC television director Humphrey Burton as our production partner, the program was a Bernstein biographical and musical tour of Beethoven's life and works. The network, delighted with the show (it came in on schedule and under budget), nonetheless aired it, for no apparent reason, one year late.

It was at this point that Beta/Unitel in Munich, a production company with an eye very much on the long-term future, approached us with an almost irresistible offer: to film the nine symphonies of Gustav Mahler, the four symphonies of Brahms and other works Bernstein might decide with whatever orchestras he wished. It was a fabulous and timely moment, Humphrey Burton signed on as series director; I was executive producer until I left to join the Metropolitan Opera, at which point my place was taken by Harry Kraut, who held the post until the maestro's death. Over the years that association produced over seventy different musical programs that have been seen all over the world, many on PBS in this country. Plans for additional productions were already set into the 1990's.

As it turned out, one of Bernstein's final appearances on what we might refer to as normal American prime time commercial television, was the aforementioned CBS Special marking the 200th birthday of Beethoven. Called *Beethoven's Birthday: A Celebration in Vienna*, it contained, along with a series of marvelous performances, a magnificent statement about the quality of Beethoven's music. Looking right into the camera, as was often the Bernstein way, he described the composer's music as being "accessible without being ordinary."

If you look carefully at those four words they also describe Bernstein himself, who was certainly accessible to ideas, people, music, life—but never, never ordinary. As *The New York Times*, in an editorial two days after his death, put it:

"Leonard Bernstein had 72 years of life. They weren't nearly enough for all he wanted to do, all he could have done, all he should have done. 'Should' because talents like his impose enormous responsibilities. If he didn't wholly fulfill all of them the fault wasn't his. Time got in the way . . . America discovered that musician on the afternoon of November 14, 1943, when the 25-year old assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic took over for an ailing Bruno Walter. For the next 47 years Leonard Bernstein was an important part of America's culture, and its conscience. Forty-seven years: not long enough." ■

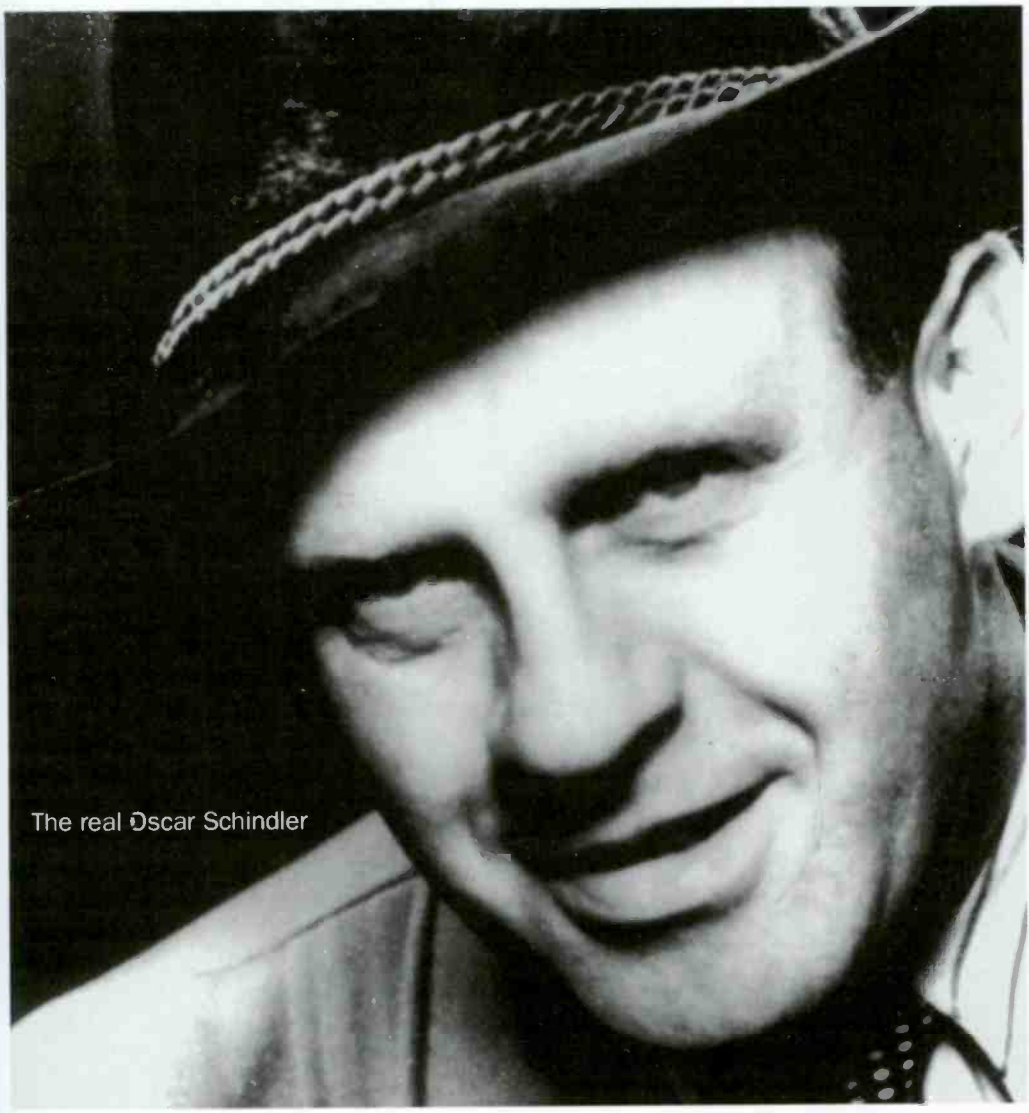
Schuyler G. Chapin is currently New York City's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs. He is dean emeritus of Columbia University's School of the Arts and former general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. His first experience in TV production came in the early 50's producing local programs at NBC's Channel 4 in New York City.

INNOVATION IN NEWS, SPORTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Schindler's List and Schindler: The Movie and the Documentary

by Dan Klugherz

Two films based on a similar subject—Oscar Schindler the enigmatic character who rescued more than a thousand Jews during the Holocaust—invite comparison. One is *Schindler's List*, the Oscar-winning movie directed by Stephen Spielberg and the other is *Schindler*, a British documentary produced, written and directed by Jon Blair in 1983 for Thames Television and not shown on television here in the United States until early this year when it was broadcast on fifty stations, including public as well as commercial outlets. The two productions, totally different in method, illustrate the fundamental difference between the feature film and the documentary. In watching a feature film, no matter how documentary its style, the audience receives the story in what Coleridge called a state of suspended disbelief. Like a child whose mother says, "I'm going to tell you a story", the audience, having paid its money



The real Oscar Schindler

and hoping to be entertained, settles comfortably, submits: the mind becomes receptive; disbelief doesn't operate.

The documentary asks a different response. On the screen is reality. Examine it, test it for what you feel is true or false. The audience is mentally active, putting what they see and hear to a critical test—something like a jury listening to a witness. The documentary must have an authenticity beyond what is required in a fiction motion picture. A comparison of the two films should note that the audience for the Blair documentary is relatively miniscule while the Spielberg movie will be seen by millions. Its effectiveness as education makes it an extraordinary film. There has been nothing like it to tell young people and coming generations about the Holocaust. What one brings to *Schindler's List* is important to take into account in judging it. Those with any personal experience of the Holocaust might find the Spielberg feature over-

whelming—a painful or unbearable recollection. This audience may be caught up in it as though it were a documentary: they are unlikely to question what is presented on the screen. A much larger audience—the general moviegoing audience—is absorbed by the Spielberg film because it conforms to a successful entertainment formula. There is an empathetic identification with the victims. They are rescued by a hero from impossible situations. There is pell-mell action, cruelty and shootings. In the end they are saved. The resolution satisfies.

Powerful as *Schindler's List* has been to most critics and audiences, there are those who feel dissatisfied with its impression of the Holocaust. Theirs is a disbelieving response, what they know about the Holocaust has seeped into their bones and when in their minds they think of Holocaust suffering, it is on a level unlike the fictional film portrayal. They see too little of the plight of victims, of their degradation, of the struggle to endure, of the pain and agony of survival. For them the film does not adequately reflect the reality

The color sequence that closes the movie is in the documentary spirit. The many who were rescued file by Schindler's grave, each to place a stone thereon, following the Jewish tradition of honoring the dead. One examines the truth of this scene: of the millions of Jews who died, those we are seeing on the screen survived, We are seeing actuality.

Spielberg has followed the basic facts of the Schindler story, a story that lends itself to making a film about the Holocaust palatable. With the rescue as the absorbing core of the movie, the full depth of Holocaust horror is kept from the audience. Though there is an abundance of Nazi cruelty and violence, other realities are made non-horrendous.

The cattle cars do not appear to be what they are: instruments of death. The barracks give no hint of the human misery that was pervasive there. The dread "showers" rumored among the victims to be prelude to death by gas, turn out to be real showers. For those who are not knowledgeable, probably most of the current movie audience and certainly the audience of the future, Auchwitz as a place where millions died in the gas chambers, is hardly felt. Thus as an educative document, *Schindler's List* has decided limitations. It would have been impossible for Spielberg to have gone any further in portraying realities without undermining the production of a commercial film. As it is, it went far enough to keep away some, with an awareness of the Holocaust, who were not ready to go to the movies to undergo a painful experience.

The limitations of Spielberg's film are felt especially by those steeped in personal accounts of the Holocaust, an extensive and imposing literature including, for example, Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Drowned and the Saved* to name but one of many authors. Reading such accounts, what makes them so powerful and involving is the endless question. How would it have been for me—in the camps in the cattle cars, in the cold nights outside for the body count, how would I have endured?

With the powerful empa-

Powerful as the *Schindler's List* film has been to most critics and audiences, there are those who feel dissatisfied with its impression of the Holocaust. When in their minds they think of Holocaust suffering, it is on a level unlike the fictional film portrayal.

thy thrust upon one to feel what had gone on for those in the grip of the Nazis, any fictionalizing is hard to take; nothing needs to be made up since so much has been written that is raw experience. With this bias, I found no inducement even to read Thomas Keneally's book *Schindler's List* since its very first page showed how much the author would be using his imagination:

"Watch the pavement, Herr Schindler," said the chauffeur. "It's as icy as a widow's heart."

This is not to enter into criticism of what many consider an important and worthy work of fiction, well-researched and highly readable. It is only to confess a tendency to resist the devices of fiction when the subject is the Holocaust.

The strong, well-made documentary, *Schindler,* has the ring of truth throughout. Its unfamiliar newsreel footage gives a vivid impression of Nazi persecution and the on-camera statements of Schindler's survivors put one as close as possible to their experience.

All the highlights of the Schindler story are here. There is enough in the newsreel and other archival footage to present a realistic image of Nazi oppression. Much is conveyed by actual film scenes such as: the old woman whose head is brutishly raised by the handle of a Nazi officer's whip; Jews being rushed out of their homes into the street; working under Nazi guards; a roundup, with victims forced to leave their homes and climb into trucks to be carted away.

There are even a few images of Schindler himself, with spare narration spoken by Dirk Bogarde about Schindler's charm, vanity, how he enjoyed being entertaining, his 17-foot sportscar. The comments from survivors themselves provide the on-the-spot record of the Schindler story while giving the authentic feeling of what it was like to be a Nazi victim. Their experiences are similar to what is dramatically enacted in Spielberg's feature film. Again, depending of one's background, one may be moved by the survivor's accounts in the documentary or the visualizations in the movie—conceivably by both.

Depending on one's background, one may be moved by the serious accounts in the documentary or the visualization in the film—conceivably by both.

In the Thames documentary, a Polish survivor, Mojesz Pantirer describes how, after an escape of one young prisoner from the camp, he and others were lined up and as a warning, Amon Goeth shot every other boy on the spot. Pantirer tells about unloading a truck of its dead for burial. One boy was still alive. Pantirer begged a guard for a "gnadige" shot, a "kindness", so the boy would not be buried alive.

"It's a 'schade,' a shame to waste a bullet on the schmutzig Jude" is the guard's reaction. Pantirer goes on: "We had to pour gasoline over them and we kept on burning them."

Goeth's mistress, whose emphysema causes her to labor to get her words out (an interview that contributes a subtle morbid tone) offers a chilling defense of Goeth. "He killed Jews, naturally . . . but he didn't like to do it."

One follows the dramatic account of the Jewish women whose cattle car was scheduled by Schindler to be sent to his factory but was misdirected to Auschwitz where they are told by inmates, "You don't need your possessions. You're not going to live another day." Eventually, through Schindler's uncanny influence, they are back under his protection and are reassured

by him, "You are safe now." This moving documentary provides the audience with a dramatic depiction of the event without the feature film's sacrifice of authenticity in dealing with the same material.

The sacrifice may not trouble most viewers, but it does if you agree with the perception of Primo Levi, the author and Auschwitz survivor. He writes, in *The Drowned and the Saved* of "the gap that exists and grows wider every year between things as they were (in the camps) and things as they are represented by the current imagination fed by approximative books, films and myths. It slides fatally toward simplification and stereotype. a trend against which I would like to erect a dike . . . It is the task of the historian to bridge this gap, which widens as we get farther away from events under examination."

Both *Schindler's List* and *Schindler* the television film have their strengths and their limitations. In the feature film, events are funneled through the sensibilities of a master of the entertainment film who has taken a seemingly unlikely subject for a Hollywood movie and turned it into a commercially successful and historically important motion picture. When the two films are seen in conjunction with each other, however, one senses how hopeless it is for the enacted film to reflect the authenticity that is achieved in the documentary through reports by concentration camp inmates, witnesses to history.

But audiences love movies that tell a story, particularly when told by a master like Spielberg, and they are not much concerned with historical truth. Throughout the world people will see and be impressed by *Schindler's List*, while it is the fate of *Schindler*, as it is of most documentaries, to be seen by a few. ■

Dan Klugherz has retired from a career as a writer, director and producer of documentary films. His last film was *The "Real" Julia* on the life of the Muriel Gardiner, who helped Jews and anti-Fascists escape from Vienna in the late 1930s. His documentaries have been seen on CBS, PBS, The Learning Channel, Westinghouse Broadcasting and on the classic Intertel series.

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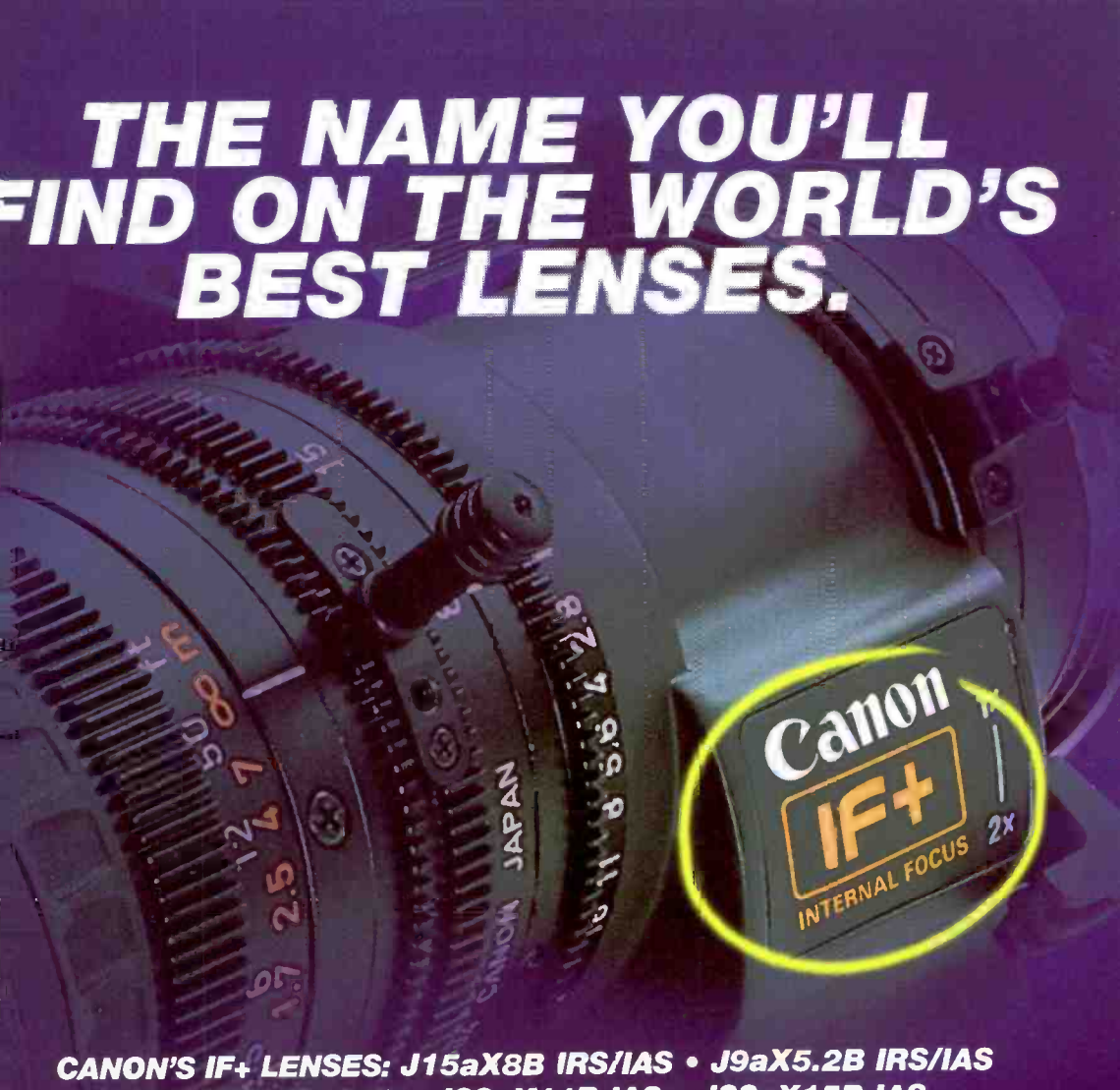

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And they said Uncle Fultie didn't have a prayer

His was only a simple one-man show, but the charismatic Bishop Sheen cut into Milton Berle's ratings, and also won the 1952 Emmy Award for the Most Outstanding Television Personality; competing against Durante, Murrow, Godfrey and Lucille Ball.

By Mary Ann Watson

The benevolent bishop broke every commandment of prime time television and became one of its biggest stars. "He's a dead duck," was the consensus among industry insiders when the DuMont television network made the dubious decision to put Fulton Sheen on the air Tuesday nights at eight—opposite Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theatre.*

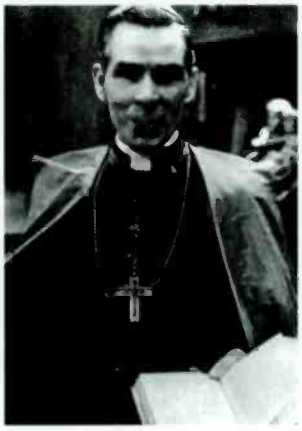
In 1952 television was still a grand experiment, but some givens had already been established. In the evening hours, everyone knew, people wanted to see bonafide entertainment. Dancing girls, singing stars, comedy sketches, and enthralling dramas were the diversion of choice. So a weekly half-hour talk by a man of the cloth didn't hold much promise.

But DuMont, the home of "sensibly priced" programming that gave smaller sponsors a chance to advertise on TV, had some time to fill. When Cardinal Spellman of New York broached the idea of giving Sheen a slot, the network was game.

The proposed prelate, who was fifty-seven years old, was hardly a neophyte

behind the microphone. For more than two decades, as Sheen advanced in the Church, he also grew in stature as an orator on NBC's radio show *The Catholic Hour.*

Chris Witting, who was head of DuMont network operations, was familiar with Sheen from the radio program. "I was always very impressed with his voice and his diction," Witting recalls. There seemed to be little risk in giving him the graveyard spot. "Berle really had the hour," Witting figured. And CBS was challenging with Frank Sinatra.



"It would be doing public service and at least we'd have something on the air" was the network attitude about the new show, remembers Melvin Goldberg, the director of research at DuMont when *Life is Worth Living* premiered on February 12, 1952.

But the low expectations were premature. An unanticipated chemistry occurred at the Adelphi Theatre in midtown Manhattan when Bishop Sheen took the stage to meet his audience. Not many Tuesday nights passed before the big-gun competition began to feel a little squeeze in the Trendex ratings. Within a month NBC and CBS dropped almost five points each.

While Milton Berle cavorted in drag, Sheen glided on set in full-blown regalia—long cassock, a gold cross and chain at his breast, a purple cape flowing from his shoulders to the floor, and a skull cap, called a zuchetto, perched on his graying hair. The visual impact was dramatic. On the small screen the bishop looked loftier than his five feet and eight inches. Chris Witting recalls. "The dress was all Sheen's idea. He was a showman."

With a boyish smile of acknowledgement for the applause of the studio audience, Bishop Sheen would begin his talk by saying something like, "Friends, thank you for allowing me to come into your home again."

Then, by way of anecdote, ("The other day I was in an elevator in a department store . . ."), he'd introduce the topic for the evening, which was always a universal theme, such as humor, art, science, or the nature of love. In his autobiography. *Treasure in Clay*, published shortly after his death in 1979, Sheen recounted his technique: "Starting with something that was common to the audience and me, I would gradually proceed from the known to the unknown or to the moral and Christian philosophy . . . When I began television nationally and on a commercial basis. I was no longer talking in the name of the Church." His TV messages were always ecumenical parables, never direct presentations of Catholic dogma.

Each week Bishop Sheen spoke for twenty-eight minutes without notes or a TelePrompter from a simple set designed to look like a rectory study. Occasionally he would write a word or draw a diagram on a blackboard, the way a university lecturer might to emphasize a key idea. When he moved away from the slate and addressed another one of the three cameras, a crew member—out of TV viewers' sight—would wipe the board clean. It became a running gag on the show that Sheen had a divine helper assigned to erasing duty— "my angel, Skippy."

Some of Sheen's personal friends and admirers who knew the true depth of his erudition, winced to hear him make corny jokes on TV. "I'm going to buy my angel a

bottle of Halo Shampoo," he quipped one night. Skippy, he explained to viewers, was a union man. He belonged to Local 20 of the Cherubim.

Bishop Sheen became hot copy. *Life* and *Look* and *Time* magazine ran flattering feature stories. The number of stations carrying *Life is Worth Living* jumped from three to fifteen in less than two months. Fan mail flowed in at a rate of 8,500 letters per week. There were four times as many requests for tickets as could be filled. The sponsor, Admiral, which paid the modest production costs in exchange for a one-minute commercial at the open of the show and another minute at the close, was feeling the gratification of someone who does a quiet good deed and ends up getting the key to the city.

NBC soon began to covet its neighbor's success and tried to persuade Bishop Sheen to leave DuMont. But if there was any temptation to jump to a bigger ship, the new celebrity's loyalty overcame it.

As National Director for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization which sponsored Catholic missions throughout the world, Bishop Sheen discovered his television exposure was a fund-raising bonanza. Gifts ranged from dimes taped on index cards to will bequests of considerable sums. It would be a mistake, though, to assume that Fulton Sheen was a precursor to latter-day TV evangelists who hoodwink the faithful for personal reward. Solicitation was not the foundation of the show.

Bishop Sheen reflected: "In the course of years, thanks to gifts that were spontaneously sent, returns for the missions ran into millions of dollars, every cent of which found its way to some poor area of this earth for the building of hospitals and schools."

As with any television personality, Bishop Sheen received all sorts of requests. Children asked for a hat like his or if he might give a poor girl a pony, which he did. One letter came from an aspiring actor named Estevez. Although in later years having an ethnic surname would be an asset to a screen career, in the 1950s it was still a hindrance. So, the young man wanted to know if he could borrow the Bishop's name. He became Martin Sheen and ascended to stardom.

By Halloween of the Bishop's first season, if a kid went trick-or-treating wearing his sister's Brownie Scout beanie, his dad's cummerbund, and a satin cape that went with his mother's evening gown, everyone knew he was supposed to be Bishop Sheen.

Milton Berle had little choice but to be good-natured about his rival's escalating success. Referring to his own sponsor, Texaco, Berle said of Sheen: "We both work for the same boss—Sky Chief!" Uncle Miltie even shared his celebrated moniker and dubbed the Bishop "Uncle Fultie."

The amazing appeal of a priest's simple show is one of the anomalies of American television. There's a bit of flawed mythology, though, about Bishop Sheen.

Some enthusiasts would like to believe that Sheen actually surpassed Berle in the ratings. But this was just not the case. Berle's was always among the highest-rated shows on the tube and *Life is Worth Living*—airing on a network with so few affiliate stations—couldn't really compete in that league. But Sheen's stature was not measured by ratings alone.

Nominees for the 1952 Emmy Award for Most Outstanding Television Personality included Jimmy Durante, Edward R. Murrow, Lucille Ball, Arthur Godfrey, and His Excellency, the most Reverend Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. When Sheen's name was announced as the winner, he claims to have been stunned and at a loss for words. Realizing that gracious winners credit

others for their success, Sheen accepted the statue by saying, "I wish to thank my four writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John."

Few evaluations of Fulton Sheen's adroitness as a television performer fail to mention his compelling eyes. "His naturally hypnotic eyes look even deeper under TV lights," reported *Life* magazine. *Time* claimed, "They are one of the most remarkable pairs of eyes in America, looking out from deep sockets, pupil and iris almost merged in one luminous disk which creates the optical illusion that he not only looks at people but through them and at everything around them."

Milton Berle had little choice but to be good-natured about his rival's escalating success. Referring to his own sponsor, Texaco, Berle said about Sheen: "We both work for the same boss—Sky Chief!"

The first time Fulton Sheen ever appeared on TV was in 1948 as a guest speaker on the Sunday morning series *Television Chapel*, which aired on WPIX in New York. Edward Stasheff directed that broadcast and remembers being amazed at the clergyman's relationship with the lens: "His whole technique was the magnetic effect of the way he looked into the camera. I hate to use a cliche, but the word is 'telegenic.' He was made for the medium."

More than forty years after *Life is Worth Living* went on the air, when viewers are asked for their recollections they invariably mention Bishop Sheen's penetrative gaze. Marvin Epstein, an Ivy League-educated young man who was also a graduate of a rabbinical seminary, watched the program as a game, anxious to find the holes in the theological reasoning of the Catholic Bishop. But what he experienced was "an instant mesmerization with this guy's eyes—they came through with magnetizing incision."

Students of rhetoric have analyzed Sheen's style and noted that he used theatrics befitting a cathedral pulpit only sparingly in the TV studio. Thunderous flourishes, he understood, worked against personalized speaking. "The several thousand people in the Adephi Theatre are not my audience, not the people with whom I try to set up a rapport," the Bishop explained. "My words are aimed at little family groups seated about their television sets in their own living rooms.

A keen sense of timing was another critical factor in Sheen's TV performance. One of his TV directors, Hal Davis, remembered: "Truly uncanny was his ability to pace himself so shrewdly that he could build to a climax of emotion at the precise second. He never required time cues, as I remember it, but worked from the clock set above the floor monitor."

The Bishop moved about spiritedly as he spoke, seldom remaining in a fixed position very long, but rather striding across the set. There were no blocking rehearsals for *Life is Worth Living*, though. Sheen shifted freely, but knew how to telegraph his moves to the director by looking over to the direction he was about to travel.

The only non-extemporaneous segment of the program was the closing. Each week Sheen prepared a peroration of precisely two minutes. He always would end his remarks by lifting both arms up and out at waist level with palms directed heavenward and saying, "God loves you."

"He wound it up on the nose every time," Melvin Goldberg remembers. "None of the techs could believe it."

Mastery of the mechanics of television speaking alone, however, cannot account for Fulton Sheen's ability to sustain audience interest. It was, of course, the content and context of his message that touched a responsive chord in so many Americans at mid-century.

The generation that had lived through ten years of the Great Depression and sacrificed for the duration of World War II matured with prescribed exigencies. First came the fight for survival in a cruel economy. And then the national purpose was simply and totally to defeat the enemy. But what was the sustaining goal now that the challenges had been met and the defining crises had passed into history?

The hunger for normalcy, for convention, for predictability and order was a natural craving in men and women whose young lives had been so unsettled for so long. Once the pieces were picked up, though, and the country was back on an even keel, there was an emptiness that accompanied the stability. People who for decades had meaning and purpose imposed on them now had to discover for themselves profundity in everyday living.

Sheen intuited the void in modern Americans. He sensed their frustration and aimlessness. His remedy was a spiritual life with assured values. On the very first broadcast of *Life is Worth Living*, he stated the premise of the series succinctly: "Life is monotonous if it is meaningless; it is not monotonous if it has a purpose."

What he offered in his television talks was the opportunity for viewers to find purpose in their lives—not through a particular religious creed, but through belief in a personal God. Marvin Epstein, whose admitted anti-Catholic bias was strong, was nonetheless attracted to Bishop Sheen: "I found myself wondering, 'How could he be making pronouncements which no person could reject, regardless of faith—because they simply made such maximal common sense?' "

Fulton Sheen was not the only one popularizing religion in the early 1950s, however. It was an era in American culture of great interest in spiritual matters. Evangelist Billy Graham appeared on ABC for fifteen minutes each week on *Hour of Decision* and had become a preacher of enormous celebrity and influence.

In 1953 the six top sellers in nonfiction included four books that were religious or spiritually inspirational: the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, *A Man Called Peter*, and *Life is Worth Living*, a collection of transcriptions of Sheen's TV talks. The Bishop's appearance as a *TV Guide* cover boy in October of that year naturally did nothing to hurt the sales of his book. (The fiction bestseller list, by the way, included *The Robe*, *The Cardinal*, *The Song of Bernadette*, and *The Left Hand of God*.)

Bishop Sheen also reflected the American ethos of his time through his pronounced belief that world communism was an evil force and atheistic governments were anathema to moral law. He was fervent in his anti-communism, but not a McCarthyite. He didn't spread paranoia; he reassured viewers that a democratic system with faith in God at its foundation would prevail and endure. "Within fifty years," Fulton Sheen predicted in 1953, "communism will be a dim memory."

By early 1955 *Life is Worth Living* was at the height of its popularity, reaching 5.5 million households each week. And Sheen was receiving scads of honors and awards. But DuMont was in trouble. Unable to get a full complement of owned-and-operated stations in top markets, the economies of production could not be made to work favorably. Losses mounted. Finally, DuMont had to pull the plug on its network operation.

Bishop Sheen quickly found a new

home for his show on ABC. In the fall of 1955 *Life is Worth Living* also moved to a new night. The shift to Thursdays was made "in order that I can hear Milton Berle," Sheen sportingly announced to the press. The clergyman's new competition was the *Bob Cummings Show* on CBS and Groucho Marx on NBC with *You Bet Your Life*. The Bishop's following began to shrink.

In his last season on network television, 1958-57, ABC moved Sheen to 9:00 p.m. on Mondays—opposite NBC's Medic, a popular anthology-style drama starring Richard Boone, and *I Love Lucy*, the number-one show on television, which averaged a 43.7 rating for CBS. At the end of that season Fulton Sheen decided to devote himself to "other work for the good Lord."

His retirement from television didn't last very long, though. In 1959 Sheen was back with a syndicated show called *The Bishop Sheen Program*. The format was virtually the same as *Life is Worth Living*, but the series was recorded on videotape and distributed by National Telefilm Associates. A second syndicated series in the same format appeared on a handful of local stations until 1968, by which time Sheen's style had been eclipsed by a social and cultural revolution.

But in broadcast history and American history Bishop Fulton J. Sheen remains first and foremost an icon of the 1950s. His surprising success reveals what Americans in the atomic age wanted so much to believe—that the life of each individual has purpose and meaning. And television is truly a blessing. ■

Mary Ann Watson is a professor of telecommunications and film at Eastern Michigan University. She once gave up TV for Lent.

QUOTE...

Andy Rooney("TV's top curmudgeon," writer, CBS on-air personality):
"I think the best newsmen and women I ever knew were both specifically and philosophically honest in regard to their trade or profession. I think you have to set out as a newsman to believe that if all the truth about everything were known by everyone, it would be a better world . . .

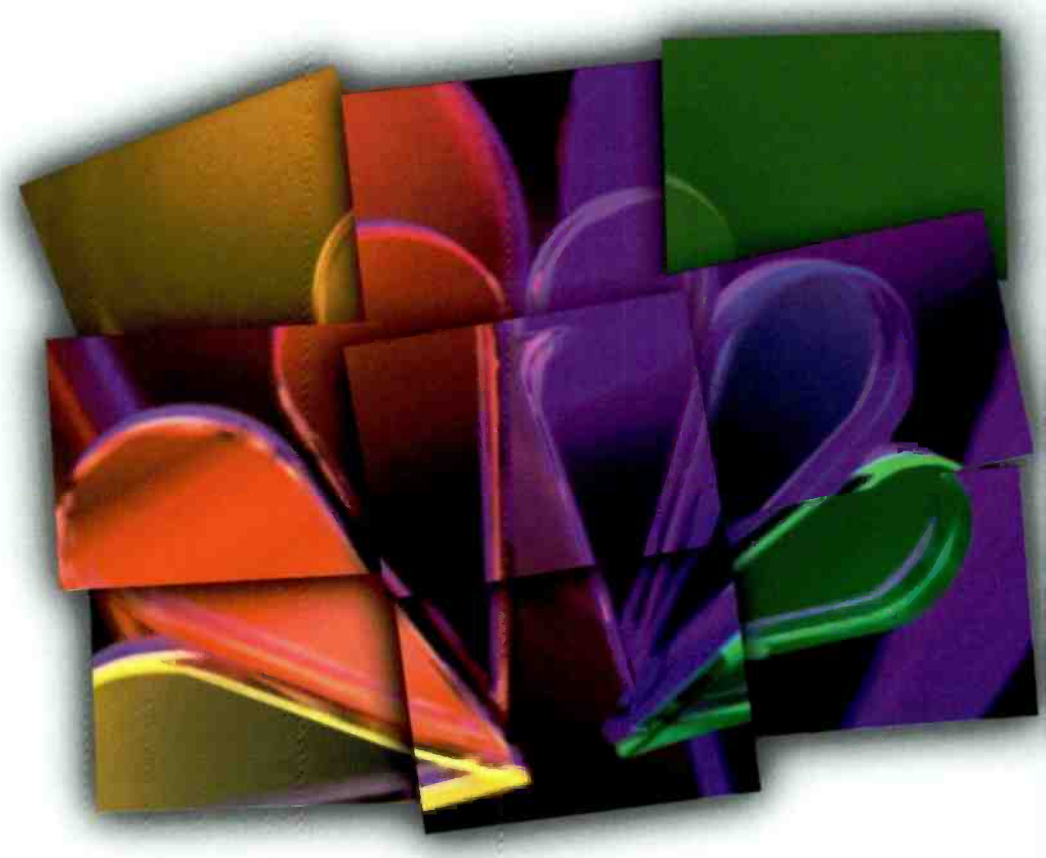
"I had written a piece that was critical of [CBS Chairman Lawrence] Tisch in the newspaper column I do twice a week. I said that what Tisch had done to CBS was better for him than it was for CBS stockholders . . . And so he called me and asked what I meant by that. I said, 'Well, I don't know how to explain it any differently, Mr. Tisch. I just feel that you had not done well by the company as far as the news division goes. And I don't know what else to say.'

"He said, 'Rooney, you're a liar and a shit!" And he hung up. I was shocked. Can you imagine Bill Paley ever doing a thing like that? The next day I told producer Don Hewitt about it and Don laughed. He said: 'Tisch was wrong. You're not a liar!' "

—from a 1996 interview with *TVQ*'s Special Correspondent Arthur Unger.

...UNQUOTE

THE GOLDEN AGE



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NBC

The Flow of Memory and Desire: Television and Dennis Potter

A critical analysis of Britain's prolific, experimental Dennis Potter, who grapples with this age's deep questions while meeting the needs of popular television.

By Ron Simon

Perhaps more than anyone else, Dennis Potter has brought the twentieth century—its anxieties, its rootlessness, and its self-consciousness—to the twentieth century's predominant medium of expression, television. And similar to artists in other disciplines, Potter has fought off the anomie and intimations of the wasteland with an unrelenting search for the self in his art. If the outside world offers little comfort, (things falling apart for Yeats and only an abiding filth for Potter), then the knowledge and meaning unleashed by art promises some type of unity and redemption. We see throughout Potter body of work the same type of experimentation and thematic concerns that have been the hallmark of other arts. But as Potter has grappled with the contemporary angst, he has also resolutely tried to define what makes television unique, both in structure and content.

One of the major investigations in all modern art is how to depict multiple layers of awareness as a way of discovering the integrated self. It is not enough for the artist to render the world in luminous detail, but as Edmund Wilson noted in analyzing the contribution of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, it is to show us "the world as the characters perceive it, to find the unique

vocabulary and rhythm which will represent the thoughts of each." From Virginia Woolf's treatment of consciousness in the novel to Alain Resnais representation of memory in film, artists have wanted to approximate the inner flux of the mind, its thoughts and desires, as it interacts with the concrete realities of daily life.

Beginning with the semiautobiographical *Nigel Barton* plays on through *The Singing Detective* and beyond, Potter has used the television narrative as a journey into the human psyche. Potter strives to encapsulate the full texture of a man thought in a given moment (and Potter explorations are truly limited to the male psyche). He uses the rhythms of television to explain where his characters [have been and where they long to be. To communicate his vision of the sovereign human being, Potter searches for the medium techniques—ingenious flashbacks, complex crosscutting, time discontinuities, expressive music—to approximate this flow of memory and desire.

Potter has abolished the present tense in his dramas. His protagonists are forever trying to reconcile their past actions with their troubled and unsettled present. Nigel Barton, ambivalent about his current status at Oxford, must come to grips with his working-class background; throughout *Stand Up, Nigel Barton*, he mentally relives his ragged school days in a mining community (with adult actors playing the children). In his six-part miniseries on Casanova, Potter wants his libertine to speculate on the consequences of religious and sexual freedom. He presents most of the amorous escapades as recollections of an imprisoned Casanova, languishing in a single cell for moral offenses. But memories for Casanova (and Potter) offer a release: "The only way to dissolve these walls around us is to use the magic of our minds. Magic, the magic of memory. Pictures. Sounds. Smells we once experienced. Pleasures we once felt. Shapes that haunt us still." Life for Potter is a negotiation with many eras of one self.

Potter is passionately concerned with "the interiorizing process." a consideration of how people's fantasies and desires inform the landscape of their outer lives. Consequently, Potter has supplemented the realistic conventions of television drama with non-naturalistic techniques to reveal the psychology of his characters. When struggling salesman Arthur Parker first bursts into song, miming a rendition of "The Clouds Will Soon Roll By" by Elsie Carlisle, we see an eruption of a man's subconscious longings during his morning ritual. In that moment we see dual images of Arthur Parker: a man burdened with a failing business and marriage, yet still hoping that life can mirror the dreams of a song. We the viewers experience, as scholar Erich Auerbach has written on the spirit of modern literature, both the interior and exterior representation of the moment, "nothing less than the wealth of reality and depth of life in every moment to which we surrender ourselves without prejudice." Throughout Potter's drama there are always such epiphanic scenes that wed the outer facts of life to the inner process of mind.

Popular culture for Potter is a touchstone of real emotion, a signaling of aspirations, memories and regrets. Throughout his work he has tried to delineate the integration of mass culture into the private core of self-definition. For Potter old songs and movies are not nostalgia, but a vital way to define character: clips of old westerns signify an alternative world of heroics for Willy in *Where The Buffalo Roam*; the songs of crooner Al Bowlly create a romantic ideal that personal experience betrays for David Peters in *Moonlight on the Highway*; and forties music serves as an emotional continuum between Philip Marlow two worlds, the real experiences of child-

hood and the imaginary adventures of his alter ego, in *The Singing Detective.*

If Potter characters do not have a private dialogue with their past or their inner desires, they are often visited by embodiments of their most hidden guilts and fears. In fact, Potter has crafted his own subgenre of the television play, the visitation drama, in which the domestic patterns of a complacent (but usually loveless) couple are overturned by the arrival of a mysterious stranger. One is never sure of the provenance of the unexpected guest: he may be a messenger from heaven (*Angels Are So Few*); an agent of the devil (*Brimstone and Treacle*); or a projection of shame (*Schmoedipus*). These confrontations with "the other" suggests a religious experience in what Potter views as a godless world. After the metaphysical encounter, the characters are driven to redefine their notions of faith and identity.

Increasingly, Dennis Potter is concerned with another nonnaturalistic mode, how the contours of imagination produce an alternate internal reality. So often Potter's creative characters, many of them writers, are in the throes of personal and professional despair. With the creative juices blocked, the characters are forced to summon up secret selves to help resolve their torments. Authors Martin in *Double Dare* and Philip Marlow in *The Singing Detective* use snatches of dialogue, momentary sights and sounds, as a catalyst for their dark, but ultimately revelatory musings. In the process, the audience is challenged to determine the meaning of these fictions within fictions. In the recent *Blackeyes* Potter brings reflexive games like those of Jorge Luis Borges and Italo Calvino to television. The series is a battle, for control of the destiny and identity of a fictional character (the model Blackeyes), between a bombastic litterateur and his niece, from whom he has stolen the story about her modeling career. Potter in his directorial debut also serves as a postmodern referee, providing sly commentary.

Each Potter drama is an inquiry into the human condition, a search for transcendence and redemption in a seemingly bleak world bereft of meaning. In Potter we see the same spiritual quest that permeates so much of the films of Ingmar Bergman. Potter's spiritual journey began with a humanistic interpretation of the Passion, *Son of Man*, in which his Christ wrestled with self-doubts about his divinity and mission. Potter fictitious characters are equally tormented, plagued with an original sin of their own making. Their anguish is often pushed to extremes, a dramatic equivalent of the portraits of Francis Bacon. The yearning for Potter is "the radiance of the religious sense of the world once glimpsed as a child," a motif that permeates all of his work.

Philip Marlow in *The Singing Detective* summed up Dennis Potter's own take on life: "All clues. No solutions. That's the way things are." For over twenty-five years Potter's search has been conducted within the shadowy realms of human consciousness, between past and present, conscious and unconscious, memory and desire. In this first complete retrospective of Potter's work, we see an artist grappling with the contradictions of the twentieth century while still remaining true to the entertainment imperatives of popular television. Dennis Potter's oeuvre is a testament to an individual vision and to the artistic possibilities of the medium. ■

Ron Simon is television curator at the Museum of Television and Radio and an adjunct associate professor at Columbia University. Potter died in 1994.

The Gripes of Wrath: Roseanne's Bitter Comedy of Class

An examination of the success of a sarcastic, blue-collar sitcom in an era of conspicuous consumption and pro-family values. Roseanne's controversial fame reveals the depths to which her show challenges assumptions about work, women, and families in the 1990s.

by Rosanne Freed

According to her many critics, comedian-actress-producer Roseanne (formerly Barr, formerly Arnold) is guilty of wretched excess. She is characterized as snide and despotic, a bitchy hausfrau who worships at the altar of crude, a publicity hound with bargain-basement instincts for capturing tabloid headlines. In a medium that is far more comfortable with sweetly de-sexualized mommies, Roseanne rudely confesses the burdens of female anatomy, its cramps and dishpan hands and stretch-marked cleavage yearning to breath free.

Her behavior on and off the airwaves rubs people the wrong way. "Roseanne stands for things that self-respecting

women should disdain," chided Maureen Dowd in *The New York Times*. Such as? "[T]yrannical behavior, lording it over the help, disguising a love of power as a love of equality." In other words, the stuff that the *Times*' front-page newsmakers display in abundance.

Despite all the outrage, there's no denying that Roseanne is also a crowd pleaser. Her self-titled show debuted in 1988 and has confidently landed in the top ten through most of its run in both prime time and syndication. Two highly unglamorous autobiographies—*Roseanne, My Life as Woman* and *My Lives*—fairly jumped off the shelves. Strangely enough, her fans often cherish the same rough qualities that scandalize her critics. For them, she is television's working-class woman as Valkyrian warrior: Mother Courage stuffed in a blue waitress frock. Author Alice Hoffman, in *USA Weekend* magazine, mounted a maternal defense. "Those who despise Roseanne—her TV character or her public persona—often seem to hate her for not being a '50s sitcom wife . . . If [my kids'] attitudes about family dynamics and sexuality and what it means to be human are even slightly influenced by TV images, and I believe they are, I prefer that they be influenced by Roseanne Arnold, not Donna Reed."

Now in its eighth, and reportedly final season, *Roseanne* promises to lower the curtain with as much tumult as when it debuted, with the star's pre-menopausal test-tube pregnancy for starters. But controversy alone is not the show's greatest legacy. From its inception, *Roseanne* has subverted traditional depictions of family, gender and class on television. Unlike the relentless optimism of most sitcoms, the show delivers gritty personal disappointments momentarily interrupted by fleeting triumphs.

The contradictions played out with dark sarcasm in the fictional troubles of the Conner brood are very likely the home truths viewers face in their own lives: financial woes, battles between parents and children, the rocky road to the future.

"We're so far beyond screwed that the light from screwed will take one billion years to reach the Earth," Roseanne Conner seethes after yet another setback, while the audience nods in tacit understanding.

In comedy, timing is everything. *Roseanne* emerged during the tail end of a decade-long obsession with wealth and consumption, its street-smart punchlines tapping into the silent resentment of the overworked and the underpaid. The show's coarse characters with their dressed-down demeanors rattled official cages as they belied the hard-gloss glamour of the era. At the same time, in the midst of a reputed "death of feminism," Roseanne's battles with her network illuminated the humble status of women in every industry, and led the way for comics who followed to gain control of their own television products. The phenomenal success of Roseanne then, is an opportunity to understand how one women's irritations gave voice to the issues of her time.

HER LIFE AS A WOMAN

In the late 1980s, Roseanne Barr (as she was then known) was a successful stand-up comic with an established stage identity. To comedy-club audiences and *Tonight Show* viewers she was the Domestic Goddess, an ironic title for a rotund huntress stalking the territory of hearth and home in order to shoot down the idealized myths of maternity. Her jokes ridiculed Supermom standards that she and her audience knew were impossible to live up to. Instead, Roseanne offered more reasonable goals: "I figure when my husband comes home from work, if the kids are still alive, then, hey, I've done my job."

Still, in the fall of 1988, Roseanne was a novice in network terms, a minor leaguer about to be brought up to the majors—a starring role in a prime-time sitcom based, to come extent, on the Comedian's routine. *Roseanne* dealmakers Carsey-Werner Productions and creator/ producer Matt Williams already had a proven track record with *The Cosby Show*. They soon learned, however, that their new slugger not only expected to bat cleanup, she also intended to manage the team. From the beginning, Roseanne fought to make the kind of creative decisions about plot, character and dialogue usually reserved for producers. The set became a battleground of egos. Roseanne flatly refused to speak lines that, in her view, belittled a strong character she had spent her career developing.

Hers was a power play that threatened established industry hierarchies, according to no less an expert than Robert Iger, ABC President, who has had his share of confrontations with the actress. "To a large extent there is a movement afoot in Los Angeles to limit the voice of the star of the show in terms of the creation of the program itself," Iger admitted to *Vanity Fair*. "Because it, in effect, empowers someone beyond the point of control."

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In the symphony that was Roseanne's stand-up persona, "beyond the point of control" was a major music theme. She maneuvered the stage like a grand ocean liner sailing between ports, riffing on the sorry lot of the housewife with a centered fury, like the eye of a PMS hurricane. Her imitation of Generic Husband captured the motor drone of his endless carping about her

cooking, her driving, her sexual problems. To which Roseanne ultimately bellowed, "Get away from me—*I'm bloated!*"

Being out of (others') control went hand in hand with Roseanne's healthy grasp of self-worth, at least in the public eye. Here was a fat woman who was unapologetic about her girth as dominant as a linebacker or Greyhound bus. In her routine, she tells a rude Valley Girl, "I eat the same amount of food that you eat, I just don't puke when I'm done." The high decibel level of her voice—the screamed bon mots that gave her the last and loudest word—filled up the spaces onstage that her body failed to cover.

Roseanne's physical transgressions put an invigorating spin on dusty notions of femininity, female sexuality and ladylike behavior. They also hinted strongly at the upheaval of other social niceties. Perhaps the television industry didn't understand that male and female audiences were delighted by Roseanne's cocky resistance in the face of authority, be it spousal or otherwise. At the very least, ABC should have wondered if their Domestic Goddess would suddenly want to clean house.

But strategies for disciplining the troops exist, no matter how high they rise in the ranks. For example, when actress Valerie Harper's contract negotiations stalled in 1987, NBC jettisoned the star from her self-titled series and successfully reintroduced the show as *Valerie's Family* ("Who's Valerie?" and "Where's Valerie?" were also suggested). Similarly, Roseanne claims that early in her series, ABC considered firing her, but abandoned their plans after learning that co-stars John Goodman and Laurie Metcalf refused to continue without the show's namesake. Within a coercive corporate culture, Roseanne's defiantly asserted prerogative over the series appears more like a case of professional suicide than a tyrannical grab for power.

The media's selective and catty coverage of such squabbles is equally misleading. Stand-up-performers-turned-sitcom-stars Tim Allen, Jerry Seinfeld and Paul Reiser are the heirs to *Roseanne's* prime-time success. These men obviously influence the creative direction of their shows. Yet their presumably power-mad appetites rarely merit the sort of vitriolic entertainment news ink that has stained Roseanne since she stepped on the Studio City soundstage. Surprisingly enough, one other sitcom star whose backstage notoriety does come close to Roseanne's just happens to be a woman. Comedian Brett Butler's assertiveness on the set of her show *Grace Under Fire* prompted an unnamed source to tell *Variety*, "[Producers] Carsey-Werner should be renamed Frankenstein, because they create monsters."

On the other hand, *The Miami Herald* gave Roseanne her due when the network initially vetoed an episode featuring a lesbian smooch. "She has made tons of money for ABC, won an Emmy and a Peabody, and raised sitcoms to new relevance," argued Hal Boedeker. Recalling the nudity, profanity and general bloodletting that marked such pedigreed programming as David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Oliver Stone's *Wild Palms* and Steven Bochco's *NYPD Blue*, Boedeker wondered "why is it that male producers can do whatever they want, and TV's most successful woman cannot?"

In her own defense, Roseanne summed up the industry's attitude toward her success: "I think what they're really mad about is that I'm a woman calling the shots; and that I was a waitress; and that I was a maid; and that I never went past the ninth grade, and I still do a better show than any of them."

IT'S THE STUPID ECONOMY

The well-publicized battles of its star can't fully explain what has made the sitcom *Roseanne* one of the country's favorites. Certainly, part of the show's unique appeal comes from addressing the

trials and tribulations of working-class life. First of all, such families are a television rarity. One researcher counted just eleven shows with a blue-collar head of household out of 262 network domestic sitcoms between 1946 and 1990. The lopsided numbers are rooted in broadcasting's economics, as well as is history.

The Kramdens, the Bunkers, the Conners and their ilk go against the grain of TV storytelling and a belief that the best demographics are won by focusing on the "haves," the class of people who can exemplify the ideal progression from hard work to financial comfort. L.A. Lawyers, thirtysomething ad executives, Cosby-esque doctors and other fictional professionals are more characteristic of a balmy consumer climate where prosperity is taken for granted, and so appears to be typical of life in these United States.

Sooner or later, mainstream television would have to pick up on the harsh economic reality that defined the 1980s. As the decade waned, lean-and-mean deindustrialization, income polarization, and increased minimum-wage and part-time employment caused millions to lose a sense of security about their jobs, not to mention their futures. In bookstores, economic studies by social critics jostled Danielle Steele novels for display space. Their gloomy titled stated the obvious: *Declining Fortunes, Fear of Falling, The Great U-Turn, America: What Went Wrong?* These studies shared a nightmarish vision of contemporary America. In this scenario, large segments of the country's social core— its middle class, and middle class wannabes—drifted like boat people farther and farther away from the economic mainland. *Dynasty* it wasn't.

Roseanne came along to capture the fragmented, complicated reality of these fears. The show hurls sarcastic, class-conscious one-liners illustrating the gap between the ideal and the real. "Well, middle class was fun," cracked Roseanne as the Conners' electricity was shut off for non-payment. And after she's turned down for a small business loan: "The trouble with people who work for the government is that they all have jobs."

The well-publicized battles of its star can't fully explain what has made the sitcom *Roseanne* one of the country's favorites. Certainly part of the show's unique appeal comes from addressing the trials and tribulations of working class life.

Just like the "pink-collar army" created by a restructured job market, Roseanne Conner's career path is strictly dead-end. She began the series as an hourly worker in a plastics factory. For a while, she shampooed heads in a beauty parlor. She sassed back to her teenage supervisor at Chicken Divine ("That negative attitude is gonna get you nowhere." "This IS nowhere!") while moonlighting as a barmaid at the Lobo Lounge.

She failed at phone sales, and lost her waitressing job when Rodbell's Department Store closed their coffee shop. And like similar families who learn to survive on temporary, five-dollar-an-hour work, the outlook at the Conner house is always uncertain. With unprecedented attention to detail, *Roseanne* captures the nuts-and-bolts of the workplace and the ups-and-downs of the family checkbook: forced overtime, autocratic bosses, second mortgages, bills past due. Roseanne's résumé, such as it is, stands as a legacy of the birth of disposable McJobs and a contingency workforce that marks the permanent transition to a post-industrial economy.

Roseanne also expressed her desire to play off the moralistic stereotypes of most

other sitcoms, where she said "everything was about striving to have middle class values and a middle class life, and I wanted to make fun of that." To that end, *Roseanne* rejects status-seekers and ridicules consumer culture with a vengeance. Mrs. Wellman, the owner of the plastics factory, is a doddering matron in a fur coat who carelessly mangles her employee's names. The Conners' snooty, yuppie neighbor is so traumatized by Roseanne's earthy vulgarity she eventually moves back to Chicago. As a summer storm approaches, Roseanne asks her panicked family "What's the worst that could happen? The tornado could pick up our house and slam it down in a better neighborhood?" When Grandpa gives them a VCR for Christmas, daughter Darlene smirks, "The Conner family finally enters the 1980s."

To complement its realistic grasp of the specifics and its recognition of class distinctions, the show's domestic "situations" are often placed in a larger social context. Traditionally, television narratives depict as individual morality tales in which the hero finds the strength to overcome the odds. But *Roseanne's* strong-willed cast of characters can find themselves overpowered by forces outside their control, despite their best efforts. At Wellman, Roseanne fails to pacify the abusive, sexist plant manager who imposes unattainable production quotas. Dan's motorcycle business goes sour, a victim of bad economic times.

One of the show's most memorable developments is driven by the crash of a character's tenuous hopes against an empty financial promise. When Becky learns that her college fund has disappeared, sunk without a trace into the failed motorcycle shop, she elopes with her mechanic boyfriend. But first, she painfully turns on her parents, accusing them of blowing her chance to have a better life than theirs. Dan and Roseanne agonize over their tragedies: Becky's dreams cut short, a painful rift between father and daughter, Dan's humiliating defeat as a breadwinner. Looking at the reality of cut-backs in student aid and the massive loss of manufacturing jobs, there's every reason to believe it was a drama being replayed in homes throughout the country.

A BIT TOO "SWAP MEET"

The occupants of many of those homes may be intimately familiar with the details of Roseanne's personal life, even if they've never watched *Roseanne*. They know about her April Fool's-style pranks like the three-way marriage, or mooning a reporter, or her National Anthem fiasco. Media buzz and public fascination with her escapades has created a fierce group of anti-fans. For them, the actress has become (in the words of a *New Yorker* profile) "America's bourgeois nightmare come to comic life." Perhaps it's a nightmare that Roseanne's self-described "hillbilly" ways are seeping into the water supply and contaminating our culture? Or as her fictional sitcom boss once remarked about the Conner clan, "Aren't they a bit too swap meet?"

In the industry press, a related attitude prevails. Along with the praise she sometimes receives for tackling controversial issues like domestic abuse, homosexuality, unemployment, and bankruptcy, Roseanne is likewise blasted as a cheap publicity seeker. Less Norman Lear than Norman Bates, she's seen as an *enfant terrible* who accidentally stumbled onto an artistic and economic goldmine. *Variety* dubbed her "a master manipulator" of a network "that has repeatedly bowed to nearly all of her whims and desires, putting up with outlandish on- and off-screen antics because, in a business starved for hits, there's no arguing with success."

Roseanne's indelicate business manners

and garage-sale ethos are only half the picture. She reflects quite the opposite status as a Hollywood millionaire and industry shaker who's not shy about flaunting her money or her authority with a laugh. In the home video "Roseanne Arnold Live from Trump Castle," megabucks entrepreneur Donald Trump becomes her servant by driving her stretch limo out onto the stage. And in real life, she played out a royal scandal and married her young chauffeur.

But Roseanne's very original sin is in acting like the queen of the trailer park *and* the belle of the ball. Her seizure of opposite ends of the social spectrum disturbs *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who believes "[Roseanne] promotes herself as a tribune of blue-collar women, while she lives the profligate, plastic-surgeried life of a spoiled star." Which is to say that such outrageous folly robs us of distinctions of rich and poor, high and low. If Roseanne represents glamour and celebrity, she is also the corruption of the moneyed privileges she has "rightfully" earned; if Roseanne pays homage to the dignity of the working class, she is equally enamored of its crotch-grabbing, black-sheep humor.

An HBO special captures this insider/outsider position with precision. On stage, resplendent in a gold lamé pantsuit, Roseanne describes a Hollywood Hills soiree at which she asked her genteel hostess, "Where's the keg?"

In this light, accusations of Roseanne's vulgarity can frequently be read as a code word for class. Roseanne is treated with fear and loathing because she and her show insult the-powers-that-be with a blue-collar bluntness they can't hope to master. Like all rebels, she understands that "tastefulness" stigmatizes potent forms of expression, forms that the comedian appropriates with great insight. How symbolic, then, for the actress to fax an obscene reply to a television critic. It's the perfect postmodern meeting of high-tech and low-tact.

THE MYTHIC FAMILY

The Traditional Family and Family Values are ideals etched in sand, concepts that shift and change over time. "Spare the rod, spoil the child" or "Never hit your child"? Well, the values you choose might depend on whether you live in a 19th Century pre-industrial slum or cozy 1950s suburbia. Some researchers believe we use these fluid historical standards to quietly mask the built-in conflicts of domestic survival within the larger social environment.

So too, our nostalgic longing for the extended kinship of parents, cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles seems to contradict our modern, idealized arrangement in which Mom and Dad know best. Television promoted a version of the former in shows like *The Waltons* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and the latter in the domestic sitcoms *Leave it to Beaver* and *The Donna Reed Show*. In the *Way We Never Were*, author Stephanie Coontz writes about the nuclear family sitcom, "the shape these shows took at their inception were bolstered by impressive economic improvements for vast numbers of Americans." Their power lingers even to this day, says Coontz, since "our most powerful visions of traditional families derive from images that are still delivered to our homes in reruns of 1950s television sitcoms."

The Cosby Show, for example, convincingly illustrates the classic model family: professional, authoritarian father; supportive mother; independent children who learn from their mistakes; unquestioned prosperity accepted as the norm. The fact that the Cosbys are black makes those values seem progressive rather than oddly anachronistic. But the upscale Cosbys are certainly uncharacteristic of most Reagan-

era families, especially families of color who, as a group, witnessed their economic gains erode during the show's tenure.

Roseanne was just one of the revisionist domestic sitcoms to appear in the wake of *Cosby, The Simpsons* and *Married...with Children* also helped rework the jumbled '50s archetypes with a seemingly warped '80s cynicism. Instead of parents as upstanding as statues, the shows offer us perplexed adults with emotional weaknesses. Their children are perhaps too independent, precociously crossing paths with unsavory characters in the outside world. More importantly, the new versions of television domesticity—especially *Roseanne*—burrowed beneath the rhetorical facade of Family Values. They suggested with startling frankness that the dysfunctional family might be the most normal family on the block.

In the Conner household, Roseanne sets off the most sparks with her ironic stabs at the basic inequality of being the lady of the house. *Roseanne* takes a dialectical view of the family, as writer Barbara Ehrenreich observes. "On the one hand, she presents the family as a zone of intimacy and support, well worth defending against the forces of capitalism, which drive both mothers and fathers out of the home, scratching around for paychecks. On the other hand, the family is hardly a haven, especially for its grown-up females ...Mom's job is to keep the whole thing together—to see that that the mortgage payments are made, to fend off the viperish teenagers, to find the missing green sock—but mom is no longer interested in being a human sacrifice on the altar of 'pro-family values'."

Although Roseanne Conner's acid tongue is a loaded weapon, she uses it mainly in self defense. Her sarcasm is born of a desire for survival, her own as well as her family's . "I love my husband; I love my children," Roseanne conceded in an early comedy routine, "but I need something more. Like a Life!" As a producer, her game plan was inspired by a kind of domestic feminism: expand television's limited depiction of women. She deplored a sitcom tradition in which "the mother is absent or an idiot or dead," and where "we don't hear nothing female or motherly or womanish."

Roseanne also expressed her desire to play off the moralistic stereotypes of most other sitcoms, where she said "Everything was about striving to have middle class values and a middle class life..."

Roseanne put the blame squarely on the male-dominated power structure. And in response, she tried to establish a gynocracy: a female-centered creative team of writers and producers who could change the "male point of view coming out of women's mouths on TV, particularly around families." Although Roseanne never achieved her "women-only" quota, Ehrenreich still called the show's resulting feminist vision "bleak and radical." So in a sense, she did succeed.

Not at her husband's expense, though. Dan Conner, a gentle giant, topples an equally imposing set of gender-based stereotypes. Television comedies commonly take a dim view of the male blue-collar breadwinner. Consider Ralph Kramden and his get-rich-quick schemes, Archie Bunker's bigotry and Fred Sanford's hypochondria.

Stephanie Coontz observes, "Acceptance of domesticity was the mark of middle-class status and upward mobility. In sitcom families, a middle-class man's work was totally irrelevant to his identity; by the same token, the problems of working class families did not lie in their economic situations but in their failure to

create harmonious gender roles." Historically, television's working-class Dad has been an incompetent buffoon or self-deceiving financial failure because he just doesn't know how to wear the pants in the family.

Dan Conner is different. Granted, he goes straight for the six-pack after work. He tries to avoid the embarrassing parental duties—talking with his kids about sex, for one—that always plague sitcom dads. But despite occasional moments of self-doubt, Dan is the blue-collar father as a sensitive, responsible provider.

Like Roseanne, he's wise to the unavoidable tussles between husband and wife, father and child, though he's a little more optimistic than she is about their chances of smoothing them out. Of course, from a feminist perspective, the options for men are bound to be less gloomy. After all, Dan has the freedom to walk away from parental responsibilities in a way that Roseanne cannot. After spending a lengthy afternoon babysitting his testy teenagers, Dan rushes out of the house admitting, "This whole marriage/family thing's been a lot of fun, but I gotta go."

One particularly raw episode of *Roseanne* portrays the Balkans-like hostilities of family roles. The story concerns the Conners' reactions to the prospect of having another child, and captures how economic and personal demands color the family's problems and their solutions. To use Ehrenreich's words, Roseanne's potential pregnancy turns her into a human sacrifice: in this example, a sacrifice to her family's outpouring of resentment.

The episode begins as Roseanne attempts to shoo everyone out of the house so that she can secretly take a home pregnancy test. Dan and the children soon discover her predicament. For the next ten minutes, while they nervously await the test results, each member of the Conner family responds to the potential blessed event by accosting Roseanne with a raw mixture of feigned concern and selfish hostility.

Their witty dialogue barely conceals icy indignities. Darlene hints that the care and feeding of a new baby, like a stray dog, is the sole responsibility of the person who brings it home. Becky defends her God-given right to a car and new clothes. Dan holds Rosie liable for the slip-up in family planning. ("Well, excuse me for ovulating," she retorts.) Only DJ responds with gusto to the idea of a younger sibling. "I'll be happy if you have a baby," he proclaims, "Finally, I get a chance to kick some butt."

The range of strife between husband and wife, parent and child, sibling and sibling, isn't Roseanne's only problem. At the same time, she struggles with her own indecision about wanting another baby, and the complex demands of money, age and maternity. As required by narrative convention, this messy situation is resolved when the test results prove negative. But the "happy" ending doesn't erase the agitated, egotistic demands that were wrenchingly revealed during the episode. Despite the family's apologies, when all is said and done, the viewer is left with the sting of Roseanne's earlier mandate. "If this test is positive, I expect all of your support. I'm not even gonna ask, you're just gonna give it. I know you can do it. Just pretend like you're some other family."

Roseanne's fans witnessed surprising developments in the last few seasons. As Dan and Roseanne got comfy in a couple of full-time jobs, the nuclear Conner family exploded into a kind of anti-Waltons. And while the strife between generations settled into a caustic groove, gender wars broke out between the Conner women and their significant others. But the tone remains the same, whatever direction the stories follow. Viewers are guaranteed a vision that is raw and edgy. And ultimately humane.

Far from contaminating the culture, as many complain, Roseanne and her show have enriched it. Certainly, television

programs would look much paler if she had never reached prime time. Moreover, we can thank Roseanne for the following: her triumphant gambles to redefine family entertainment; her invention of a comic vocabulary of maternal resentment; her talent for treating blue-collar cockiness as a popular art form; her gift for ridiculing the system as harshly as the people doomed to live within it. Roseanne is just what we deserve—an icon as tough as the times we live in. ■

Rosanne Freed is a writer and producer in the Detroit area. She has written about popular culture and television for trade and labor publications.

QUOTE...

Phil Donahue: "Who is concerned about titles and names? I think, not always, but often, the people who bring an unbecoming elitism to the whole issue, those who would say, 'I am a journalist and you're not' are essentially saying—forget the very important point that we should take our information where we can. . . . I learned a long time ago that there is an unbecoming elitism within the journalistic community. There are some people in power in Washington, for example, who say 'This would be a nice place to work if we didn't have all these new journalists who keep coming in here all the time. It was much more fun when the White House was ours. If you'd just leave us alone, we'd tell you the news. We are the news and you're not, and the result is, recently we got far too many people who were not so much covering the Reagan bandwagon but on it."

—from a 1991 interview with *TVQ*'s special correspondent Arthur Unger.

...UNQUOTE

Is Television Corrupting the Olympics?

Media and the (post) modern games at age 100

by Michael R. Real

The brilliant pageantry and drama of the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games in 1996 recall the rich history of television coverage of the Olympics and the debates over television's impact on the Games. Television has been charged with corrupting the authenticity of the traditional sporting experience in general by no less an authority than Benjamin Rader, author of the principal history of television and sports, *In Its Own Image*. Similarly, in his book on *Sportsbiz*, Stephen Aris charges, "Sport has been hijacked by industry and TV to serve their very different ends."

In the case of the Olympics, these charges are especially challenging because the modern Olympic Games, more than any other sporting event, have been born and nurtured in idealism. Olympic idealism has long preached dedication, self-sacrifice, and love of sport over against any self-interest and profit-seeking. Rallying support a century ago for the rebirth of the Games of ancient Greece, Baron Pierre de Coubertin gave to the Olympics an idealistic fervor.

He spoke of the Olympics as moral as well as physical events, "There are not two parts of a man—body and soul; there are three—body, mind, and character, character is not formed by the mind, but primarily by the body. The men of antiquity knew this and we are painfully relearning it."

On another occasion, he proclaimed, "Healthy democracy, wise and peaceful internationalism, will penetrate the new stadium and penetrate within it the cult of honor and disinteredness which will enable athletes to help in the tasks of moral education and social peace as well as

of musuclar development."

Are television and commercialism today destroying the high values that the founders of the Olympics argued were essential to the Olympic spirit? What light does a review of the increasing involvement of modern media in the Olympics shed on this question? Two conflicting models, both borrowed from biology, characterize the opinions of many experts on the interaction between media and sports. In one model, television is a corrupting parasite that latches onto the host body, sport, and draws life support from it while giving nothing back in return. In the other model, television and sports are connected "symbiotically" so that each both gives and takes in the relationship, leaving each better off than it would be without the other. A growing number of sports/media

critics argue vigorously for either the parasitic or symbiotic model in the case of numerous sports in this country, in England, and around the world.

The modern Olympic Games initially remained above such conflicts and could afford to be idealistic because they were supported, not by mass interest, but by Old World wealth. Aristocratic privilege sustained the Olympic movement in its first decades, with no patronage more generous than from Coubertin himself. Beginning in 1896, press coverage in newspapers and magazines, the only mass media of the time, was very slight for the first several Olympics.

By the 1912 Stockholm Games, 500 accredited journalists attended. Following World War I, the Olympics begin to gather momentum as a major international event with increasing public recognition. The "old boy" network of support became more and more supplanted by other forces. In particular, cities spent increasing amounts in hosting the games, reaching an apex with the Berlin games in 1936, and competitors came more frequently from outside the leisure class creating tensions of race and class captured in *Chariots of Fire*, the popular film about the 1924 Paris games.

Experimentation with television at the 1936 Berlin games and the release of Leni Riefenstahl's two-part *Olympia* documentary marked the first intrusion of the moving image into the Olympics. For the next Games in 1948, the London Olympic organizing committee charged the BBC 1,500 pounds sterling to telecast the event. But when the 1956 Melbourne organizing committee attempted to sell television rights to the games, broadcast networks in the United States and Europe boycotted the games, demanding the same access without charge that radio and newsreels had always enjoyed in covering the Olympics as news not entertainment.

The result was that only six prerecorded, half-hour programs of features and highlights were presented on a scattering of independent stations in the United States. Following that controversy, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1958 passed a new regulation establishing that the local organizing committee shall sell rights with the approval of the IOC. With that policy, the principle of commercial Olympic television was established, and the Olympics would never again be the same.

Television coverage in general and television rights fees in particular created a new relationship between the public and the games at the same time as they brought the dynamics of commercial capitalism into the Olympic movement. This was part of a larger convergence of television and sports that worried observers like Mark McCormack, who complained in his book, *What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School*. "In the 1960s an unholy alliance was developing. Sport was helping to make television and television was helping to make sport."

Since 1960, television rights fees for the Olympics have increased several hundredfold. These rights fees paid by the United States commercial networks have comprised at least 63 percent of world fees for the Winter Games and, since 1976, at least 66 percent of world fees for the Summer Games.

By 1972, television revenues had replaced Olympic ticket sales as the principal commercial source of income from the Games. Television rights began to dominate Olympic budgeting. In 1960, television provided only one of every 400 dollars of the cost of hosting the Summer Olympics. In 1972, one of every 30 dollars was from television; in 1980, one of every 12 dollars: and by

1984 one of every three dollars of Olympic host costs were paid for from television revenues. In these years, the number of accredited media representatives has grown tenfold. In 1960, only 296 of the 1,442 accredited media representatives were from the non-print, electronic press; in 1988, more than 10,000 of the 15,740 media representatives were from the electronic, audio-visual world.

During this period, the IOC discovered that television fees and related commercial sponsorship were the means of support to carry the Olympic movement through its two major financial crisis since World War II.

The first crisis saw the IOC near bankruptcy in the late 1960s until, in 1971, it officially declared that all television revenues belonged exclusively to the IOC and would be distributed by the IOC to the local organizing committee, the international sports federations, and the national Olympic organizations. The IOC agreed to return 60 percent to the host city, but that percentage will be reduced to 49 percent in 2004. Largely because of this, the IOC's bank account increased from $2 million to $45 million between 1972 and 1980.

The second crisis followed Montreal's huge public deficit resulting from hosting the 1976 Games. Moscow would host the 1980 Games, but no one else wanted the financial liability of future Games. Teheran was the only city besides Los Angeles interested in hosting the 1984 Games. As a result, the IOC was forced to accept the commercially sponsored 1984 Los Angeles plan without the usual guarantee of public monies. Los Angeles corporate sponsorship was so successful that the Games paid for themselves, for the first time in history, and left a surplus of tens of millions of dollars for the Los Angeles organizers. Commercialism could be lucratively integrated with the Olympic Games. The turnaround was so dramatic that by 1986, 13 cities spent $200 million on bidding efforts alone to stage the Summer and Winter Games of 1992.

Both commercial turns—the 1971 IOC takeover of television monies and the 1984 corporate sponsorship—proved so lucrative that Olympic leadership is now as attuned to economic progress and success as it is to athletic achievement. Commercial changes, combined with media-related Olympic hostage-taking and Olympic boycotts, led Jeffrey Segrave and Donald Chu in 1981 to conclude: "The politicization and commercialization of the modern Olympics has reached such a crescendo that few could deny that the idealistic intentions of the Games has become increasingly immersed in a sea of propaganda."

Commercial Sponsorship Vs. Olympic Ideals

The immersion of the Olympics in the world of television exposure led to rapidly increasing commercial sponsorships of the Games and teams themselves. The 1984 Los Angeles Games pioneered this approach. even selling rights to one company to bill itself as the "Official Olympic Specimen Carrier" because it transported the urine samples of athletes to laboratories.

Two statements from this period reveal the pressure and conflict that the International Olympic Committee was facing. When Juan Antonio Samaranch assumed the presidency of the IOC in 1980, he stated "The commercialization of the Olympic Games will never be tolerated. They will remain the only sports event in the world where there is not advertising in the stadia or on the athletes' vests."

Shortly after that, television producer David Wolper advised Roone Arledge of ABC in unprintably colorful language that, since Arledge had paid $225 million for the Games, he could ignore "that

schmuck" Samaranch and do whatever he wanted with the Olympics.

Under Samaranch's leadership, the IOC "gerontocracy," as its aged membership has been called, moved in to lucrative financial arrangements for marketing Olympic symbols and associations, stopping just short of advertising in the stadium or on athlete's vests. The Olympic Program (TOP) was formed in 1982 by the IOC for this purpose. TOP worked with the marketing consortium International Sports and Leisure (ISL), headed by Horst Dassler of Adidas, to sell corporate sponsorship.

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This led to an internal crisis within the Olympic Committee and the resignation of IOC director Monique Berlioux. As head of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Peter Ueberroth had seen this coming: "It's Berlioux's job to keep commercialism out of the Olympics; it's Dassler's job to make sure every athlete bears the Adidas name in large letters on every piece of clothing and equipment. Therein lies the conflict."

A similar battle had been fought in the 1981 IOC meeting at Baden-Baden, Germany, when the code of pure amateurism was dropped in favor of letting the international sports bodies establish rules for Olympic participation. Big-name, high-profile professional athletes could now play and draw bigger audiences and endorsements, culminating in the U.S. Dream Team winning the gold in basketball at Barcelona. The dropping of pure amateurism coincided conveniently with the development of TOP marketing.

The TOP effort has now grown to the point where income from the licenses for Olympic marketing is roughly equivalent to the IOC's huge income from television rights. In 1992, TOP contracts with Coca-Cola, Eastman Kodak, EM, Ricoh, Matsushita, *Sports Illustrated*, Visa, and U.S. Postal Express brought in more than $120 million to the IOC. In Barcelona, sponsorships accounted for 30 percent of the total budget and television rights 28 percent.

The Atlanta Games in 1996 set records by selling more than $1 billion in corporate Olympic sponsorships. There were 10 Worldwide Sponsors at up to $40 million, and 20 regular Sponsors at up to $20 million. The Worldwide Sponsors payments went to the International Olympic Committee, and the other two were shared by the U.S. and Atlanta committees. The sponsors spent these amounts for rights to use the Olympic torch logo, the five rings, and the Olympic name. In 1996 sponsorship worth $179 million was paid to the IOC by one transnational corporation alone, the Coca-Cola company based in Atlanta and an Olympic supporter since 1928.

One consequence of the television and sponsorship commercialization of the Olympics is an increasing "commodification" of the Games, creating a virtual circus of labels and pitches. Corporate logos and sponsorship abound, Olympic memorabilia multiply merchandising and marketing preoccupy officials, shoe sponsors become powerful decision-makers.

Promotions begin months before the Games and continue into the media presentation, and Olympic leaders and the public learn to accept this commodification as if it were part of the Olympic creed.

Commercialism leads to pop stylistic elements in the games as well. When the 1984 Opening Ceremony featured 84 pianos playing Gershwin, British critic Alan Tomlinson commented, "Televisual images do linger on; and those of the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 can only be said to owe more to the spirit of Liberace than to that of de Coubertin."

Olympic schedules and sites have been unmistakably influenced by television. Consider how television and sponsorship have come to shape the selection of a host city, the array of stadiums and sites, the style of opening and closing ceremonies, the dates of the games, the timing of final events— and time zones.

The selection of a location for the Olympics must take into account what time live action from a city will play on Eastern Time in the United States. The IOC stands to make more money from television if it selects a Calgary or Atlanta, where a maximum number of events and finals will play live in primetime. Some of the most important finals in the Barcelona Games occurred between midnight and 6 a.m. in Australia and Japan. Researchers in Australia reported "Olympian" efforts to adjust sleeping patterns, and data in Japan suggested "that well over eight million Japanese lost sleep over the Olympics." American television's financial clout helps protect Americans from such Olympian inconveniences.

The 1988 Seoul Games were dubbed "the breakfast games" because almost half the event finals were held before 2 p.m. Seoul time to accommodate North American primetime. Daylight savings time was introduced in Korea to assist with this shift. The dates of the Seoul Games were adjusted to avoid conflict with the World Series. In another example of American television's clout, when ABC bid $309 for the 1988 Calgary Winter Games, they were able to get the competition extended from 12 to 16 days and extended over three rather than the previous two weekends. ABC lost money, some $50 million, on those Games but won the February sweeps for the first time in four years.

"The Olympic Games is very much a media constructed reality," in the words of the newly published study of the Barcelona Games, *Television in the Olympics*. In fact, Luis Bassat, the producer of the Barcelona ceremonies, called it "the longest commercial spot of his career. Unknown to most viewers, virtually all sound for the Barcelona Opening Ceremony was pre-recorded months in advance. The way potential Olympic stadiums are configured and the way Opening and Closing ceremonies are staged are now evaluated far more for television consideration that for live attendance.

Television has become a massive megaphone announcing the advances and frustrations of underrepresented groups. Criticizing TV for gender and ethnic and national gaps is little more than blaming the messenger for bearing the bad news.

The needs of the United States television networks clearly preoccupy Olympic decision making, but the U.S. does not broadcast the most hours of Olympic coverage or always pay the highest rate per viewer. For example, the 187 hours of ABC coverage of the 1984 Los Angeles games was fewer total

hours of Olympic broadcasting than in Western Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. The United States paid $1.67 per TV set, but Australia paid $1.91 per TV set for those Olympics. In contrast, the EBU paid only $.17 per TV set for Western Europe and the OIRT paid only $.05 per TV set for Eastern Europe.

Still lower rates are paid per TV set in poorer, less developed countries where, in addition, large group viewing is common. Samaranch and the IOC have been working to balance off the dependence on U.S. television money by, for example, negotiating almost a three-fold increase in European television rights fees between 1988 and 1992, from fees of $90 million for Barcelona to $225 million for Atlanta. Nevertheless, U.S. television remains prominent in IOC finances and decision-making.

The Balance Sheet: Pros and Cons of the Olympic Connection

Does all this mean that American television has corrupted the Olympics and that the relationship is parasitic rather than symbiotic? Not necessarily, but only if one maintains that negotiated change is not necessarily corruption.

Would the Olympics be different without television? Of course, along with virtually every other aspect of contemporary life. The real question is: Would the Olympics be better without the changes initiated or encouraged by television? Any honest answer has to respond: Yes in some respects, no in others.

While masses of people in most parts of the world today are becoming accustomed to hypercommercialism, there are many negatives associated with it. The physical environment is easily exploited and damaged under such pressure. The Olympics were originally designed to ride above such shortcomings in the larger world of politics and commerce. Today they are thoroughly immersed in it.

The Olympics have more member nations than the United Nations, but the Games do not unmistakably rise above the everyday world as a beacon of international peace and human goodwill in every respect. The readily apparent greed behind many aspects of sponsorship and television conflict with the high-minded ideals of Coubertin. Without pressures from television, the selection of host cities, the scheduling of events and finals, the nature of ceremonies, and other details might all be conducted with more regard for athletes and the world audience and less preoccupation with U.S. prime-time and sponsorship.

But also, without television, the Olympics would not be available to "the widest possible audience," the explicit goal of Olympics media policy for several generations. This policy has coincided with television's drive to maximize markets and has dictated against exclusive use of pay-per-view and other more restrictive options, but it contributes to the dubious hyperspectacle style of promotion and presentation of the Games.

Do the televised Olympics contribute to multiculturalism or to racial and sexual exclusion and stereotypes? For two generations, television has transmitted to wide audiences the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities in the Olympic Games, but without television neither women nor minority athletes would receive the exposure to the global public which Olympic television makes possible.

Historically, neither women nor athletes from outside Europe and North America competed in the original 1896 Olympic Games. Today, the percentage of women athlete's exceeds 25% at the Olympics, and female Olympic events receive only slightly less coverage than their male

counterparts. For example, in the Winter Games, if we eliminate male-only sports such as hockey, content analysis of the 1984 Sarajevo Games finds female Olympic events receiving 44% of airtime, and male events 56%. If we include the male-only sports—a factor under control of the IOC not the broadcasters—then we find 77 % of airtime went to male sports and only 23 % to women's events.

If the Olympics themselves had complete gender parity, broadcasters would most likely follow suit. Female participation has overcome rejection, stereotyping, and even the "fake female" swimmers of the old East German Olympic machine. In fact, female competitions proved to be the most-viewed event from the Barcelona Games among viewers in the United States (women's gymnastics); England (women's 10,000 meter); France (women's 400 meter); Korea (women's archery); Canada (women's synchronized swimming) and in many other countries, depending to a large extent on national prospects of winning medals.

Non-whites have experienced a similar growth in Olympic representation. In the small 1904 St. Louis Summer Olympics, non-whites were featured in a crude sideshow called "Anthropological Days;" Coubertin and other Olympic officials deplored the stereotypes of savages arranged by local organizers. But by 1912, the U.S. team featured an African-American, a Hawaiian, and two Native Americans; one, of course, was the legendary Jim Thorpe who was dubbed by the King of Sweden "the greatest athlete in the world" at those games.

By 1920 a Japanese and a Brazilian won the first medals for Asia and Latin America respectively. The famous triumphs of Jesse Owens in the Nazi Olympics of 1936 proved a delicious blow against theories of Aryan racial superiority. But when Tommy Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in a black power salute on the winners' stand during the playing of the national anthem in 1968, the affront received far more publicity than had the killing of scores of Mexican students on the eve of those Mexico City games.

Today, non-whites are abundantly represented, although as sports historian Allen Guttmann has observed, "Since winning, rather than simply taking part, has continued to attract the world's attention, the men said, especially the women of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been left to play ancillary roles on the Olympic stage." Chilean researcher Fernando Reyes Matta points out how the "gigantism" of wealthier, northern, industrialized countries leaves poorer countries of the south as spectators on the sideline.

Television in fact has become a massive megaphone announcing the advances and frustrations of underrepresented groups. Criticizing TV for such gender and ethnic and national gaps is little more than blaming the messenger for bearing the bad news.

Olympic schedules and sites have been unmistakably influeneced by television. TV and sponsorships have come to shape the selection of a host city, the array of stadiums and sites, the style of opening and closing ceremonies, the dates of the games—and time zones.

Once a uniform international ritual shared by global audiences, especially in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the "designer Olympics" of today is televised in different versions to different audiences around the world.

These customized versions favor only what is already most popular and comfortable for national audiences. Of course, without television, nations would not be able to share in the performance of their athletes and those of some 190 other nations around the world. But, without television, the public might also be subjected to less jingoistic commentaries and less selective nationalized coverage of the Games.

The British watch equestrian events, the Americans basketball, the Indians field hockey, and the Australians swimming, where a generation ago they all watched the same events everywhere. This nationalized fragmentation culminates in what official Olympic historian John Lucas considers the excessively partisan ritual of national anthems being played more than 400 times during the Summer Games. Contemporary television's ability to selectively cover events and tailor coverage to each rich country's tastes has tended to fragment the unifying international potential of Olympic pageantry and unity.

Massive and detailed international research projects have examined the complex and powerful place of television in the past two decades of the Olympics. A 1984 UNESCO-sponsored study which I had the privilege of organizing, found the unifying rituals of the Olympics existing in tension with nationalistic zeal among commentators and editors.

An exhaustive study of the Los Angeles Games as a media event by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz found many positive functions. The Olympics, they concluded, constitute one of the most influential of the "high holidays" of secular culture today, creating domestic rituals in which family and close friends come together to eat special foods, share time together, and celebrate the athletic competition.

Recent books on the place of television in the 1988 Seoul Olympics and the 1992 Barcelona Olympics have identified in satisfying detail how the events in one city become a varied and intriguing television experience for people all over the world.

The newest book, *Television in the Olympics*, by Moragas Spa, Rivenburgh, and Larson, clarifies one question of special interest to broadcasters: Exactly how big is the Olympic television audience? The figure of 3.5 billion viewers worldwide was widely cited during the Barcelona Games in 1992. *Television in the Olympics* notes that this would be possible only if 90 percent of the developed world watched, making 1.1 billion viewers, and 9.7 persons watched each of the 244 million television sets in the developing countries—making 2.4 billion viewers.

The authors suggest a more realistic estimate of 4 to 5 people per television set in the developing world reduces the maximum potential world audience to 2.3 billion. They further suggest that realistic estimates of viewing for any single event, such as the Opening Ceremony, should be between 700 million and one billion, depending on such factors as local interest, timing, alternative program availability, number of viewers per set, and others.

Still, who would have imagined a century ago such a widely shared, peaceful coming together as the televised Olympics make possible?

Assessing all the evidence, is television making significant positive contributions to the Olympics? Yes. Are there problems and could television do better? Yes, again. Is television a parasite sucking life out of the Olympics? Probably not. But the symbiosis between them which benefits both the Olympics and television is a dynamic one that can easily become unbalanced.

The crucial distinction is that television is only one part, although the most prominent part, of a vast cultural seismic shift

—from the "modern" world of a century ago, with its simple Olympic ideals, to the "postmodern" world of today with its relativism, commercialism, technological saturation, and diversity To imply that —television works alone to corrupt the —Olympic Games is to over simplify to the —point of misrepresentation. But to say that the televised Olympics—along with the Super Bowl, the Oscars, the World Cup, and other super-events—play a leading role in celebrating and shaping our global culture is to begin to approach a realistic sense of television's complex place in the world of today. With the world gathered around the electronic campfire that is Atlanta '96, the ghost of Marshall McLuhan hovers curiously over it, looking with amusement and some tough questions at this ultimate expression of the medium as the message, massage, mass age—our global village. ■

Michael Real has published widely on sports and television, especially the Olympics. He is the author of *Mass-Mediated Culture*, *Super Media*, and *Exploring Media Culture*. He is a Professor of Communications at San Diego State University.

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Television Quarterly is looking for articles. We welcome contributions from readers who have something to say and know how to say it. Some of our pieces come from professional writers; others from television professionals who want to write about what they know best—their own field of expertise, whether it's programming, news, production or management. We especially seek articles about television's impact on society. We feel, too, that one of our functions can be to add to the developing history of television, particularly as told by individuals who have contributed to shaping the medium. We believe that such historical articles can be valuable for much more than their nostalgia value since they can illuminate present and future television.

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